Climate Assemblies

Citizens' Assemblies and Mini-Publics

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Climate Assemblies

New Civic Institutions for a Climate-changed World

Edited by
Oliver Escobar and Stephen Elstub

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The editors dedicate this book to Oliver's daughter Molie, and Stephen's daughter and son, Imogen and Isaac, with love and hope.

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Section 1: **Introduction**

Oliver Escobar and Stephen Elstub

Chapter 1
The present of climate assemblies

Abstract: Climate assemblies are a fast-growing phenomenon in the fields of democratic innovation and environmental governance. These new civic institutions empower citizens to participate in evidence-informed deliberation to advance collective action on the climate and ecological crisis. Climate assemblies are part of ongoing efforts to democratise environmental governance and respond to the challenges of our climate-changed world. This introductory chapter provides a state-of-the-art overview of this emerging field of research and practice. We cover the history and development of climate assemblies, reflecting on the environmental, socioeconomic, and political contexts that explain their emergence. We also provide an overview of their characteristics, critiques, and impacts, and argue that practice is progressing faster than research. Then we outline how this book contributes to narrow that gap by focussing on both the internal and external dimensions of climate assemblies, and how they are intertwined. All chapters are introduced and summarised to offer an accessible guide to key insights, before concluding with reflections about the hope and hype that underpins the present state of the field.

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

1 Introduction: Hope in a climate-changed world

What do Extinction Rebellion, the United Nations and governments of various ideological stripes have in common? All have supported climate assemblies in the last decade. Climate assemblies are civic institutions that include a cross-section of the public in evidence-informed deliberation to influence policy, governance, public discourse or collective action on the climate and ecological crisis.

This book examines the state of the field and the reasons behind the growing hope and hype about climate assemblies. Covering the latest research, the book provides insight into their capabilities and limitations and asks whether the citizens' assembly model of public engagement *works* in the context of environmental governance and climate action. We consider both the internal dimensions (i. e. agenda-setting, design, facilitation, expertise, deliberation, proposals) and the external dimensions (i. e. communication, public engagement, media, politics, policy), and explore the complex relationships between them. The book thus offers an empirical assessment of the field, as well as normative proposals to improve climate assemblies and their prospects for making a difference in a climate-changed world.

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Humankind is running out of metaphors and superlatives to underline the urgency of addressing the climate and ecological crisis. In 2024, the United Nations (UN) Secretary General stated: "In the case of climate, we are not the dinosaurs. We are the meteor. We are not only in danger. We are the danger. But we are also the solution … We need an exit ramp off the highway to climate hell."[1] Scientific assessments indicate that we are approaching ecological tipping points at a faster rate than expected: human activity is transgressing "planetary boundaries" and taking humanity beyond the "safe operating space" (Richardson et al. 2023; IPCC 2023). Our economies are overshooting the capacity of Earth systems (Victor 2023) and the global poor are already suffering at the sharp edge of climate injustice (Dryzek and Pickering 2019; McKinnon 2022). The climate and ecological crisis is now understood as an accelerating *polycrisis* where "climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste" coalesce to fuel not just ecological catastrophe but also conflicts over territory and resources, population displacements and health crises (United Nations Environment Programme 2024, xi). We are not just facing an emergency; we already live in a climate-changed world.

The diagnosis has been clear for some time, but the ways forward are contested. There is, nonetheless, public support for action. For example, a recent survey indicates that 71% of people in G20 countries believe that major action is required, but only 39% believe that governments will lead such action (Ipsos 2024). It can be difficult to find hope in the current landscape of environmental politics and governance. Some are giving up and argue that a better "end of the world is possible" and we should prepare to rebuild communities in new ways after environmental collapse (Servigne et al. 2021). Even if the worst scenarios don't materialise, social upheavals and concomitant states of emergency related to heatwaves, floods, wildfires, forced migration, homelessness, hunger, disease, and violence are expected to cause unimaginable human suffering, challenge political systems and undermine democratic governance (Fischer 2017).

Dystopian prospects often inspire utopian thinking because utopias "demystify the spell of the status quo's unchangeability" (Thaler 2022, 91). Since the turn of the century, the field of *real utopias* has thrown into relief grounded experimentation with social, economic, and democratic innovations (Wright 2010). Climate assemblies can be understood as part of this broader agenda to reimagine democratic governance. It is difficult, however, to overstate the challenge. Democracies around the world are under considerable strain from autocratic trends and democratic backsliding in a global context of growing power inequalities (Dalton 2017; Coppedge et al. 2022). In his revision of the structural transformation of our public spheres, Habermas (2023, 27) argues that democratic governance is undermined by the "centrifugal forces of social disintegration" driven by contemporary capitalism. Three decades ago, Jameson

1 See https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/secretary-general/speeches/2024-06-05/discurso-especial-sobre-la-acción-climática-"la-hora-de-la-verdad"#:~:text=António%20Guterres,our%20world%20so%20desperately%20needs (accessed 03.01.25)

(1994, xii) noted that it seemed easier to imagine "the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism; perhaps that is due to some weakness in our imaginations." Today it is argued that capitalism has reached the stage at which it is devouring the planetary conditions for its own existence (Fraser 2022; Raworth 2018; Victor 2023). The crisis is thus not just environmental, but also a crisis of political, economic, and public imagination (Escobar 2024).

By now readers may wonder what climate assemblies might bring to this carnival of despair. Can they make a difference in the face of such structural challenges? There is no need for a book to state the obvious answer: no, on their own, they cannot. Despite failures in collective governance, however, humanity has been busy envisioning, practicing, and working towards alternatives. Some find hope in participatory governance, indigenous wisdom, and commons-based just transitions (Fischer 2017; Escobar 2020; Bollier 2021). Many are working towards socioecological economies underpinned by democratic governance and innovation (Raworth 2018; Trebeck and Williams 2019; Steinberger et al. 2024), harnessing the transformative power of science and technology (Ritchie 2024), and participating in grassroots initiatives, civic activism, and social movements (Grasso and Giugni 2022; Jones and Youngs 2024). From local to global levels of action, and from communities to institutions, wide-ranging efforts are under way (Rask et al. 2012; Stevenson and Dryzek 2014; Howarth et al. 2022;) and some find plenty of reasons for cautious optimism about a sustainable future (Ritchie 2024).

Nevertheless, democratic means and environmental ends are not always easily coupled (Schlosberg et al. 2019). This book starts from the premise that there is a need to build new bridges between citizens and institutions; between local, national, and global publics; between community power and state power; between activism and public administration; between scientific evidence and political action; between humans and nonhumans; between current and future generations; and between the realities of the present and the demands of the future. We see potential in climate assemblies to be part of this bridge-building effort, acting as new civic institutions that enable citizens to participate directly in environmental governance and collective action. As we will show, they are far from being a panacea but can contribute to reimagine democratic governance in a climate-changed world.

This book brings together 25 authors to offer novel perspectives, critical insights and practical reflections on this growing phenomenon. It is the second book (see Smith 2024b) to focus on climate assemblies as a distinctive strand of democratic innovation, and the first to gather primary research from diverse scholars working at the cutting-edge of the field. The result is a theoretically rich and empirically-informed collection that can be read as an advanced introduction to the field (see also our *Special Issue* on barriers and enablers for change via climate assemblies, Elstub and Escobar forthcoming).

The book focusses on the recent wave of climate assemblies developed across Europe, and at global level, in the last decade.[2] These new civic institutions are populated through *sortition* (aka civic lottery) and designed to embody principles of deliberative democracy. With the rapid spread of this approach to public engagement on environmental governance, practice has developed well in advance of research. This book helps address that gap by analysing the internal and external dimensions of climate assemblies and how the two relate to each other. The chapters are based on original research about cases in countries like Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Poland and the United Kingdom as well as at transnational and global levels of governance. The collection aims to advance systemic understanding and to establish under what conditions climate assemblies can make a meaningful contribution. Therefore, the book investigates not only how climate assemblies work but also what kind of work they can and should do.

This introductory chapter sets the context by reviewing both the practice and research of climate assemblies. We consider the historical, geographic, thematic, and institutional contexts in which assemblies have proliferated, and review the evidence base about their characteristics and impacts. We also introduce an analytical distinction between internal and external dimensions, which provides the structure for the book. Before concluding, we introduce and summarise all chapters, highlighting their relevance and contributions.

2 Climate assemblies as a field of practice

Climate assemblies are a contemporary phenomenon, but *popular assemblies* are the oldest known democratic institution. They existed in various parts of the world at least 2,000 years before Athenian democracy (Keane 2022, 17, 21). Assembly-based forms of democratic governance have been found across continents since pre-historical times (Isakhan and Stockwell 2012; Graeber and Wengrow 2021). In that sense, assemblies are a quintessential part of the human story.

Different kinds of assemblies have developed over time (see Keane 2022). Today we can distinguish at least three types, associated with different theories of democracy (i. e. participatory, representative and deliberative). First, *popular assemblies* are the oldest and are, in principle, open to everyone, so participants are self-selected. They are a staple of participatory democracy and common in local governance, community organising or social movements like Occupy and Extinction Rebellion. Second, *elected assemblies* feature representatives chosen through election. Early precedents are the assemblies in Faroe Islands and Iceland from the year 930, and the first parliaments in northern Spain in 1188 and England in 1215 (Keane 2022, 85 – 88). These assemblies

2 The Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies has been mapping these developments: https://www.knoca.eu/climate-assemblies#Map-of-climate-assemblies (accessed 09.01.25).

evolved to epitomise representative democracy in contemporary political systems. Finally, *lottocratic assemblies* select participants via *sortition* (aka civic lottery), a form of random or quasi-random selection that aims to give everyone in the relevant population an equal chance of being chosen. These originated in ancient Athens, where both sortition and elections were used to form democratic bodies (Sintomer 2023, 2). Sortition re-appeared in public institutions in late medieval Italy (Guerrero 2014, 55) and more recently with the emergence of *mini-publics* in the 1970s, which have become a staple of deliberative democracy (Elstub 2014).

Climate assemblies belong to the lottocratic tradition and are a type of *mini-public.* Mini-publics are a diverse family of democratic innovations including citizens' juries, people's panels, planning cells, consensus conferences, citizens' councils, deliberative polls, citizens' assemblies and more. Shared features are selection through some form of civic lottery; opportunities for participants to examine diverse evidence and perspectives; and process design and facilitation that seek to translate deliberative norms into communicative practices (Escobar and Elstub 2017). But they vary widely in terms of funding and size; commissioning and governance; duration, internal design and decision-making; and role in their social and political context (for a practical guide see Escobar and Henderson 2024). Around 800 mini-publics have been counted just in OECD countries (Mejia 2023), which suggests a much larger number around the world.[3] There are two aspects of mini-publics that makes them distinctive as sites for citizen deliberation (Elstub 2014). First, using civic lottery reduces the self-selection bias that favours certain social groups, and thus helps to include a cross-section of the public. This is aided by measures to reduce barriers to citizen participation (e. g. stipend, transport, accommodation, childcare, technology). Second, they can be designed to support normative standards of deliberation that may be difficult in other public fora –i. e. inclusion, open mindedness, active listening, respect, reciprocity, evidence-informed argumentation, productive challenge, reasoned justification, considered decision-making.

The 1998 Aarhus Convention marked a turning point for citizen participation on environmental decision-making, making it a "standard expectation and often a legal obligation" (Smith 2024a, 6). Environmental governance was by then already prolific in public engagement processes, including small mini-publics (Newig et al. 2019). In OECD countries, for instance, the environment has been the most frequent focus of mini-publics in the last 40 years, with 125 cases (Mejia 2023). This number is small, however, given the geographic and temporal spread. Mini-publics have clearly been the exception, rather than the norm. Nevertheless, the first process of international citizen deliberation via mini-publics was on the future of climate policy. In 2009, the project World Wide Views on Global Warning organised 44 simultaneous mini-publics in 38 countries, with 4,000 citizens deliberating on issues feeding into COP15 in Copen-

3 See databases and cases in Democracy R&D https://democracyrd.org/our-work/#highlighted, LATINNO https://www.latinno.net/en/, and Participedia https://participedia.net (accessed 09.01.25).

hagen (Rask et al. 2012). Similar, but larger, processes followed, including in the lead up to the Paris Agreement (Rask et al. 2019). All these mini-publics were important precedents to climate assemblies.

Citizens' assemblies are one of the largest types of mini-publics, featuring between 50 and 1000 participants.[4] They started in Canada in 2004 and spread across other countries, and supranational organisations like the European Union, covering issues as varied as electoral reform, constitution-making, equal marriage, abortion, assisted dying, taxation, social policy and genetic modification.[5] Climate assemblies are a type of citizens' assembly. As previously noted, we define climate assemblies as *civic institutions that include a cross-section of the public in evidence-informed deliberation to influence policy, governance, public discourse or collective action on the climate and ecological crisis.* At this point, two terminological clarifications are in order.

First, we use the term *climate assemblies* because it has become popularised, but it is a shorthand for all citizens' assemblies (*not* all mini-publics) that focus on addressing the climate and ecological crisis. They are therefore not just focussed on climate, but on wide-ranging environmental issues, and can cover both mitigation and adaptation work. Climate assemblies have deliberated on areas as diverse as carbon reduction and net zero strategies, just transitions, conservation, biodiversity, air quality, natural resources (e.g. land, water), transport, housing, public health, flood protection, energy production and consumption, food systems, fossil fuel sovereign wealth, institutional reform, and so on. Second, we conceptualise them as *civic institutions* because they entail direct citizen participation according to procedures and norms that have gained stability and value over time (cf. Huntington 1968, 12). This does not mean that they are yet part of formalised institutional systems, albeit there are developments in this direction as we explore in Chapter 10.

Momentum for climate assemblies has been building up for almost a decade, mainly in European countries, but with cases in other parts of the world (see Chapter 10) and recent initiatives in the Global South[6]. The first national citizens' assembly to address climate change was Ireland's, albeit this was only one amongst several issues covered by their 2016–2018 omnibus assembly. The 2019 French Citizens' Convention on Climate was the first to focus solely on climate governance (see Chapters 5 and 7), followed by climate assemblies starting in 2020 in the UK and Scotland, and in 2021 in Denmark, Spain, Austria and Germany. The Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis also took place in 2021 leading up to COP26 in Glasgow (see Chapters 3

4 The boundary of what constitutes a citizens' assembly compared to smaller mini-publics is contested, but here we adopt a bracket that includes most cases.

5 See https://participedia.net/search?&query=citizens%27%20assemblies (accessed 27.01.25).

6 See the South-North Learning project by Democracy R&D https://democracyrd.org/new-frontiers-project/south-north-learning-snl/, the DemoReset initiative https://www.demoreset.org/en/, and the WHO guide which reflects on the adaptability of mini-publics across different contexts https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240081413 (accessed 09.01.25).

and 9). It was the first of its kind: a single global citizens' assembly rather than a transnational network of country-level mini-publics.

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the field accelerated since 2020 and by 2024 there have been at least 200 climate assemblies in Europe at local, regional, sub-state and state levels, usually commissioned by public institutions but some by civil society organisations (Smith 2024b, 119)[7]. Although most climate assemblies have emerged at the initiative of governments, legislatures and other public institutions, they have often been the result of the interplay between civil society, social movements, and state authorities. For example, the French climate assembly was convened by President Macron as part of the response to the Yellow Vests mobilisations (see Chapters 5 and 7). In Scotland, it was constituted through an amendment to the 2019 Climate Change Act introduced in the Scottish Parliament by the Green Party following demands in civil society and by Extinction Rebellion.

Apart from their origin stories, and commissioning procedures, climate assemblies also vary greatly in terms of funding, size, duration, participant selection, agenda, governance, public engagement, process design, facilitation, decision-making, reporting, implementation and monitoring. For example, funding has ranged from €100,000 in Denmark to €7 million in France; size has usually been between 50 and 150 participants; and duration from 2 to 8 weekends typically over several months (Smith 2024b, 45, 47). Participant selection also varies because sortition can be conducted differently to reflect a cross-section of citizens in terms of demographics and views (Sintomer 2023; Dryzek and Niemeyer 2024). Setting the agenda for the assembly –i. e. the task it pursues, and its role in the broader political system– has also been undertaken in varied ways (see Chapters 2 and 5; also Elstub et al. 2021b).

Approaches to the governance of assemblies differ in terms of who provides scrutiny and oversight for the overall process (see Chapter 2; also Carrick 2022; Dean et al. 2024) and there is also variation in media and public engagement strategies (see Chapters 6 and 7). Likewise, process design can vary greatly in terms of how evidence is shared (see Chapters 4 and 5), how sessions are sequenced, the participatory methods deployed, and the approaches and techniques used by facilitators (see Chapter 3). Some assemblies are delivered by in-house teams within the commissioning institution or organisation, while others hire external participation practitioners, and there are options in between (Smith 2024b). Finally, the ways decisions are made by assembly members, how these are turned into recommendations or proposals, and how these are reported, implemented and monitored are further areas of varied practice (see Chapters 3, 5 and 9; also Boswell et al. 2023; Smith 2024b).

We will delve into some of these practical considerations throughout the book. Readers will find a list of practice-oriented networks and resources in Chapter 10

7 For a live map of climate assemblies, see the Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies: https://www.knoca.eu/climate-assemblies#what-is-a-climate-assembly. For a list and case studies of climate assemblies see Bürgerrat: https://www.buergerrat.de/en/news/climate-action-through-citizens-assemblies/climate-assemblies-worldwide/ (accessed 09.01.25).

(Box 10.1), where we will also reflect on current trends and future possibilities. This is a vibrant field of evolving practice, which highlights the importance of an ambitious research agenda to match. The next section reviews existing research and positions the book within that emerging body of evidence.

3 Climate assemblies as a field of research

Research on climate assemblies is recent but burgeoning and combines normative and empirical work across disciplines. Researchers are studying how climate assemblies work, the work they do in diverse contexts, and their potential to challenge and change the status quo in climate governance. These research foci reflect public opinion in a range of countries, which is growing in support for systemic changes to political systems and for the use of citizens' assemblies in public governance (Wike et al. 2021a; Wike et al. 2021b; Pilet et al. 2023b). Support for assemblies appears particularly strong amongst disadvantaged or underrepresented groups, driven by dissatisfaction with traditional politics as well as belief in the capacity of fellow citizens to engage in competent political work (Jacquet et al. 2020; Talukder and Pilet 2021; Pilet et al. 2023a).

The main protagonists of public deliberation on the climate and ecological crisis have tended to be politicians, interest groups, social movements and scientists, with most citizens often rendered as spectators (Rask et al. 2012; Ghimire et al. 2021). However, the importance of participation in environmental democratic governance is now more frequently acknowledged: citizens must be involved in shaping the decisions that affect their lives (Willis 2020; Smith 2021). It is argued that public engagement can advance understanding of the causes and consequences of the climate and ecological crisis, thus mobilising stronger support for the socioeconomic changes required to address it, which in turn can enable more ambitious policymaking, as well as stimulate action across society (Mellier and Capstic 2024; Alnscough and Willis 2024; Curato et al. 2024). Politicians, policy workers, participation practitioners and activists are creating space for democratic innovations in various policy arenas, seeking to boost legitimacy and capacity for collective action via citizen participation (Elstub and Escobar 2019). This context has provided fertile ground for the first generation of climate assemblies.

Researchers have questioned the capacity of current democratic governance to address the climate and ecological crisis, given the power of economic interests, political failures and systemic incentives to avoid action (Fischer 2017; Curato et al. 2024). It has been argued that participants in climate assemblies can be better equipped for cultivating the long-term thinking required to address the crisis than traditional representative institutions, as they are free from electoral incentives and short-term political and market cycles. Assembly members do not need to respond to volatile public and media opinion to win votes or bow down to powerful interests (Fischer 2017; Smith 2021). At least for now, they are less likely to be the target of lobbyists and therefore less prone to sectoral capture (Willis et al. 2022), and arguably less susceptible to cli-

mate delay discourses (Lamb et al. 2020; Curato et al. 2024). Nevertheless, these themes will require ongoing scrutiny: 1,773 fossil fuel lobbyists attended the latest UN climate conference, constituting the fourth largest delegation at COP29 (Frost 2024). If, or when, climate assemblies become prominent institutions in environmental governance, they will also become prime targets.

Climate assemblies are seen as a better way to engage people than other approaches to public engagement, because of their efforts to provide balanced evidence and diverse perspectives, which reduces silo-thinking and misinformation (Howarth et al. 2020). Engaging in public deliberation has been shown to improve citizens' ability to deal with the complexities of climate change (Niemeyer 2013). Climate assemblies also offer new possibilities for the formation of transnational or global publics needed to address global issues like climate change and ecological breakdown (Dryzek et al. 2011; Curato et al. 2023). Moreover, they can create new opportunities for including the voices of natural worlds and future generations (Kulha et al. 2021; Ejsing et al. 2024).

Based on deliberative theory, and empirical research on mini-publics more broadly, climate assemblies are expected to deliver a range of social, political, and environmental outcomes. Researchers have illustrated the power of mobilising the collective intelligence of citizens through deliberative processes that enable public-spirited reasoning to address complex governance challenges (Landemore 2020; Smith 2024b, 31). Accordingly, Curato et al. (2024, 2–3) argue that, under the right conditions, citizen deliberation can: deepen environmental governance, empower citizens, break political deadlocks, reduce polarisation, transform protest demands into actionable proposals, reduce elite control, render social mandates visible to official power-holders, build deliberative capacity in communities, foster broader public deliberation, raise climate policy ambitions, and support broader democratisation agendas.

Research on climate assemblies has explored their effects on participants' views and policy preferences (Muradova et al. 2020; Kulha et al. 2021; Andrews et al. 2022). It has also considered the troubled relationships between climate assemblies and environmental governance actors (Sandover et al. 2021; Boswell et al. 2023; Buge and Vandamme 2023), their impact on government policy (Lage et al. 2023; Galván Labrador and Zografos 2024;) and on broader publics (Andrews et al. 2022; Averchenkova et al. 2024; Fernández-Martínez and Bates 2023), and how this is affected by the scope of their agenda (Elstub et al. 2021b; Pfeffer 2024) and the reasons to initiate climate assemblies (Oross et al. 2021; Lewis et al. 2023).

Although most climate assemblies have taken place in the last 5 years, efforts to evaluate their impact are evolving at pace. Demski et al. (2024, 11–12) propose considering three *areas of impact:* state actors, civil society and other non-state actors, and systems and structures; as well as three *types of impact: instrumental* impacts such as direct influence on environmental policy and action; *capacity* impacts such as changes to resources and governance; and *conceptual* impacts, for instance changes to knowledge, attitudes or political discourse. This framework highlights that climate

assemblies should not be seen just as processes that feed into policymaking, but as civic institutions with a broader range of contributions to the political system.

Smith argues that the impact of climate assemblies on people, institutions, discourses, and policies has been rather mixed (2024b, 71–80). People who participate in assemblies tend to enjoy the experience, find it transformative, and become more supportive of such processes. However, there has been limited impact on political discourse, media interest, public awareness, and broader public engagement –with exceptions for instance in France, Austria, and Ireland (Smith 2024a, 9). In terms of impact on institutions, there are recent developments to institutionalise climate assemblies, but as we show in Chapter 10, they remain marginal. There have also been some limited efforts (e.g. Ireland, Denmark, Scotland) to create new parliamentary or governmental mechanisms that link climate assemblies to legislative and administrative processes.

Actions proposed by climate assemblies tend to go further than existing environmental policies, for example in seeking to restrain consumerism and production, in supporting state intervention, in questioning capitalist growth models, and in adopting social justice principles for just transitions (Smith 2024b, 65–70). A study comparing recommendations from the first wave of climate assemblies to existing mitigation policies shows that citizens propose stronger sufficiency policies and regulation than their representatives (Lage et al. 2023). Climate assemblies have thus demonstrated potential in terms of policy formulation, but policy translation and implementation remain underdeveloped.

Once climate assembly proposals are handed over to institutions, the process is at the mercy of traditional decision-making arenas where recommendations may be accepted, reconceptualised, rejected, or ignored (Poole and Elstub 2025). After Scotland's Climate Assembly, for example, members were disappointed with the governmental response to their 81 recommendations. It is estimated that a third matched existing or planned policy; another third were rejected; a fifth were to be explored without commitment; and 14 were communicated to the UK Government as they fell within its jurisdiction (Andrews et al. 2022, 140–141). Some of the more radical proposals, such as adopting Passivhaus standards for new houses or reorienting the economy away from GDP growth, were ignored. The French Citizens' Convention on Climate seems to have fared better. It is estimated that 20% of the recommendations were fully implemented, 51% were partially implemented, and 22% were abandoned (Averchenkova et al. 2024). A ban on internal flights when there is a low carbon alternative is amongst the measures partially implemented[8], whereas the proposal to legislate for the crime of ecocide was rejected.

The citizen empowerment dynamics promoted within climate assemblies are in stark contrast to the disempowering dynamics that often follow in their aftermath (Galván Labrador and Zografos 2024). Often, institutions are not ready to work with the

8 The assembly proposal was for journeys up to 4 hours, whereas the final policy reduced it to 2 hours.

outputs of assemblies because they don't plan for their aftermath, or because they don't know how to integrate them in systems that are not designed for citizen participation and deliberation (Smith 2024b, 92–98). Planning challenges can be addressed through new practices, but systemic challenges require institutional reform as well as culture change (Escobar and Henderson 2024, 66–74). Even when climate assemblies are coherently integrated into governance systems, or precisely because of it, there is always a risk of co-option, manipulation, and cherry-picking –for example, when authorities select their preferred recommendations while discarding the rest, or when an assembly is convened for symbolic rather than substantive purposes (Elstub and Khoban 2023, 118). Organisers in Poland have sought to prevent this by committing municipalities to implement proposals that command 80 % of support by assembly members, while action below that threshold is discretionary. In Gdansk, for instance, direct implementation of assembly recommendations has strengthened the city's flooding defences (Smith 2024b, 104).

The impact of climate assemblies, as we will illustrate throughout the book, is inextricable from their internal and external dimensions, and thus it is not the only area that has attracted scrutiny. There is still much to improve in how climate assemblies work, as shown in evaluations of the Global Assembly (Curato et al. 2023) and national assemblies (e. g. Elstub et al. 2021a; Andrews et al. 2022), as well as in this book (Chapters 3, 4, 5, 7 and 9). There are also some more fundamental critiques and ongoing debates. For example, climate assemblies can be seen as lacking legitimacy and accountability according to established democratic norms, and therefore Lafont (2019) argues that their role should be limited. In practice, like any other institutions, climate assemblies are embedded in governance systems with checks and balances –for example, pre-authorised by elected assemblies or governments, or authorised post-hoc through plebiscitary, executive, or parliamentary processes. In any case, these civic institutions encompass new ways of defining and exercising legitimacy and accountability (Elstub and Khoban 2023; Vandamme 2023).

Another fundamental critique concerns the consensus-building orientation of climate assemblies, which is alleged to crowd out "alternative strategies and imaginaries for socioecological transformation" (Machin 2023, 857) thought necessary to address the climate and ecological crisis. This has led some critics to argue that climate assemblies currently "do not deliver breakthrough ideas" (Ufel 2021, 88; see also Chapter 8 in this book) and that they need further development to elicit substantial change (Mulvad and Popp-Madsen 2021). For this reason, they are accused of being reformist and lacking capacity for political transformation (Berglund and Schmidt 2020, 7, 70), which leads to questions about whether climate assemblies can "really challenge the very regime by which they have been instituted" (Machin 2023, 859). Some point to the opportunity cost of directing energy and resources to civic institutions that are tethered to flawed systems of governance underpinned by state bureaucracies and electoral politics (Ejsing et al. 2023, 73). In their current form, Machin (2023) concludes, climate assemblies may become a distraction from more robust forms of political contestation to confront the interests that sustain the status quo, thus ultimately obstructing meaningful

change. These critiques are eliciting reflection about how climate assemblies may play a genuine role in systemic transformations (Ejsing et al. 2023; Mellier and Capstic 2024), a theme that runs through the book and is revisited in Chapter 10.

All in all, this emerging body of evidence provides valuable groundwork about the contribution climate assemblies can make to environmental governance. However, more research is required to understand how the internal and external dimensions of climate assemblies relate to each other and there is a need for more conceptual, comparative, and systemic research. Whilst research on mini-publics has progressed substantially (Curato et al. 2021; Reuchamps et al. 2023), research on climate assemblies is in its infancy. It is important to address this gap because the climate and ecological crisis is such a unique, urgent and multifaceted challenge that findings from research into other mini-publics will not necessarily apply to assemblies in this context.

Therefore, this book makes three timely contributions. First, it covers *internal dimensions* of climate assemblies, including how climate and ecological issues are framed, how agendas are formed, how governance is organised, how evidence and expertise are mobilised, how participants are involved, how processes are designed and facilitated, and the effects that these factors have on citizens, the actions they propose and the recommendations they produce. Second, it covers *external dimensions*, including the relationships between climate assemblies and other parts of the political system such as government, parliament, civil society, business, epistemic communities, the media, other forms of citizen participation such as social movements, and broader publics. Finally, the book makes a further contribution by developing comparative insights into the relationship between internal and external dimensions –in particular, how design choices affect an assembly's impact and how contextual and systemic factors affect assembly processes. The collection therefore advances our theoretical and empirical understanding of the role climate assemblies can play in environmental governance. In doing so, it contributes to narrow the gap between the rapid roll-out of assemblies in practice and the evidence base available.

4 Overview of the book: Exploring internal and external dimensions in climate assemblies

The following chapters analyse the climate assembly phenomenon through diverse perspectives and cases to advance research and practice. The authors draw on deliberative, participatory, and agonistic schools of democratic thought across various disciplines. Collectively, we take a critical approach that foregrounds questions about power, inequalities, impact, and the democratisation of environmental governance in a climate-changed world.

We use the distinction between internal and external dimensions as an analytical device that elicits practical and normative insights. It allows us to zoom in on the internal workings of climate assemblies and zoom out to study their broader context and

relationships. Section 2 (Chapters 2–5) focusses on internal dimensions such as agenda-setting, governance, design, facilitation, and the role of experts and expertise. Section 3 (Chapters 6–9) addresses external dimensions related to media and communication, legitimacy, political actors, unfavourable conditions, and the challenges of developing local, national, and global deliberation that is consequential. Section 4 presents our conclusions (Chapter 10), where we draw learning from the chapters and reflect on the present and future of the field.

In **Chapter 2**, Pfeffer examines the complexities of setting the agenda for climate assemblies. Drawing on research from eleven cases, alongside practical experience, Pfeffer analyses options and trade-offs for agenda-setting, and outlines guiding principles to help researchers and practitioners. Agenda-setting is one of the most contested and consequential dimensions in climate assemblies. It encompasses the overall *role* or purpose for the process (e.g. advising an institution; informing public opinion), as well as the specific *remit* or task for the assembly (e.g. developing proposals; scrutinising policies). Questions such as who initiates, sets and controls the agenda, and what issues are prioritised, have a domino effect on the entire process. For example, regarding the internal dimensions of climate assemblies, agenda-setting shapes their design and facilitation, informs their governance, and influences the types of evidence, perspectives and experiences included. In turn, regarding the external dimensions, agenda-setting has implications for the legitimacy of the process, the constellation of actors involved, its public and policy relevance, its prospects for impact, and the scope of that impact – e.g. from moderate to transformative possibilities. These wide-ranging issues are fundamental to assess the value, risk and potential of climate assemblies. Pfeffer lays out the thinking process to analyse agenda-setting in different contexts, while offering useful and usable strategies to inform practice.

In **Chapter 3**, Morán, Stasiak, von Schneidemesser and Oppold study the crucial role of facilitators in climate assemblies. The chapter draws on empirical research about the paradigmatic case of the 2021 Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis. Based on field observations, survey data, document analysis and qualitative interviews, the authors offer perceptive analysis of the creative and relational work that supports deliberative engagement. This includes work behind the scenes (*backstage*) as well as in participatory spaces (*frontstage*), which allows for a dynamic understanding of how practitioners navigate tensions between planning and improvisation. The study illuminates the significance of agency, co-design, shared ownership, learning by and while doing, building relationships, and developing a community of reflective practice. The findings warn against the commodification and marketisation of facilitation practice and highlight the importance of emancipatory and communitarian approaches to facilitation. Morán and colleagues thus provide a nuanced account that will resonate beyond climate assemblies, including novel insights about the challenges of facilitating online global deliberation.

In **Chapter 4**, Salamon, Lightbody, Roberts, Reher, and Reggiani analyse the role of experts and expertise in climate assemblies –an internal dimension crucial in all mini-publics, and particularly salient when addressing the climate and ecological crisis. The

chapter explores the influence of experts over the provision of evidence and arguments, the governance and oversight of the assembly, and the review of recommendations. Offering a nuanced understanding of what constitutes expertise, and who counts as an expert, the authors outline key debates but also take them in a new direction. They make the case for foregrounding EDI (equality, diversity, inclusion) not just in the composition of the assembly, but also in the pool of experts. Their compelling study provides both normative justification and empirical research through the analysis of 23 UK cases featuring 476 experts. The findings are unequivocal: EDI considerations rarely enter public accounts of the recruitment and participation of experts in climate assemblies. Overlooking this dimension, they argue, can undermine the democratic quality, legitimacy, and impact of deliberative processes. The chapter proposes guidance to inform how research and practice can take EDI seriously regarding experts and expertise.

In **Chapter 5**, Tilikete shows that the climate and ecological crisis can be conceptualised in different ways within and across climate assemblies. This influences the actions proposed as well as the political functions of assemblies. Diverse conceptualisations emerge from the interplay between citizens and different kinds of expertise. That interplay is analysed as a form of co-production that shapes the framing of problems and solutions, the ways citizens develop proposals, and how the assembly relates to its broader political context. The empirical research compares four climate assemblies at different levels of governance including sub-state (Wallonia, Belgium), national (France), transnational (European Union) and global. The result is a typology of different assemblies according to the type of participant that citizens are invited to become (cf. Escobar 2017): citizens as policy users, citizens as constituent assembly members, and citizens as legislators. The analysis connects the internal and external dimensions of climate assemblies. It shows how contextual factors and design choices influence the elaboration of proposals and their reception and impact beyond the assembly. Tilikete outlines key implications, including reflection on the risks of technocratic approaches, the importance of participants' affective engagement, the consequentiality of how expertise is mobilised, and the scope for transformative climate assemblies.

Section 3 focusses on external dimensions, starting with **Chapter 6**, where Fleuss and Suiter develop a framework to investigate media and communication around climate assemblies. Bridging deliberative scholarship and communication studies, the authors develop a *Communicative Flows Framework* to map out sites and actors that drive political discourses about climate change and environmental action in the public sphere. The framework interrogates how assemblies relate to diverse actors through a complex media landscape, and how this influences their impact. The chapter is grounded on systemic deliberative theory and hybrid media research, but sensitive to the political economy of media ecosystems. It argues that research and practice must pay more attention to the influence of vested industries (e.g. fossil fuels, transport, agribusiness) and discourses of climate delay. The authors conclude that assessing communicative flows across media networks can inform strategies to support the impact of climate assemblies.

In **Chapter 7**, Rozencwajg, Gaborit and Jeanpierre question assumptions about established practices in mini-publics. They examine the potential contradiction between the autonomy needed for assembly deliberation and the need to connect with the rest of the population. The fluid and negotiated boundaries of assemblies are thus scrutinised, showing how assembly members relate to activists, lobbyists, policymakers, experts and the broader citizenry. Conducting an ethnographic study of the French Citizens' Convention on Climate, the authors illustrate how external influences can permeate the assembly and shape how members seek to influence environmental policy and action. The case demonstrates how complex entanglements between internal and external dimensions elicit fundamental dilemmas. For example, should assemblies constrain external relationships even if this increases public irrelevance? Or should assemblies be more open and risk undue direct influence by organised interests? The study of the Convention indicates that permeability allowed for the inclusion of a wider range of discourses, which informed the level of ambition of the proposals, thus stretching the initial scope set by the organisers. By asking how open assemblies should be, the chapter illuminates tensions between structure and agency, between autonomy and interdependence, and between the established canon of mini-publics and the relational and thus evolving quality of participatory processes. The authors conclude that this case shows a departure from the *jury model* that proscribes unplanned external influence and towards a form of climate assembly that blends deliberative and savage democracy.

In **Chapter 8**, Dániel Oross and Zsolt Boda analyse a climate assembly in the context of illiberal politics and democratic backsliding. Studies of climate assemblies often cover cases in relatively favourable political contexts. This chapter offers a distinctive contribution by investigating the case of the first climate assembly in Hungary, a context that the authors characterise as unfavourable for citizen participation and deliberation, particularly on environmental issues. The case study is the Budapest Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change, examined through mixed methods research. The analysis unpacks how contextual factors influenced the internal and external dimensions of the assembly. It scrutinises the level of ambition of the recommendations and their policy impact, the quality of media coverage, and the effects of participation on assembly members. Exploring how the political context influenced the climate assembly elicits insights that can inform comparative research, as well as practical strategies by organisers. The conclusion offers some hope: unfavourable contexts do not necessarily render climate assemblies as futile. On the contrary, they throw into relief the double role assemblies can play in supporting environmental action and rebuilding democratic governance.

In **Chapter 9**, De Pryck, Chalaye, Elstub, Conway-Lamb, Sanchez and Sari provide an insightful account of the 2021 Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis. This case was the first of its kind, seeking to prototype a new civic institution for citizen deliberation on global climate governance. The chapter draws on a rich dataset, developed through mixed methods research, to address questions about the inclusiveness, authenticity, and consequentiality of the assembly. This framework helps to in-

vestigate internal and external dimensions, including the selection of participants, the deliberative quality of the sessions, the governance of the process, the external relationships of the assembly, and the level of impact. The authors analyse the challenges that stem from involving citizens around the world, as well as from the idiosyncrasies of the current system of global climate governance. The chapter draws lessons to inform the development of future assemblies. It shows that, despite substantial shortcomings, the Global Assembly provided proof of concept to expand our collective imagination and inspire global democratic innovation.

Section 4 features our conclusion, **Chapter 10**, which summarises key learning across the book to inform research, policy, and practice. We pay attention to how internal and external dimensions are dynamically intertwined and consider the implications for the next generation of climate assemblies. We assess whether climate assemblies work, what kind of work they do, their shortcomings, and how they should work to play a stronger role in democratising environmental governance and advancing collective action. The chapter puts the book's findings in conversation with wider work on democratic innovation, thus providing normative and practical reflection about the frontlines and frontiers of this emerging field.

5 Conclusion: Research between hope and hype

Climate assemblies are capturing the imagination of people interested in how citizens can participate in decision-making to address the climate and ecological crisis. This chapter reviewed the state of the field to provide context and situate the contributions of the book. Here we conclude with broader reflections about the present of climate assemblies.

In almost two decades involved in the research and practice of mini-publics, we have seen the field evolve from the fringes to the mainstream, with a mix of positive and negative effects. On the positive side, these processes have shown citizens in a new light. The first time that people observe a mini-public tends to be eye-opening. Observers are often surprised by the dedication, solidarity and thoughtfulness that citizens bring to the process. This surprise is expected given habitual misrepresentations of the citizenry in media and political narratives –e.g. distrust in citizens' capacity to deliberate on complex issues; questions about their commitment to democratic participation; doubts about their ability to deal with disagreement beyond shallow debate. Narratives about people being selfish, self-interested and self-centred have become prevalent (Bregman 2020).

In that context, it is striking to see how some participatory processes bring forth the best in people. This begs the question: what kind of citizen are citizens invited to be in our political systems? (Escobar 2017). People have the capacity to be collaborators, problem-solvers, co-producers, critical thinkers and so on, but are often restricted to acting as spectators, complainers, protesters and occasional voters. All these are important roles, but the governance of the future in a climate-changed world requires an en-

larged notion of democratic citizenship and institutions to embody it. Climate assemblies, alongside other democratic innovations and reforms, are working towards that goal (Elstub and Escobar 2019).

However, as the field of practice evolves rapidly, counterproductive narratives and expectations are emerging about climate assemblies (Smith 2024a, 5). In our experience, most discussions, events and advocacy in this field are reflective and critical; but some problematic narratives are also noticeable:

- *Silver-bulletism:* narratives that present assemblies as the solution to wide-ranging problems, without attention to systemic factors and the need for broader social, economic, and political reforms (Knops and Vrydagh 2023; see also Chapter 10).
- *Reductionism:* narratives that reduce the problem to the need for institutions to make better policies and decisions, overlooking the challenges of contemporary capitalist economies, state incapacities, and policy implementation gaps (Dryzek 1996; Cairney et al. 2023).
- *Synecdoche:* this rhetorical move makes one part stand for the whole; in this case assuming that assemblies are all that is needed to build a deliberative democracy.
- *Proceduralism:* much effort goes into perfecting the internal dimensions of assemblies, which matters for credibility, legitimacy, and impact; but perfecting institutions that need to survive in very imperfect systems requires more attention to external dimensions (see Chapter 10).
- *Hype:* some narratives bluntly claim unrealistic potential for these civic institutions e. g. "Citizens' assemblies can help save the world order" (Schwab 2020).

It is understandable why hope and hype often go together. Advocates who are hopeful about climate assemblies sometimes hype them up so that the message can cut through noisy public spheres and jaded political systems. This can be counterproductive because it makes it difficult to live up to expectations, but research can play a preventative role. Democratic innovation requires constant learning and adaptation. The chapters that follow offer critical analysis and actionable insights to inform work on climate assemblies. The book aims to make sense of current developments and future possibilities to probe the hype and substantiate the hope.

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Section 2: **Internal dimensions in climate assemblies**

Janosch Pfeffer

Chapter 2
Setting the agenda for climate assemblies: Key dimensions and dilemmas

Abstract: This chapter examines the critical role of agenda-setting in climate assemblies (CAs), highlighting its significant implications for both their internal operations and external impacts. Agenda-setting decisions can shape the policy influence, legitimacy, and transformative potential of CAs, often requiring trade-offs between competing objectives. For instance, aligning the agenda with ongoing policy processes may enhance policy impact but can limit the exploration of transformative proposals. To aid researchers and practitioners, this chapter provides a systematic overview of agenda-setting options and their contextual trade-offs, drawing on expert interviews and experiences from the first wave of CAs in Europe. After outlining key objectives and contexts for CAs, the chapter explores substantive dimensions of agenda-setting—formulating eleven guiding principles and reflecting on how to frame remits and subthemes. It further addresses procedural dimensions—discussing CAs' institutional roles, initiation rights and mechanisms, who should be involved in agenda-setting, and how to organise agenda-setting governance. The chapter proposes strategies for managing disagreements in collaborative agenda-setting. It concludes by arguing that CA objectives and agenda-setting trade-offs depend on context, such as powerful actors' commitment to climate action and participation. Deliberate, context-sensitive design choices, like sharing or sequencing agenda-setting powers, may balance these trade-offs, offering a path forward.

Keywords: mini-publics, agenda-setting, impact, climate change, governance

1 Introduction

Setting the agenda for a climate assembly (CA) can have several knock-on effects on the internal procedures and external impacts of assemblies. Agenda decisions can, among other things, influence the policy impact, perceived legitimacy, or emancipatory value of deliberative processes (Elstub et al. 2021).

CA agenda setters face difficult trade-offs because their decisions can have contradictory effects for different objectives related to climate change and democracy. For example, constraining the agenda to fit an ongoing policy process may increase policy impact but is less likely to elicit proposals challenging dominant policy rationales and practices that prevent more profound transformations (Pfeffer 2024, 2022).

This chapter aims to support researchers and practitioners in thinking more systematically about agenda-setting decisions in CAs by providing an overview of options, and their potential trade-offs considering different contexts and objectives. Many de-

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bates are far from settled because CAs are a young phenomenon, and CA effects are complex and contextual.

In the next two sections, I outline the methodology, define agenda-setting, and review relevant literature. Section 4 summarises different objectives and contexts for CAs. Then, I address the substantial dimension of agenda-setting by introducing eleven guiding principles, exploring how to frame CA remits, and what sub-themes to cover (section 5.1). Next, I turn to the procedural dimension of agenda-setting including questions such as who should be involved and with how much power (section 5.2). Section 6 addresses how to navigate disagreements in collaborative agenda-setting, while section 7 provides discussion and conclusions.

2 Methodology

This chapter is based on expert interviews with members of the Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies (KNOCA)[1], related publications (Brancaforte and Pfeffer 2022; Pfeffer 2022), and discussions with practitioners. It summarises current discussions based on different forms of knowledge—scientific, experiential, and tacit. Most insights are drawn from past CAs at the national level (Table 2.1), but more might be learned from practices at other levels.

The guiding principles in section 5.1 are based on 14 semi-structured expert interviews sourced through KNOCA and conducted in 2022. These experts have served as commissioners, public officials, process advisors, academic researchers, organisers, facilitators, and advisory activists. They have been involved in CAs in at least 14 countries and at supra-national levels (2021 Global Assembly). Most experts (12) were based in western Europe, and two in Australia and the United States. I developed the guiding principles by recursively incorporating expert responses until reaching saturation (Hennink, Kaiser, and Marconi 2017) (for more information, see Pfeffer 2024).

The other sections build on insights from the extant literature, informal interviews conducted by Stephanie Brancaforte in 2021–2022 (Brancaforte and Pfeffer 2022), information gathered from KNOCA and policy documents related to CAs in Europe, and my practical experiences[2].

1 KNOCA is a European Network gathering knowledge and facilitating exchange on CAs that provides information on all national-level European CAs, hosts learning calls, and publishes research reports. See https://knoca.eu/ (accessed 20.11.23)

2 Alongside my academic research, I am a member of Klimamitbestimmung e.V.—a German non-governmental organisation advocating for and consulting on deliberative processes. I have contributed to the implementation of Berlin's climate assembly and consulted elected and public officials. I have regular exchanges with process organisers, politicians, and public officials in Germany to gain insights from multiple perspectives.

Table 2.1: Climate assemblies informing the analysis

Assembly	Place	Year
Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat	France	2019 – 2020
Climate Assembly UK	United Kingdom	2020
Scotland's Climate Assembly	Scotland	2020 – 2021
Borgerting på Klimaområdet	Denmark	2020 – 2021
Kansalaisraati	Finland	2021
Bürgerrat Klima	Germany	2021
Asamblea Ciudadana por el Clima	Spain	2021 – 2022
Berliner Klimabürger:innenrat	Berlin, Germany	2022
Narada Obywatelska o Energii (energy poverty)	Poland	2022
Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss / An Tionól Saoránach	Ireland	2022 – 2023
Bürgerrat "Ernährung im Wandel" (nutrition)	Germany	2023 – 2024

Note: This table lists cases referred to in the text. Not all cases underwent systematic in-depth analyses.

3 Agenda-setting for climate assemblies

Agenda-setting has been described as "the process through which issues attain the status of being seriously debated by politically relevant actors" (Sinclair 1986, 35). Agenda-setters exert considerable power over policymaking not only by selecting issues for debate but also by keeping issues off the agenda (Bachrach and Baratz 1962), and by choosing from competing interpretations of political problems which often implicitly favour some solutions over others (Cobb and Ross 1997).

Mini-publics like CAs can have an agenda-setting function in the cycle of public policy processes (Gastil and Richards 2013), for example by selecting issues to be discussed by elected officials as practiced in East-Belgium (Niessen and Reuchamps 2019). However, this is not what I refer to as agenda-setting in this chapter.

Here, agenda-setting for CAs refers to setting the boundaries and guidelines for deliberations within the process. I distinguish between a substantial and a procedural dimension of agenda-setting. The substantial dimension includes the choice of a general issue for deliberation; the framing of the process including the formulation of a remit; and the selection of sub-themes (or even proposals) for discussion or exclusion (also see Barisione 2012). The procedural dimension addresses who are involved in setting the substantial agenda, with how much power, and how this is organised.

Only a few scientific studies (Bua 2012; Blue 2015; Barisone 2012; Lang 2008; Parlinson 2006) , reports (Shaw and Wang 2021), and practical guides (Carson 2018; Rourke 2014) have addressed agenda-setting for mini-publics. Parkinson (2006) argues that,

in theory, the more open the agenda the more legitimate the process. He found that tightly set agendas following a bureaucratic-instrumental (or system-supporting) rationale to 'solving a delineated problem' can imply preference assumptions that many deliberating citizens do not share (Parkinson 2006, Ch. 6). Moreover, political elites can exert co-optive influence over mini-public agendas to legitimise decisions that have already been taken (as summarised by Bua 2012). Elite control over agendas has also led to technocratic framings at the expense of competing frames such as those focusing on justice dimensions (Barisione 2012; Blue 2015). Nonetheless, constraining agendas in mini-publics may be necessary to enable high quality deliberation and arrive at decisions (Lang 2008). Parkinson (2006, Ch. 6) notes that the more open the process, the more vague are the outcomes, and the less likely practical solutions and policy impacts. Finally, Elstub et al. (2021) found that a large scope—a high number of issues to be covered by the mini-public—has reduced the policy impact of Climate Assembly UK (see Scope in section 5.1.1).

4 Objectives and contexts of climate assemblies

When discussing CAs, people often have diverging objectives and contexts of climate politics in mind (Hammond 2020; Bussu and Fleuß 2023; Sandover, Moseley, and Devine-Wright 2021). While some may be confident that governments are intrinsically motivated to act on climate change, others may believe that governments need to be pressured. This can lead to misunderstandings, because such implicit notions influence beliefs and attitudes about what roles CAs should play and how they should be designed. This section provides a tentative map of different contexts and objectives to help navigate through this jungle. I will base latter discussions of trade-offs between different agenda-setting decisions on categories introduced in this section.

The climate political context can be defined as widely shared informed beliefs about what constitute the main barriers to climate mitigation and/or adaptation (henceforth, climate action) (Pfeffer 2024). Contextual elements hindering climate action can include lacking government motivation; conflict within government; influential lobby interests; government wariness of public resistance; entrenched worldviews and paradigms; authorities lacking capacity (knowledge, time, money) (also see Jordan et al. 2022). This list of barriers is illustrative rather than exhaustive. Some barriers can occur simultaneously.

One can distinguish between CA objectives and concerns that are related to climate change or to democracy. Regarding climate concerns, it is useful to recognise two ideal-typical rationales about CAs (Hammond 2020). A *system-supporting rationale* is primarily concerned with supporting policymakers in their efforts to address climate change, typically assuming a context of general willingness to act among policymakers. This rationale emphasises the need for uptake of proposals which would require cooperation and the need to design rather constrained processes in line with political and administrative requirements. A *system-disrupting rationale* typically emphasises the need for

conflict, public attention and pressure, and the necessity to allow for more open deliberations that can challenge dominant practices and paradigms in policymaking. This rationale typically assumes insufficient willingness or unwillingness to act among policymakers and/or emphasises the need for fundamental systemic transitions that are unlikely to occur by following system-supporting logics. These are ideal-typical rationales that can underly attitudes towards CAs and their design, rather than accurately describe specific cases. In practice, one may find both supporting and disrupting elements combined (Bussu and Fleuß 2023).

Turning to the democratic dimension, one can distinguish between emancipatory, educational, critical, political, and scholarly objectives and concerns (e. g. Rangoni, Bedock, and Talukder 2021). Emancipatory objectives are about empowering citizens, and especially marginalised groups in democratic decision-making. Many politicians emphasise educational objectives stating that CAs can (re-)connect elites and citizens. They hope that CAs can sensitise citizens about the difficulties of their political work, increase citizens' knowledge, and promote other civic values, while also informing politicians about 'what the people think' in a more deliberative way than polls and informal exchanges. Others are critical of CAs, for example because CA members are not elected (and hence seen as undemocratic[3]), or because they pose a threat to their power. Importantly, some actors follow political objectives such as gaining public popularity among voters or silencing opposition by means of a CA. Finally, there is a rich scholarly literature proposing criteria for assessing whether mini-publics like CAs improve democracies. Scholars suggest asking, for example, whether mini-publics generate factually informed preferences (Mansbridge et al. 2012), enhance critical scrutiny in public discourse (Curato and Böker 2016), or lead to any political or societal consequences (Dryzek 2010).

5 Trade-offs and guidance for agenda-setting in climate assemblies

With these varying contexts and objectives in mind, this section considers a range of agenda-setting decisions, discusses their trade-offs, and points to empirical examples. I begin by focusing on the substantial dimension of agenda-setting—that is, the choice of suitable issues for deliberation—before covering the procedural dimension addressing who is involved in setting the substantial agenda, with how much power, and how this is organised.

3 This perspective is based on theories of democracy that see elections, rather than sortition, as the only legitimate basis for a mandate for political office or public service.

5.1 Substantial dimension

This subsection addresses how to frame the remit of a CA and which sub-themes to cover. I begin, however, by presenting guiding principles for setting the substantial agenda in CAs.

5.1.1 Guiding principles

Table 2.2 summarizes eleven guiding principles. These may be used as a checklist by practitioners tasked with setting the agenda for an assembly. The table includes each principle and contextualises it in light of the categories introduced in section 4. More elaborate discussions of each principle can be found in Pfeffer (2024).

The first principle, *context,* highlights that there is no single 'right' way for setting the agenda. Rather, good agenda decisions—and design decisions more generally—depend on the context of climate politics (also see Pfeffer and Newig 2025). For example, if the main barrier to climate action is political deadlock around a limited number of clearly defined policy issues, it appears sensible to focus the CA on these issues. If, however, a polity is lagging behind its climate targets in almost all areas with little capacity, knowledge, and vision where to begin, then a CA covering a broader range of topics may be an effective way of opening up policy debates (also see Smith 2023). The Irish CA may be seen as an example for it was convened to address Ireland's status as laggard (Devaney et al. 2020). The principle of context means that the relative importance of the other guiding principles, and how to implement them in practice can vary depending on the context and the main objectives.

Table 2.2: Guiding principles for setting the agenda in climate assemblies (adapted from Pfeffer 2024)

Guiding principles	Context and objectives
Context. The agenda fits the context of climate politics.	Underlying foundation
Resource efficiency. Societal benefits outweigh invested resources. ***Dilemmas.*** Clear trade-offs must be made. ***Legitimacy.*** The agenda is seen as legitimate by most groups.	Necessary foundation
Authority. The sponsoring authority has sufficient power to act on recommendations. ***Political relevance.*** Policymakers see a need for change on the issue. ***Receptiveness.*** Policymakers welcome citizen input.	System-supportive rationale; Policymakers willing to act on climate change

Table 2.2 *(Continued)*

Guiding principles	Context and objectives
Societal relevance. The issue is important for citizens. ***Openness.*** Citizens are not unjustly constrained by the agenda.	System-disruptive and emancipatory rationale[4]
Scope. Citizens have sufficient time to develop recommendations, understand consequences, and provide justifications. ***Timing.*** There is an opportunity to affect change.	May be implemented in line with both system supportive and disruptive rationales

Considering the principle of *resource efficiency*, ensuring a basic level of perceived *legitimacy*, and addressing the trade-offs of societal *dilemmas* are seen as necessary foundations for successful CAs, largely independent of context. Many in the field highlight the importance of focussing on trade-offs and citizen priorities to avoid long wish lists of recommendations that do not provide sufficient guidance for policymakers, for example on how to finance measures. The German assembly on nutrition was asked to limit their number of recommendations to a maximum of nine, intentionally forcing the assembly to debate priorities. While this proved challenging for members, it led to clearer guidance and to more focused discussions in political follow-up. Moreover, interviewed experts believe the agenda should be perceived as legitimate by most groups, because salient criticism of the process may undermine democratic and system-supporting objectives, such as policy impact. However, full consensus on agenda decisions is unlikely to be achieved and may even be undesirable. Full consensus can come at the price of selecting issues of low political relevance, e.g. issues of little controversy that agenda-setting actors think are unimportant enough to leave to citizens (Pfeffer, Renn, and Newig 2023). The principle of resource efficiency is a reminder to reflect whether a large-scale citizens' assembly is worth investing the time and money given the magnitude of the selected issue. Other democratic processes exist that may be more suitable.

The guiding principles *authority*, *political relevance*, and *receptiveness* are closely linked to system-supporting rationales and contexts where those in power are generally willing to act on climate change. These principles can justify constraining deliberation but can go at the expense of emancipatory and system-disruptive objectives. Policymakers sometimes lament the lack of usefulness of recommendations addressing areas beyond their authority. Some interviewed experts argue that many climate problems spread across boundaries and authorities, and thus CAs should address problems holistically as counterweight to silo structures. Some past CA recommendations explic-

4 Although these principles are connected to system-disruptive objectives such as empowering citizens, citizens might follow system-supportive rationales.

itly encourage policymakers to lobby for policy change at other political levels[5]. If the political relevance is low, i. e. policymakers do not see the need for change on an issue, or are generally sceptical of citizen input (not receptive), the direct policy impact of a CA will likely be low (Averchenkova and Ghilan 2023). From a system-supportive perspective, a CA would be ineffective. From a system-disruptive perspective, however, a CA could be a way of raising the political relevance of an issue and pressure policymakers to be more responsive to citizens.

The principles *societal relevance,* and *openness* emphasise system-disruptive and emancipatory concerns. David Farrell (2022) has echoed these concerns when he criticised that too much government control over the agenda has led to "rather daft issues" not resonating with citizens being assigned to Irish citizens' assemblies. Focussing on issues important to citizens may also spark higher public attention and increase citizens' motivation to participate. Conversely, if policy impact through bureaucratic pathways is deemed more important than public attention, relevance to policymakers may be more important than relevance to citizens. What is important to citizens and politicians may or may not align depending on context. Ensuring open-ended deliberations is fundamental for the democratic integrity of CAs. Constraining the agenda can undermine CA members' sense of ownership and be (perceived as) illegitimate. On the other hand, constraining the agenda is effective, if not necessary, for enabling high-quality deliberations helping CAs to arrive at considered recommendations useful for policymakers. To attend to concerns of both legitimacy and usefulness for policymakers, agenda-setters should justify their agenda constraints and allow citizens to reflect on and deviate from them (see section 5.2).

Timing and *scope* can serve different objectives depending on how they are implemented. A more system-supportive rationale might suggest aligning a CA with the timescales of existing policy processes and avoiding to schedule it too close to elections to prevent its results from being ignored by a new government or delayed by the election period and its aftermath (as in Spain and Berlin). A more system-disruptive rationale, on the other hand, might suggest running an assembly shortly before general elections to spark public attention and influence an election or a subsequent coalition agreement, as was practiced in Germany (2021). The 'right' scope of an assembly is a widely discussed topic. Scope refers to the extent of issues to be covered in an assembly and is connected to the number of resulting recommendations (Elstub et al. 2021; Pfeffer 2024). Many argue that the scope of past CAs has often been too broad. Elstub et al. (2021) found that a large scope—a high number of issues to be covered by the mini-public—has reduced the policy impact of Climate Assembly UK, because it led public officials to doubt whether all participants had sufficient time to work on each issue. They also argued that holding policymakers accountable regarding their response to CAs is more difficult, if the number of recommendations is too high. Smith (2023) cau-

5 In Scotland, some recommendations were passed on to the UK Government, and in France, some recommendations stated explicitly that France should take the issue to the EU (e. g. Proposition PT9.1).

tiously notes: “Remits are arguably more effective when focused on aspects of policy that have the most significant negative climate impacts and/or where government is finding it difficult to act” (p. 8). However, Smith also points out that there are contexts where broad scopes might be more suitable, e. g. when CAs are meant to open the policy debate where little progress has been made. Large scopes may also be suited where administrations have low capacity to develop policy themselves, because they can outsource the work of policy formulation to a structured process combining the knowledge of experts and citizens. Notably, the most influential first-wave national-level climate assembly in terms of policy impact—the French—had a very large scope. This suggests that other factors, such as those related to political will, are more important determinants of impact. Finally, scope relates to the time a participant has to effectively deal with an issue. This depends on the number of issues but is relative to the complexity or knowledge intensity of the issues, the overall deliberation times, and the way the deliberations are structured.

5.1.2 Framing and remit

In some remits, CAs have been asked explicitly to consider certain societal values, e. g. “social, economic, and environmental factors” (Germany 2021), “fairness and impact” (Finland), “in a spirit of social justice” (France), “fairness and effectiveness” (Scotland). This can constrain deliberation or may be seen as illegitimate, e. g. if the emphasised values carry partisan meanings or include (dominant) framings worth questioning. On the other hand, this can help organisers to structure and deepen discussions because it focuses deliberations on questions like ‘What does fair mean?’ and ’How is the proposed policy measure expected to perform on our conception of fairness?’. This may even add reflexivity and transparency to the framing because value dimensions are made explicit. An option is to include widely shared societal values in CA remits while inviting citizens to prioritise them and/or add new value dimensions if they want.

CAs can vary regarding the level of detail and nature of proposals they produce. Analytically one can distinguish between:

- normative guidelines for policymaking (e. g. polluter pays principle, Scotland),
- targets (e. g. 100 % renewable electricity by 2035, Germany 2021),
- strategic priorities (e. g. prioritise renewables over carbon capture technologies, UK),
- specific policy measures (e. g. ban domestic flights where train alternatives exist, France).

Many CAs have produced recommendations with different levels of detail. From a system-supportive perspective, it is sensible to focus the assembly on those issues where policymakers think they require input and avoid wasting resources by deliberating on settled issues, such as widely accepted emission reduction targets. From a system-dis-

ruptive perspective, one may criticise that this will cement just those worldviews, strategies, and practices that need to be challenged, or at least confronted with people's normative perspectives. It may have benefits to contextualise each specific policy proposal with underlying normative principles, targets, and/or strategic priorities. This may increase the quality of proposals by increasing their consistency while reducing ambiguities. This would offer opportunities for administrations to reject proposals due to concerns of effectiveness, efficiency, legality, or practicality while still responding to the underlying goals with alternative policy proposals.

5.1.3 Sub-themes

Often CAs are structured along several carbon intensive sectors (e. g. mobility, electricity, heating, or food and agriculture). This approach facilitates the integration of results into the policy process if it mirrors climate governance regimes that are organised along sectors with clear responsibilities assigned to ministries and committees. Some, however, argue that dealing with climate issues requires integrative approaches beyond sectoral silos, and that CAs should foster integration across sectors instead. Whether a sectoral or cross-sectoral approach is more effective in achieving climate objectives will depend on context. For example, if conflicts between ministries and sectors are a major barrier to climate action, a cross-sectoral CA addressing these conflicts is likely a more effective vehicle for enabling change than a sectoral CA that ignores these conflicts (Pfeffer and Newig 2025). Recent CAs have had narrower scopes focussing on issues connected to climate change like energy poverty in Poland, biodiversity loss in Ireland, or nutrition in Germany.

Another approach is to focus on issues that are close to citizens' everyday lives because they are seen as particularly competent in those areas. This approach is sometimes driven by concerns that citizens are not capable of dealing with more technical issues (Averchenkova and Ghilan 2023). Past decades of experience and research on mini-publics, for example those on genetic engineering (e. g. Dryzek and Tucker 2008), wind farms (Roberts and Escobar 2015), or science and technology[6], strongly contradict this concern. Deliberation on technical issues requires more time, resources, and effort dedicated to suitable learning activities but it is not doomed to fail due to citizens' lack of capability.

CAs have also been focusing on cross-cutting issues, particularly those with high leverage across sectoral siloes. Issues have included carbon pricing (Germany 2021) or decarbonising through finance (France). While such issues can be technical and may require additional time dedicated to informing participants, it may still be an efficient approach due to the leverage of potential solutions.

6 See the Danish Board of Technology: https://tekno.dk/?lang=en [Accessed on November 29, 2023]

Yet other processes deliberated on reforms to the climate governance regime and proposed changing legal frameworks or introducing standing bodies. The French CA proposed criminalising ecocide while, in Denmark, a permanent CA was proposed. Structural changes to climate governance can have transformative potential if they significantly alter incentive and power structures.

A promising approach might be to focus on areas where governments find it most difficult to act (Smith 2023). This may end up being a collection of seemingly unrelated issues across different sectors, each facing their own barriers. CAs on such issues should hold the potential for high added benefits by breaking deadlocks and driving climate policymaking.

While most CAs have dealt with climate mitigation, some deliberated on climate adaptation (e. g. Spain and Scotland). Mitigation focuses on limiting climate change by reducing net emissions of greenhouse gases; adaptation refers to diverse ways of dealing with climate changes to reduce harms that cannot be avoided.

To conclude, CAs can deal with all issues outlined above but not at once (Brancaforte and Pfeffer 2021). A good choice depends on the main objectives and context of climate politics. CAs should hold the most potential for effective climate policymaking if they focus on areas where climate impacts are highest, and policymaking is facing barriers (Smith 2023).

5.2 Process dimension

Having dealt with trade-offs of substantial agenda decisions, this section focuses on the process by addressing who should be involved in agenda-setting, and with how much power. Considering this is important not just to increase the epistemic quality of agenda decisions by integrating diverse knowledge, but also because it influences whose concerns and interests are prioritised. Before diving into this, I provide some reflection on the institutional roles of past CAs.

5.2.1 Institutional roles

CAs have played different roles along the policy process. Most CAs were asked to formulate policy proposals and appraise them through deliberation and voting. They varied, however, in the freedom given to members in formulating proposals. Some processes were more expert-driven (e. g. Germany), others more citizen-driven (e. g. France or Denmark). In Finland, the CA was tasked to only appraise polices proposed by government.

CAs have been initiated with varying political agendas or roles ascribed. Such ascribed roles most often meant supporting governments in their climate action efforts through advice (e. g. Scotland), but also included supporting parliament in holding government accountable (e. g. UK), affecting coalition negotiations (e. g. Germany), or, most

powerfully, to draft legislation in a politically collaborative rather than advisory role (France). Role formulations are often influenced by what is politically opportune and are characterised by a sensitivity to the attitudes and strategies of those with initiating and/or decision-making power.

5.2.2 Initiation rights and mechanisms

How CAs get initiated is a key question because it influences the range of productive roles assemblies can play in governance systems (Setälä 2021). Two dimensions can offer insightful analysis: Who has *motivation* and who has *power* to initiate a CA? Assemblies on a specific issue only get initiated if both coincide. Usually, CAs only get initiated through state structures if governments or parliamentary majorities (power) expect to benefit from them (motivation). This limits CAs' capacities to fulfil system-disruptive functions. Perhaps one can only expect CAs to lead to disruptions where powerful initiators did not anticipate them or where initiators were willing to accept the prospect of disruptions. An increasing number of CAs is being initiated by motivated civil society actors outside of state structures (e. g. Germany, Poland, Norway). Mini-publics initiated by civil society actors without stronger ties formal decision-making can have difficulties in achieving public and political impact. Because such processes can, arguably, more legitimately be ignored by governments, it is more difficult to generate and maintain their political relevance and hence media value (e. g. Germany). In practice, CAs often emerge from the interplay between state institutions and civil society demands (as seen also in other democratic innovations; Escobar et al. 2018). The Berlin CA, for instance, originated from a citizen initiative, and in France and Scotland, the Yellow Vest protests and activists of Extinction Rebellion were vital.

If CAs are to play roles beyond supporting those in power, new rules for their initiation are likely required. These can include initiation rights for citizens, for parliamentary minorities, or other political bodies. In East-Belgium a permanent sortition-based citizens' council can initiate temporary mini-publics on issues of its choice (Niessen and Reuchamps 2019). Moreover, initiation mechanisms can be integrated into governance regimes that require a CA under certain conditions (Setälä 2017)—for example, if governments fail to meet certain targets, if policymaking has reached a deadlock, or as regular part of a cyclical policy process (as recommended by the Danish CA). Institutionalising CAs (or mini-publics more broadly) in such ways may hold co-benefits with other democratic objectives highlighted in section 3, but potential trade-offs require further investigation. It remains to be seen how much impact on climate politics and policy institutionalised CAs will have, or whether they might still be ignored or subject to strong "cherry-picking" by governments (Font et al. 2018).

Under conditions where no novel initiation mechanisms exist, one strategy to potentially increase the disruptiveness of CAs through agenda-setting is to limit the power of politicians and include a diverse range of other actors when choosing the framing and the sub-themes.

5.2.3 Who should be involved in agenda-decisions?

Politicians, civil servants, citizens, scientists, stakeholders, and process organisers can each hold different interests and contribute complementary forms of knowledge. Giving significant agenda-setting power to each of these groups has merits but also risks (Table 2.3).

Politicians and civil servants know the political context, including key policy dilemmas, political conflicts, policymaking timelines, and jurisdictions. Including political actors and considering their demands increases their interest in CA results and likely policy impact. However, giving politicians too much or exclusive power to shape the agenda can decrease CA members' sense of ownership. Moreover, strategic political considerations will likely influence agenda decisions. Politicians tend to shy away from hot topics if they see a risk of not generating their preferred outcome (Pfeffer, Renn, and Newig 2023).

Assembly members or the general public can contribute issues of societal relevance that they see neglected and politicians shy away from, and might challenge dominant agendas, values and practices. Including citizens in agenda-setting can increase their sense of ownership. However, leaving agenda decisions mostly or exclusively to citizens can lead to less informed choices (e.g. Denmark), such as a selection of sub-themes with relatively low potential for cutting greenhouse emissions. Moreover, the fit with policy processes, relevance for politicians, and policy impact may be hindered. The risk that politicians and civil servants come to perceive assemblies as unnecessary burdens on their already overloaded schedules may increase further.

Scientists and policy experts (see also Chapter 4 in this book) can help identifying areas of climate policy where changes are most effective, highlight neglected issues, and contribute new perspectives and policy rationales. However, depending on the choice of experts, and who is choosing them (Roberts et al. 2020), they can also reinforce dominant perspectives and technocratic frames (Blue 2015). This can lead to a neglection of moral dilemmas and injustices that often underlie political inaction.

Stakeholders—i.e. interest groups and other representatives—can provide the practical knowledge and concerns of those affected by political decisions. This contributes to the democratic legitimacy of the process and may increase acceptance of the CA and its results. Including a diverse range of stakeholders can elicit conflict but also show areas of agreement. Stakeholders may challenge dominant agendas and framings, and introduce marginalised concerns and new ideas. However, involving stakeholders may, in some contexts, lead to contestation and slow down the process. Depending on the selection of stakeholders, it may also decrease the perceived legitimacy of the process and reinforce dominant agendas.

Participation experts and organisers have process experience and can assess what is feasible and effective given time and resource limitations. Process organisers are often externally contracted non-profit or for-profit organisations, but with institutionalisation of democratic innovations growing, public authorities are increasingly building in-house capacities (see Escobar 2019 for a more detailed account). If public author-

ities lack willingness for genuine participation and deliberation, in-house or external organisers sometimes act as 'internal activists' (Escobar 2017, 2019). On the other hand, external organisers can sometimes be (and/or feel) bound contractually, and may, at times, be hesitant to criticise the process or the commissioner, or propose further actions. In contexts where this is the case or internal activism is needed, more independent participation experts may serve as mediators.

There is merit in involving multiple actor groups in agenda-setting, and some CAs have done so (see next section). However, this will increase coordination costs and may induce conflict. Conflict can be productive or unproductive (see section 6).

Table 2.3: Risks and benefits of involving different actors in climate assembly agenda-setting

Actors	Benefits	Risks
Politicians and civil servants	– know political contexts including barriers, timelines, responsibilities – higher interest in results	– strategic political choices – lower societal relevance – lower ownership by CA members
Citizens	– higher citizen relevance – higher ownership by CA members – less strategic	– lower political relevance and interest – less climate effectiveness
Scientists and policy experts	– more climate effectiveness	– reinforce technocratic framings – potential neglection of moral dilemmas underlying political inaction
Stakeholders	– challenge dominant agendas and framings – introduce marginalised concerns and new ideas – can increase legitimacy	– can decrease legitimacy – reinforce dominant agendas – slow down process – unproductive conflict
Participation experts	– process experience – know feasibility	– can be constrained by their institutional or contractual roles

5.2.4 How to organise agenda-setting governance?

Agenda-setting is not just about who should be involved but more precisely on what, and with how much power. The devil is in the detail when it comes to the governance of CAs.

In France and Scotland, stakeholders played an important role while government commissioners had less influence compared to other processes (Carrick 2022). In Scotland, legislation provided a broad mandate for the assembly but the final decision on the remit and its details was taken by a stewarding group. This stewarding group included stakeholder representatives (i. e. activist groups and social movements; sectoral intrests in housing, business, agriculture, etc), members of parliament, civil servants,

participation experts, and academics dealing with climate issues but no assembly members. Deliberations within the stewarding group were facilitated. While finding agreement was not easy—environmental activists from Extinction Rebellion (XR) left the group after six months because decisions were not ambitious enough, in their view, and to apply pressure from outside—many have reported overall appreciation for the collaborative process, including the XR representatives. In France, a governance committee of fifteen stakeholders with diverse political views and interests was the centre of power through the whole CA. In this case, there were reports of mutual distrust and paralysis. Two CA members regularly joined the meetings which helped the committee to overcome disagreements (Carrick 2022, 17–18).

In the UK and Berlin, parliament or government commissioners retained more control over agenda decisions (Carrick 2022). This task is often transferred to expert bodies, seconded civil servants, or contractors delivering the process. The nature of interactions between the actors involved is often described as collaborative but the final decision-making power remains with the commissioner.

In Denmark, CA members significantly influenced the selection of sub-themes (similar in Germany [nutrition]). Members first heard from 18 different expert witnesses before voting which areas to focus on. A selection of members subsequently met with the responsible parliamentary commission and minister to exchange views. The Danish CA had a second iteration where members set their agenda with less expert input. Organisers and members seem to have preferred the iteration with expert input because members became more confident in their capabilities to decide, and decisions were more attentive to climate effectiveness (Brancaforte and Pfeffer 2022, 12).

In sum, the goal of good agenda-setting governance is to generate decisions that are informed, motivated deliberatively (as opposed to strategically), and perceived as legitimate by affected actors. Including policymakers and stakeholders in facilitated deliberations but leaving the final decisions to informed assembly members could be a way of attending to all three aspects. The perceived legitimacy of such processes, however, will be context-dependent and might change over time.

6 Navigating disagreements in collaborative agenda-setting

Involving multiple actors in agenda-setting can cause conflict. Conflict and contestation is productive when marginalised agendas are elevated and dominant ones questioned, or diverse agendas are explored and navigated to foster learning and mutual respect; but unproductive, when tensions are exacerbated, and action is delayed. A lack of contestation risks suppressing tensions and reinforcing the status quo (Chambers et al. 2022).

Chambers et al. (2022) make suggestions on how to navigate tensions between diverse actors to foster sustainability transitions, based on 32 worldwide case studies. Here I adapt some ideas to CAs.

The foundation is to acknowledge that different actors can contribute legitimate concerns. If actors behave in ways that are unproductive, one can attempt to induce more productive behaviours by reframing their roles and argumentation, and/or by breaking through ideological divides:

A) Unproductive tensions can occur when any control by commissioners is seen as co-option, or commissioners perceive ceding power as a threat to their goals and roles. Such concerns may be reframed productively by valuing commissioners' expertise and power as means to empowering others, or by noting that strategically ceding power to others can enable collective action and increase legitimacy of decisions. Unproductive tensions can also occur when actors believe that a focus on impact harms the process, or conversely, when time spent on process is seen as unnecessary distraction from goals. Both notions may be reframed productively by seeking agreement that only high-quality processes can lead to significant impact.

B) While disagreements are sometimes based on irresolvable conflicts between interests, they frequently exist only on the surface. Information provided in this chapter may help solving disagreements by moving away from overly generalising statements opposing each other to appreciating practical trade-offs for almost every design choice. This may open doors to balancing trade-offs by combining elements of system-disruptive and -supportive design in ways sensitive to context.

7 Final remarks and way forward

Without careful agenda choices, any CA will struggle to meet its goals, but agenda-setting is not everything. Other design elements are crucial, such as how administrations respond to CA inputs, or how information is presented to members. Moreover, the degree to which agenda-setting is weaved through internal procedures such as the selection of expert witnesses, the framing of informational content or the structure of deliberations remains an area for investigation (Shaw and Wang 2021; see also Chapters 4 and 5 in this book).

This chapter summarised the state-of-the-art knowledge on CA agenda-setting to date. The knowledge base, however, remains limited from a scientific perspective—with most evidence stemming from informed experts but sometimes being tacit and anecdotal. The mini-publics and CAs community is a flourishing network fostering social learning which, at times, outpaces research in producing knowledge. There is, however, a risk of groupthink and oversimplification.

In sum, agenda-setting for CAs encompasses many distinct choices with crucial implications for their internal operations and external effects, such as policy impact, perceived legitimacy, or emancipatory value of deliberative processes. Almost every choice comes with trade-offs regarding different CA objectives. Objectives and trade-offs are

highly dependent on context, e. g. the willingness of powerful actors for climate action and genuine participation. This complexity, however, offers potential. We are beginning to see how design choices are deliberately combined to balance trade-offs, e. g. how agenda-setting powers are shared between actors or sequenced in ways that enable informed agenda-setting by assembly members themselves. Such context-sensitive approaches to mini-public design are the way forward (Bussu and Fleuß 2023; Pfeffer 2024; Pfeffer and Newig 2025). More experimentation and careful study are needed to assess the interactions between design choices amid varied contexts.

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Chapter 3
Global facilitation revisited: The many stages of climate assemblies

Abstract: Climate assemblies are gaining attention as a means to respond to the climate crisis democratically. While much research has focused on the design and outcomes of mini-publics, the role of facilitators –especially outside Western contexts– remains underexplored. The Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis (GA), implemented during COP26, offers a unique case for examining facilitation in global deliberative forums. Designed to include 100 participants selected globally, the GA aimed to deliberate on how humanity can fairly and effectively address the climate crisis. Facilitators played a critical role in navigating the GA's complexity, which required adapting to unforeseen challenges during its online, transnational deliberation. Far from merely implementing pre-designed scripts, facilitators improvised and redesigned processes in response to participants' needs, shifting from their initial frontstage role to co-designers in the backstage. These adaptations revealed enablers and barriers to global deliberation, including the challenges of fostering collective learning, managing diverse perspectives, and ensuring inclusivity. This chapter highlights the importance of including facilitators in process design from the outset and reframing their role as reflective practitioners, based on 19 semi-structured interviews with facilitators of the GA. We argue that flexibility, shared ownership, and continuous collaboration are essential for enabling deliberation at global scale.

Keywords: facilitation, co-design, climate assemblies, global deliberation, environmental governance

1 Introduction

In recent years, climate assemblies have increasingly been in the spotlight as a means to achieve a more democratic climate transition. Much scholarly attention has been paid to the internal and external features of these mini-publics and their evaluation. However, with a few important exceptions (e. g., Doerr 2018; Escobar 2019; Landwehr 2014; Moore 2012; Schneidemesser, Oppold, and Stasiak 2023), their facilitation and the perspective of those in charge of enabling deliberation among participants have been understudied, especially outside Western contexts. The Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis (GA) offers a unique chance to reflect on the role of facilitators in enabling transnational deliberation.

The GA was implemented in the framework of the United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP26). It engaged 100 participants from all over the world to deliberate

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the question: "*How can humanity address the climate and ecological crisis in a fair and effective way?*" The participants were selected with the aim of ensuring diversity regarding age, gender, education, and geography. To fulfil the latter requirement, 100 geographic points were chosen based on numerous demographic datasets, and participants were recruited from within 200 kilometres of each geographic point (Global Assembly Team 2022, 48–76).

The ambition to carry out a deliberative process online and at a global scale posed numerous challenges beyond the complex sortition process, including experimentation with different design choices and a considerable degree of adaptability throughout the process itself. Decisions taken backstage influenced frontstage dynamics, namely how discussions on the climate and ecological crises emerged (or did not emerge) among participants. The deliberations were fraught with challenges, including the participants' reluctance to elicit diverging opinions, as noted by participants[1] and observing researchers. While our chapter will not address the constraints of deliberation within the GA specifically, our analysis will be grounded in and limited by the prevalence of collective learning over collective deliberation in this deliberative process (Curato et al. 2023, 67–80).

Focusing specifically on the question "*How was the role of facilitators*[2] *enacted within the Global Assembly?*", this chapter aims to better identify and discuss responses to the particular challenges of facilitating deliberative forums at the global level. The reasons for this focus are twofold. First, facilitators play a crucial role in enabling deliberation among participants and responding to many of the limitations in group deliberation. Facilitators are supposed to make processes "more inclusive, more comprehensive, more careful to avoid deception, suppression, and coercion" (Dryzek 2000, in Moore 2012, 148). Understanding their role within the GA is a key element in understanding the possibility of global deliberation. Second, for those participating in the GA, facilitators were also the most distinct face of the process. A better grasp of the role of facilitation within in-group deliberations is crucial to enhance the engagement of participants in future global assemblies.

We will argue that facilitators enacted their role by redefining it gradually. We describe how facilitators advocated for impromptu transformations of the process design to meet participants' needs while pursuing the envisaged goals of the GA. Our analysis

1 Survey responses (final survey n=70) to the question "Do you think that other participants had different views than yours?" revealed that 55% of participants believed that only a few of them held differing views, while 21% indicated that none did. Overall, respondents largely concurred that either a minority or none of the participants had perspectives different from their own.

2 The Global Assembly's Report refers to facilitators as *breakout facilitators* since they were enabling deliberation among small groups of participants. There were also *plenary co-facilitators* for the large sessions (gathering 100 participants) and *cluster facilitators*, organisations tasked with "recruiting, training and supporting" different members of the Global Assembly's implementation team (Global Assembly Team 2022, 59). We will focus on *breakout facilitators* since deliberation among participants occurred largely in small groups, and participants spent most of their time within these breakout rooms (i.e., digital spaces for small-group deliberation) (Global Assembly Team 2022, 108).

shows that during the online sessions with participants, facilitators often improvised by going off-script and by encouraging new types of interaction among those in their breakout rooms (i. e., digital spaces for small-group deliberation). As challenges emerged, they set up new digital stages for learning among facilitators and strengthened ties with and between participants.

The chapter is divided into three main sections. First, building upon literature on co-design and facilitation, as well as global deliberation, we briefly lay the foundations for understanding facilitation and how it was performed in the backstage and frontstage of the GA. Second, we discuss the enablers and barriers experienced by facilitators within the GA as we analyse the backstage, frontstage and emerging stages where facilitators enacted their roles. Finally, by critically exploring the facilitators' roles within the GA, we revisit the role of facilitation within global deliberative forums. We argue that shared ownership, room for improvisation, and multi-stage deliberation ought to be considered good practices within global deliberation.

1.1 A note on deliberation and mini-publics

Throughout this chapter, we follow a minimalist definition of deliberation, understood as a core democratic principle of mutual communication "that involves weighing and reflecting on preferences, values, and interests regarding matters of common concern" (Mansbridge 2015, 27). In doing so, we recognise that deliberative forms or 'phenotypes' vary quite dramatically – not only because of the inherently different nature of "matters of common concern", but also due to the varying social, geographical, and institutional contexts within which deliberation happens. Mini-publics, which we are focusing on given the nature of the GA, are defined as the "*near-random* selection [of participants] alongside structured (or facilitated) deliberation between [them]" (Ryan and Smith 2014, 19). Mini-publics are often tailored to a specific situation by adjusting the design and facilitation of the process, including the framing of the issue, participant selection strategies, and their interaction modes.

Certain design choices have gained prominence in Western countries and have become mainstream practices for the implementation of mini-publics, regardless of the overarching goal of the process. For instance, whenever the general public can be considered to be the adequate "stakeholder group" to deal with an issue, some form of random selection has become a common and useful recruitment strategy (Flanigan et al. 2021; Gąsiorowska 2023; Pilet et al. 2023). Other decisions regarding the design of mini-publics are more prone to variation: for example, the duration or the type of facilitation provided for citizens' assemblies, which can span from only a couple of days in duration to several weeks or months. And, while most forums are facilitated by skilled professionals, others might rely more on participants to organise themselves (Schneidemesser et al. 2023).

2 Facilitation

Facilitation during the GA occurred within different stages. In this section, we offer a theoretical overview of our understanding of facilitation, with the aim of grounding our analysis of the changing roles of breakout facilitators – originally tasked with enabling deliberation among participants. We use the concepts of frontstage and backstage facilitation as an analytic framework for examining the role of facilitation in the GA.

Facilitation is often referred to as the act of leading discussions and continuously interacting with participants during a deliberative forum (Moore 2012, 147) to enforce accessibility, inclusivity, and impact (see Dryzek 2002; Moore 2012; Escobar 2019). However, those deliberative interactions are only the visible side of facilitation, known in the literature as the 'frontstage' (Goffman 1966, in Escobar 2014). This refers to the moment and space in which participants discuss a specific issue guided by a facilitator.

Scholars have argued that we need to move beyond studying the frontstage of deliberation to better understand the often invisible 'backstage work' of facilitating deliberative forums (Escobar 2019; Byner et al. 2023). Backstage work includes defining, "through multiple and fine-grained design choices (e.g. list of invitees, agenda, setting of the room), the rationale, framing, and rules operating in the collaborative setting" (Molinengo 2023, 103). Understanding how processes are made to enable deliberation, the literature argues, is as important as the actual deliberation among assembly members. The argument we present follows this logic and positions facilitation as the combination of process design and interaction mode which ultimately enables deliberation. In particular, we focus on how breakout facilitators influence the backstage or improvise new stages for deliberative interaction and collaborative learning.

'Process design' refers to the way that the interaction between participants is planned 'backstage', akin to what Escobar (2015) and Molinengo and Stasiak (2020) call "scripting" and "setting the stage". It often occurs in conjunction with the conveners of the deliberative process (be they civil society organisations or institutions), thematic experts and other key stakeholders. The process design or 'script' outlines the question guiding the process, forms an agenda, and identifies communicative, thematic and facilitation methodologies that seek to engage a group of participants in productive deliberation (Molinengo and Stasiak 2020, 4; for an example of a facilitation script see: Annex 3 in WHO 2024, 87).

Since climate assemblies, and deliberative forums more broadly, are often embedded within existing policy or power structures, these design choices are to a large extent political decisions. Such choices determine who should be included in the deliberations, the remit of the process (see Chapter 2 of this book), and the commitment to implement citizens' recommendations. Therefore, in the design process preceding deliberation, critical tensions often arise around the forum's embeddedness, its purview and goals, and the extent to which its design is planned to ensure inclusion, interaction, and impact – the three expectations of facilitation identified by Escobar (2019, 182).

The 'interaction mode' (Molinengo and Stasiak 2020) describes how participants and facilitators engage and interact in a collaborative process by following the process design. The performances of the script are led by facilitators and carried out on the frontstage of deliberative forums. Facilitators have a particular competence and know-how in conducting deliberations, sometimes referred to as "processual expertise" (Moore 2012) or "participatory expertise" (Fischer 2003). The facilitator's role is that of an enabler and their interventions should ideally be "invisible" to participants (Lee and Lee 2015, 114). In deliberative settings, many of the facilitators' efforts consists of appreciating and activating various forms of knowledge, values, and reflection held by participants (Forester 2013; Quick and Sandfort 2017).

Facilitation on the frontstage seeks to ensure that the planned deliberation process is carried out and the respective goals of deliberation are met to the best extent possible. Shared cultural and social norms help to guide interactions in deliberations within specific cultural spheres. However, such culturally specific cues for speaking and listening, expectations of who contributes what type of ideas, social hierarchies, and other conventions that in local circumstances help to enable, manage, or break certain "norms and patterns [of behaviour] deemed appropriate in a given context" (Escobar 2019, 184) are less reliable at the global level. The broad spectrum of expectations of how to behave, when to ask questions, what questions are appropriate, and what type of personal information is appropriate to share or ask, as well as other aspects of interpersonal interaction across different cultures, add to the complexity of facilitation in a global setting.

Further challenges arise when frontstage interactions occur online. These include: the limited range of communication channels (with a focus on verbal expression); difficulty in monitoring the level of involvement and response of participants; the possibility and temptation to switch off the camera; technical difficulties like poor connection quality; interruptions; and the influence of respective ambient conditions (including noise and parallel responsibilities) on participants. On the other hand, there are some advantages. For example, hierarchies might become flatter on the screen – social identity cues, as referred to by Rhee and Kim (2009), may be harder to identify in an online context.

2.1 The backstage: Process design in the Global Assembly

Designing a global assembly against the background of a complex international context and a floundering climate governance system is a complex endeavour. The GA was a process convened by civil society organisations (CSOs). Although it had the endorsement of the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, the convening team was not appointed, nor backed, by any democratically established institution, as many local or national climate assemblies. This had two important implications.

On the one hand, due to their informal nature mini-publics are rarely regulated by law. As a consequence, their impacts depend on the power and commitment of conven-

ers to create ways of enacting recommendations or securing other effective outcomes. CSOs, who were the initiators of the GA, lack specific means or formal powers to decide upon recommendations produced by the GA. This significantly limited the potential impact of the process in general. On the other hand, this also meant that critical decision-making on the process design was carried out by participation professionals, in iterative interactions with thematic experts, but with no institutional oversight.

Many decisions around process design depend on the context and bear consequences for facilitation. For instance, the selection of participants, which is a major focus of the design of mini-publics, directly affects the shape of the group that is expected to exchange and deliberate. In European countries, randomised selection or sortition is considered a best practice and is often carried out using residency registers, addresses, electoral rolls, or telephone directories. At the global level, randomised selection presents a challenge because of the difficulty of developing a global recruitment method. This, concretely, means that dominant institutional designs are confronted with various practical and/or structural barriers, such as the absence of comprehensive databases of country residents (Ross and Morán 2023).

A multi-stage process was used to select participants in the Global Assembly[3]. First, geographical points were randomly selected based on population density. Then, individuals were recruited via snowball sampling in the territories that won the location lottery, which surprisingly did not use stratification to account for those most affected by climate and ecological crises (Curato et al. 2023, 47). Finally, participants were selected via lottery while accounting for a descriptive representation of age, gender, education levels, and attitudes toward climate change worldwide (Global Assembly Team 2022, 51). The diverse composition of the deliberative groups had direct implications for facilitators as it determined, for example, the number of languages in use during deliberations.

The multilingual context in which the Global Assembly unfolded brought about another set of complex design choices. Designers decided that deliberations would be conducted in English. However, 64 % of assembly members came from other linguistic contexts and needed translation to participate (Global Assembly Team 2022, 98). To adjust to this design choice, new actors beyond facilitators were introduced to the frontstage of deliberation: translators and 'community hosts' (that is, members of local organisations who served as points of liaison with the GA's organisers) supported assembly members by accompanying them during the learning, deliberation, and evaluation of the GA. Linguistic barriers affected the mode of facilitation, as most verbal communication with and among participants had to be mediated via third parties – translators and community hosts.

Other key process design choices taken backstage regarded convening deliberations in multiple time zones; drafting a booklet for participants with key content to in-

3 The provenance of the algorithm underpinning the sortition process is contested but this is not a focal point of our analysis.

form deliberations; systematising the results of small-group deliberations by merging and consolidating the information collected by note-takers (Global Assembly Team 2022, 83, 92, 100, 106, 112); and, particularly important for facilitators, drafting the script for the weekly deliberations amongst assembly members. Many of the process design features remained similar to other mini-publics, including facilitation mechanisms that encourage listening and sharing, knowledge-inputs presented by experts, combining personal reflection with collective creation, keeping participants focused on the task at hand, and other strategies to move the process forward (Landwehr 2014; Mansbridge et al. 2006).

2.2 The frontstage: Interaction modes in the Global Assembly

Throughout the GA, the interactions were heavily influenced by the digital setting. Participants joined small-group deliberations and plenary sessions in real-time through their phones or computers; from their homes; or from places where they could have internet access (Curato et al. 2023, 99). Disruptions in internet connectivity or translation difficulties contributed to the challenges of frontstage interactions. Although it was not intended that facilitators should address these issues, the task of coordinating solutions or workarounds often fell to them. Facilitators were also responsible for developing an atmosphere among participants that would be conducive to deliberation. This entailed establishing rules of interaction to ensure that deliberations were open and not dominated by certain members.

The GA was designed to have different sets of synchronous deliberation across multiple time zones. This meant that participants met roughly three to four times per week over 12 weeks (Global Assembly Team 2022, 100–110). They met two to three times per week to deliberate within small groups, during times that were accessible for their respective time zones. Small breakout groups consisted of a facilitator, a note-taker, four to six assembly members, and their translators and community hosts. Participants also attended weekly online plenary sessions, where plans and results were consolidated and the next steps communicated. Plenary sessions also included small group moments so assembly members could interact with other members who were not part of their regular breakout groups.

Small-group deliberation between GA members was often characterised by phases of learning, discussion, and voting. Learning could be supported by reading a section of the information booklet provided by the GA's conveners or listening to a video recorded by expert witnesses. Questions were posed by facilitators depending on the topic at hand and the goals of that particular deliberative session. For example, when discussing fossil fuel subsidies among a breakout group, facilitators asked participants about their experiences with the impacts of these and their positions. As participants spoke, note-takers would record their ideas, which would then be passed on to editors, who gathered and systematised the information. Based on notes from all 20 breakout groups, editors drafted the 'People's Declaration' for COP26, which was again discussed

by each breakout group. After three revisions based on reactions in the breakout groups, the assembly members voted on the different sections of the People's Declaration, which were then either accepted for submission or rejected and further discussed and revised.

Eight participants and four members of the Global Assembly team participated digitally and in person in various events during Glasgow's COP26. The experience and the results of the GA were shared with government representatives participating in the formal negotiations in the Blue Zone. The results of the GA's deliberations were also presented to the general public and COP attendees at a prominent Green Zone event.

3 Methods

To understand how facilitators enacted their roles during the Global Assembly, we conducted 19 semi-structured interviews with facilitators of small-group deliberation. We contacted the 20 breakout facilitators via email and 19 agreed to the interview (a 95% response rate). Respondents came from East Africa (3), East Asia (1), Europe (4), Latin America and the Caribbean (3), North America (2), South-East Asia (5), and South Asia (1). The interviews were conducted online via video calls in English or Spanish. With the interviewee's permission, these interviews were recorded, transcribed, and anonymised.

The interview guide was developed using a hybrid approach combining both deductive and inductive steps (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006). Deductively, we developed a structure of categories in which we were interested based on the existing literature on facilitation. Then, after observing breakout-room deliberations during the GA, and examining detailed process plans for each session, we adjusted and honed these categories and questions to align our focus with the unfolding process and facilitators' experiences. Responses were coded in MAXQDA, following a coding scheme built in parallel to the interview guidelines, also constructed deductively based on the literature and refined inductively after observing GA deliberations.

Table 3.1: Deductive and inductive analysis

Step	Strategy	Description	Example
1	Deductive categorisation of interview responses (following the interview protocol)	Analysis of each response seeking to produce categories of analysis	Q: Can you tell us about a particularly easy session or activity you had to facilitate? A: A session in which participants linked the story in the information booklet to the effects of climate change in their territories Category: Challenging/Easy Sessions

Table 3.1 *(Continued)*

Step	Strategy	Description	Example
2	Inductive categorisation	Analysis of recurring responses seeking to produce codes and categories	"Links to participants' territories, food systems, and families" was a recurring response when describing a good deliberation among participants. Proposed category: Enablers of deliberation

We also use data from a panel survey comprising six questionnaires for assembly members conducted before, during, and after the GA. The surveys contained closed and open questions about their deliberative experience. These surveys were led and developed by Hannah Werner and Nicole Curato with the support of Azucena Morán (Curato et al. 2023, 158) and were presented to participants in collaboration with the GA's core delivery team. The table below shows the survey's response rates (n=100).

Table 3.2: Data from Global Assembly's Evaluation Report (Curato et al. 2023, 159)

Survey	Response Rate
Pre-Survey (Induction Session)	91
Session 1.2P	86
Session 3.1B	96
Session 3.4P	27
Session 4.2P	79
Final Survey (Final Session 5.6)	70

4 Analysis: Facilitators' changing stages

Most design choices, including the selection of participants and the remit of the Assembly, were initially taken backstage by the convening team with the support of their advisory committees (Global Assembly 2022, 257). Facilitators, most of whom had considerable facilitation experience, were given detailed scripts for each session. However, most reported that implementation challenges emerged during deliberations due to the rapid pace of the sessions and the inaccessibility of the content presented by expert witnesses. In response, breakout facilitators intuitively moved from the frontstage of deliberation to the backstage to engage in editing the process design as the GA unfolded.

While it was not originally intended that facilitators would alternate between the backstage and frontstage of the GA, this soon became a crucial part of the process. As breakout facilitators were challenged by various aspects of the process design, they started to intervene in the interaction mode enabled by specific facilitation methods and the script of the GA. Their interventions, which remained largely non-binding suggestions, occurred during weekly meetings. These frontstage actors also integrated new facilitation techniques by sharing their experiences and recommendations backstage during weekly meetings and in parallel through WhatsApp groups.

While the facilitators could not alter key parameters such as the remit, the selection of participants, the accessibility of content presented by expert witnesses, the goals of the sessions, or the amount of support provided by the convening team, translators, and community hosts, they did exercise considerable influence at the micro-level, ensuring that the voices present in each group had equal opportunity to participate and be included. The facilitators mitigated failing design choices, enabled new interaction modes, and encouraged collective learning between and among the frontstage and the backstage actors through re-scripting, improvisation, and the integration of new deliberative stages created in parallel to the process.

4.1 Backstage challenges and re-scripting

Most facilitators reported that their experiences with the core team (the group of participation experts convening the GA) were very positive. However, concerns regarding the overstretched capacities of members of the core team often emerged among facilitators. Those interviewed described the organising team as “sleep-deprived” (Interviewees 3, 5), providing “24/7 support” (Interviewee 12) or “fire-fighting” (Interviewee 9). The need for high levels of responsiveness from the core team was often linked to their initial control over the process design. As reported in the interviews, the facilitators, who worked directly with the participants, were not involved in the initial scripting of the process.

Therefore, while the process plan was perceived as a detailed, clear, useful, and standardised tool that got everybody on the same page, it was also referred to as someone else’s work. Apart from one facilitator who described being brought into the process design group, the rest of the facilitators pointed out that they had not been involved in the co-design of the process and thus were missing a sense of ownership.

In the beginning, the process design seemed “carved in stone” (Interviewee 10) and certain questions were sometimes even read out loud word by word when presented to assembly members. Facilitators describe studying the process plan, which was referred to by most facilitators as “the script” or even as a “bible” (Interviewee 5) or “lifeline” (Interviewee 7). Some reviewed the document multiple times, read it out loud using a second computer, or shared it with participants using slides.

Lack of engagement in the design of the GA often led to confusion around the overall process plan. For instance, one facilitator noted that the reasons why certain topics

were selected over others were unclear. Two facilitators expressed that they neither understood the overall picture nor knew what would happen after issuing the People's Declaration. Others mentioned not having access to the high-level objectives of the GA nor knowing from the beginning what the role of the editors was in the drafting of the People's Declaration.

Facilitators expressed feeling both supported and surveilled by the core team or researchers coming to observe the sessions they were facilitating. Although these observers were expected to keep their cameras and microphones off to avoid any possible distraction or disturbance, their presence did affect the way facilitation was conducted and how participants' questions about climate issues were addressed. While most of the facilitators were experienced with facilitation, many were unfamiliar with climate issues and had to review content on the climate crisis as well as the process plan before facilitating.

In the face of these numerous challenges, facilitators adopted a strategy of re-scripting and advocating for edits in the process design during weekly meetings with organisers and exchanging facilitation practices among themselves. In doing so, the Global Assembly became a learning experience for both the participants and facilitators. During the interviews, the majority of facilitators highlighted the importance of their weekly meetings with the core team, where they could discuss the small-group deliberations, as well as the WhatsApp groups created by facilitators to exchange experiences. Key learning moments among them encouraged them to increasingly suggest edits to the GA's script, both in terms of design and facilitation strategies.

> I think, by the fourth or fifth session, we begin to speak up a little bit more, to provide feedback. 'You know, it would be helpful if you had a bit more space. Twenty minutes is definitely not enough. It's not going to work because we have people from diverse backgrounds, diverse languages. We need more conversation space'. (Interviewee 3)

They also appreciated the openness of the core team to consider some suggestions made by facilitators. As one interviewee put it:

> I then thought about how valuable it was, the humility with which they did the process. Because it isn't simple: imagining this, building this, finding the funding, doing all of the work, and suddenly one day they [the facilitators] come and tell you 'this isn't working'. And they [the core team] had the openness to say: 'OK, let's rethink it'. (Interviewee 15)

The ambivalence evident in this statement is a direct symptom of having frontstage facilitators solely in the role of 'executors' of plans made backstage by others. Separating frontstage and backstage roles prevents facilitators from having ownership of the whole process, leading to something of a principal-agent conundrum (Gailmard 2014): the core team contracted the facilitators to conduct certain tasks; as the process unfolded, the facilitators began taking on new roles to adjust the process design along the way and thus moved beyond the scope of initial tasks. The facilitators started pro-

viding feedback and suggesting or asking for changes in how the facilitation –for which they were responsible– is carried out.

4.2 Frontstage challenges and the potential of improvisation

The GA was described by some facilitators as a formative experience (Interviewee 14); a series of ”enlightening” and ”learning” sessions (Interviewee 2); ”a chance [for people] to engage with the material” (Interviewee 4); and an opportunity to amplify the value of deliberation (Interviewee 1). In the post-deliberation questionnaire, some participants described the GA as a place to discuss and give opinions, ”help write the People’s Declaration” and ”debate solutions to problems,”; but also as ”being in school”; a place to have ”illuminating sessions”; a space ”bringing basic knowledge”; a moment to ”give reflections and views on the deliberations from experts”; and a place in which ”facilitators collected responses”.

Despite the presence of certain enabling conditions, deliberation was characterised by its school-like conditions and lack of disagreement and contention within groups (see Curato et al. 2023), which often constituted the most challenging sessions for facilitators. Many facilitators described the absence of disagreement as they pointed to time constraints and the content’s lack of accessibility and legibility, as well as what they perceived as the one-sided nature of the information provided prior to the deliberation. Diverging opinions among participants occurred mainly on an exceptional basis and largely reflected divides between developed countries and the majority world. For instance, facilitators mentioned topics such as the coal phase-out and the real-life consequences it had for members from certain developing countries.

> It often happened that I felt people were repeating the text [given to them]. They would say the same thing in different ways. What was written there, but in other words. Whenever you wanted to know what they thought or how they felt, it just didn’t [work]. (Interviewee 15)

Facilitators tried to break with the lecturer/students dynamics, and thus to avoid deliberation occurring as a conversation only between the facilitator and participants, instead of deliberation among assembly members. These efforts were enabled, often, by going off-script and building collective ties within the group – for instance, by sharing photos or images; finding links to people’s lives, celebrations, and territories; talking about family and food; and using forms of non-verbal expression like music and dancing: ‘*For example, my group bonded over music, so we had group playlists that we played during our breaks, and everybody got to throw in their favourite song and it made them very happy.*’ (Interviewee 10)

Additionally, improvisation occurred as facilitators decided to edit the script on the spot. For example, they extended the amount of time originally given to an activity in the script, or dropped digital exercises that were incompatible with the unequal digital literacy skills in their group. The ability to improvise only when needed was often

linked to facilitators' clear commitment to the GA's participants. Interviewees described facilitation as a responsibility (Interviewee 12); as creating a sense of "your opinion counts" among participants (Interviewee 2); and as "enabling" and creating a "safe environment" for deliberation (Interviewees 3, 10). Necessary improvisations were also enabled and controlled by the accessibility of other facilitators through WhatsApp groups, as well as the presence of note-takers who created "a dynamic of co-responsibility" (Interviewee 14) with facilitators and supported their work in the small-group sessions.

A variety of challenges emerged in the frontstage that required on-the-spot improvisation. Facilitators described concerns about community hosts and/or translators relaying responses that were not actually given by participants; directly responding to questions by participants; or trying to influence the deliberation. Some facilitators sought to tackle these challenges with improvised solutions, for example by talking to community hosts and setting boundaries for the discussion or even directly correcting translations of participants' statements.

Meaningful deliberation was often enabled by off-script improvisation, on-the-spot editing of the script, and *ad lib* adoption of the roles of translators and community hosts. However, these reactions were not enough to overcome some obstacles inherent to the design of the GA. The most common challenges experienced by facilitators were time constraints, connectivity issues, content accessibility/legibility, and concerns regarding the quality of translation. Concerns about participants' weariness were not only related to the digital platform (Zoom) fatigue but to GA members who joined the process late in the evening or after entire workdays. Facilitators also described GA members having to temporarily drop out and come back to the deliberation or simultaneously face catastrophic circumstances such as extreme weather events, bereavement, or escalating security/political concerns in their territories (Veloso et al. forthcoming).

4.3 New challenges, new stages

Besides the backstage and frontstage initially envisaged by the organisers, parallel, digital stages were created throughout the GA that connected facilitators, community hosts, and assembly members. Some of these were closer to the backstage, some to the frontstage and others linking both. Initially, the core team encouraged facilitators to create WhatsApp groups among those in specific time zones. These parallel groups allowed experienced facilitators from all over the world to share their experiences, methods, and strategies, as well as content that would clarify questions on the topic to be deliberated.

Some facilitators also created WhatsApp groups together with others they considered to be particularly proactive, experienced, and like-minded in their ambition to shape the process in the best way possible. Members used these groups to discuss issues that they felt would distract the larger group. These parallel learning spaces en-

abled facilitators in different time zones to prevent the same challenges from arising again and again across the GA.

> We had sessions happening [throughout] 20 hours, depending on the time zone [where] it was happening. Many times, we got some feedback just before our session, based on the experience of the facilitator who had started that session earlier [than us]. So, there was some real-time feedback that kept flowing in, which then helped [us] to find ways of doing things during our sessions. (Interviewee 11)

One facilitator created a group with their community hosts to send them reminders and inform them about upcoming deliberations. Another created a group for participants to address the challenges that arose when community hosts failed to attend the deliberations. Some facilitators expressed concerns regarding community hosts' reliability when it came to, for example, sending the information package to participants before the deliberations. Creating direct channels of communication with participants responded to this challenge and helped breakout groups gain trust and strengthen ties despite language barriers.

> I would talk to a person from [West Asia]. This person didn't speak English at all, and I don't know how, but we talked on WhatsApp and they'd send me [a photo of] the catch they made that morning before the assembly [while fishing]. It was amazing. (Interviewee 14)

The communication channels described above developed organically into new stages for facilitation and deliberation as the GA process unfolded. They were used both for *ad hoc* interventions when facilitation-related challenges had to be met quickly, as well as for the gradual establishment of a community of practice among facilitators. When it came to facilitation, these emerging stages helped tighten relationships among assembly members, beyond what had been possible within their Zoom breakout groups and shared sessions. The emergence of new stages in response to new challenges illustrates Cornwall's argument that invited/invented spaces are not static, and they are constantly being shaped by the unfolding dynamics of the process (2002).

5 Discussion

Convenors frequently view the facilitation of deliberative processes as the provision of a service. Facilitators have specific expertise –they are people who can get acquainted with a script developed backstage to involve participants in deliberation at the frontstage. However, this approach may leave much potential untapped in efforts to enable (global) deliberation. This was the case with the GA.

The collective narrative that emerges out of the interviews with facilitators presents the GA as a complex endeavour. The facilitators' original task was to moderate the interactive sessions with GA participants; that is, to be active at the frontstage of the process. It soon turned out, however, that the complexity of global deliberation

could not be fully foreseen and accounted for in the initial process design, under which the task of supervising the deliberations was to be outsourced to professionals, who would follow a clearly defined script –reinforcing the idea of facilitators as service-providers or (sub-)contractors. In fact, these global deliberations called for facilitators who understood their role as that of "reflective practitioners" (Forester 1999) who see themselves as co-designers and attentive 'hosts' for the conversations of their 'guests' (participants) in the sessions they supported.

This resulted in interesting dynamics emerging among facilitators, who initially reported not feeling considered in process design, but increasingly entered the backstage by editing the process and introducing improvisation into the script. Ultimately, facilitators created new stages to digest, deliberate, and provide follow-up after each session. Developing and coordinating these new elements firmly rooted facilitator activity in the backstage, while their original purpose (or mandate) was largely frontstage activity.

Separating frontstage and backstage roles led facilitators to increasingly deviate from the initial plan. At times, they would negotiate changes with the core team. Other times, they would simply carry out the changes as they facilitated. However, facilitation –understood as the practical means to enable deliberation– is such a crucial element in citizens' assemblies that its design cannot be separated from its implementation. Good facilitation, which leads to actual deliberation among participants, is highly dependent on improvisation, adaptation, and lively dynamics that vary according to the needs of each group. The need for openness and adaptability in the facilitation process requires convenors of deliberative processes to plan for the unexpected. In practice, this means that the process needs a governance structure which incorporates facilitation as a key dimension of the deliberative process, at least on an equal footing with other elements of the process, such as recruitment choices or output expectations.

Including facilitators in backstage work from the outset could enhance ownership and better adapt the script to the needs of participants. Experienced facilitators may be more aware of the dynamics that emerge during processes, and advocate for building flexibility into the script to accommodate these contingencies. Against the tendency to perceive and describe deliberative processes as something that *was designed*, *organised*, *facilitated,* or *run* (see critical discussion in Escobar 2019), our study reaffirms the importance of an agent-sensitive perspective.

In that sense, better results can be expected when facilitators are invited to co-develop the process and can bring their expertise, experience, and knowledge of diverse local contexts –and this on a dynamic, ongoing basis until the deliberation is over. Including facilitators in backstage development would not only guarantee a more thorough understanding, but also co-ownership. Even in processes with very detailed scripts, facilitators will need to react to emerging challenges and find suitable responses to whatever is happening within the group. They need to be certain of where their mandate (and that of the deliberative process) ends. This remains a creative activity, where the ability to react on the basis of thorough understanding, soft skills, and empathy lets facilitators "follow from the front" (Moore 2012).

Taken as a point of departure for further analysis, the collaboration among facilitators of the GA, which unfolded in a bottom-up mode in reaction to a shared need for collegial support and exchange, and contributed to strengthening the quality of the process, shows the importance of understanding facilitation (also) through a 'community of practice' lens. The contrasting metaphor of a 'market of practitioners' characterises more technocratic, individualised versions of facilitation practice, which are present within the emerging industry of participation and emphasise competition among those who are proficient in facilitation practices. As such, they contrast with the emancipatory traditions of facilitation and community organising, which tend to be more oriented towards cooperation, resilience, and (de)liberation.

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Chapter 4
The role of experts in climate assemblies: Recruitment and inclusion

Abstract: Experts often play a crucial role in the governance and delivery of mini-publics like climate assemblies by occupying advisory roles or contributing to the giving and sharing of information and perspectives in order to support assembly participants' understanding of the issue at hand. While equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) of climate assembly participants is universally paid great attention, we ask: do climate assemblies consider EDI when recruiting and accommodating experts? In this chapter, we theoretically explore why EDI for experts in climate assemblies should be prioritised. We then analyse 23 mini-publics on climate change held in the UK since 2019 and find that there is little to suggest that EDI considerations are taken in practice with respect to the recruitment and inclusion of experts. We outline why this is particularly problematic for assemblies focusing on climate change and offer suggestions for both the practitioner and academic communities.

Keywords: mini-publics, expertise, expert recruitment, EDI, climate assemblies

1 Introduction

Experts participating in mini-publics, like climate assemblies, play a key role in conveying evidence to citizen participants, drawing from their expertise garnered from both professional activities and/or lived experience. This evidence supports participants to make informed decisions on issues related to climate change (Roberts and Lightbody 2017). While the extent of expert involvement can range based on the size or scope of the assembly, existing literature suggests that it is paramount to ensure that diverse perspectives are represented by experts in the evidence-giving process (Roberts and Lightbody 2017, 2).

Because of the increasing use of climate assemblies and their potential to influence policy, continual evaluation of the processes and practices involved can help to ensure that they are inclusive, create evidence-based outcomes that take the perspectives of all relevant actors into account, and are viewed as legitimate by both participants and the wider public (Roberts et al. 2020). For these reasons, ensuring equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) of participants is prioritised by climate assemblies in a range of ways (Climate Assembly UK 2021, 10). Assembly members are often chosen via sortition, such that the composition of participants reflects a cross-section of the wider community (for example, in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, age, income, (dis)ability, and/or other social categories or characteristics) as closely as possible (Escobar and Elstub

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2017). Increasingly, inclusion of different viewpoints has played a role in the recruitment of participants, with some climate assemblies accounting for participants' level of concern about climate change within their selection criteria (e. g. Climate Assembly UK 2021; Scotland's Climate Assembly 2021; Aberdeen Climate and Fairness Panel 2021; Adur and Worthing Climate Assembly 2020). In addition, participants can be offered monetary compensation, technological support, childcare, accessible spaces, and other accommodations to ensure accessibility and inclusivity of their participation in the assembly (Roberts et al. 2022).

In comparison, little attention has been paid to whether EDI measures for the experts involved in climate assemblies are prioritised. It is thus unclear whether existing policies or practices of climate assemblies have sought to ensure EDI considerations, standards, or thresholds for the recruitment of those involved in evidence-giving. This is important because, first, issues of inequality in society, politics, and education –particularly in the fields of engineering and physical sciences from which experts for climate assemblies are often recruited (Blackburn 2017; Reggiani et al. 2023)– precede and foreground climate assemblies, potentially increasing the likelihood of over-representation of already privileged demographics within the pool of expert evidence-givers. Second, paying attention to oppression and inequalities is particularly important when it comes to issues of climate change due to the disproportionate impact of a changing climate on vulnerable groups around the world (Dietzel and Venn 2021; Tubi and Feitelson 2019) who tend to be underrepresented, marginalised, and/or disadvantaged in political institutions and processes.

To address this gap in both the literature and practice, we first explore the role experts play in mini-publics and put forth a theoretical basis for addressing EDI issues for experts in climate assemblies. Following this, we investigate existing practices of EDI for experts through an analysis of 23 UK climate assemblies. We assess the demographic makeup of the pool of experts who participated in these climate assemblies and whether organisers of climate assemblies in the UK embed EDI principles for expert inclusion throughout the process, including having measures in place to ensure and report on EDI for experts.

2 The role of experts in climate assemblies

To complement or deepen participants' knowledge of the topic being deliberated, experts are tasked with providing information and answering participants' questions (Brown 2014). While climate assembly organisers and/or those in governance roles carefully curate the format and style of the evidence-giving process, experts can convey information through a range of means, including presentations or talks, written briefings, videos, articles, site visits, games, etc. (Iredale et al. 2006; Roberts et al. 2020;). Evidence-giving usually takes place via formal plenary sessions or breakouts, or informal round table discussions.

In the case of climate assemblies, experts play an important role in conveying technical or scientific information about climate change in accessible ways to participants. But they also help to unpick commonly held, socially-engrained assumptions. For instance, while some participants may think that the solution to climate change mitigation involves individuals making more sustainable choices, experts can introduce more systemic perspectives. These perspectives can highlight, for instance, policy's ability to make sustainable choices the easiest, most affordable, most inclusive, and most available option for individuals, communities, businesses and institutions. Experts also help to convey the impacts of climate change that participants themselves may not feel or see personally. This may involve explicitly linking issues that may be important for participants (such as the cost of living, immigration, public health, or biodiversity loss) to climate change. Experts' testimony may also enable participants to see themselves as experts by encouraging them to reflect on their own experience of climate change and ecological breakdown (Roberts et al. 2020).

Importantly, democratic processes are founded on egalitarian values which prioritise the fair and equal participation of all citizens. Thus, the mere involvement of experts in these processes produces a tension: experts are granted a particular epistemic authority above 'common' participants by virtue of their extra-ordinary knowledge, and yet in order to make informed decisions, experts are needed to support participants' understanding of the topic they are deliberating. Mini-publics seek to mitigate this tension between egalitarianism and the need for informed decision-making by limiting the power of experts (who serve as advisors to participants rather than decision-makers themselves). We assert that EDI considerations for experts may also serve as an additional means to ensure that egalitarianism is prioritised within these democratic processes.

Experts not only maintain a wide range of responsibilities in mini-publics, but the information they provide citizens during the deliberation process has the most sway on their opinions of the topic at hand (Goodin and Niemeyer 2003; Thompson et al. 2021). For this reason, experts should come from a wide range of knowledge backgrounds, including those with highly specialised and/or technical expertise in aspects of climate science or policy as well as those with lived experience related to the topic. For example, including disabled lived-experience experts could expose participants to the particular implications of banning plastic straws or car travel in cities for the disabled community. Such lived experience experts may also come from local communities, other marginalised groups, or environmental justice movements (Schlosberg 2013; Fischer 2000). In selecting experts, therefore, governors of climate assemblies should embrace an expansive notion of what constitutes expertise and, therefore, who counts as an expert.

Experts participate in the governance of climate assemblies in various ways, including by serving in governance groups (e.g. Stewarding Board). In some cases, a group of topic experts are given a formal role (Expert Panel, Expert Leads or similar) to coordinate and oversee the selection of other experts. As Roberts et al. (2020, 7) outline, experts usually select "the information and perspectives that they think are most

relevant", although in some instances this information is vetted by climate assembly governance groups. Thus, while it is clear that experts' privilege extends across multiple levels of the governance in climate assemblies (Roberts et al. 2022), the implications of this dynamic has not yet faced sufficient academic attention.

Similarly understudied are the ways experts are selected. Governance bodies are often responsible for choosing experts to participate in mini-publics, although in some cases citizen participants may request additional experts to speak on topics they would like specific evidence on, particularly as climate assembly unfolds. Yet, Roberts et al. (2020) show that the process of recruiting experts can be challenging for a number of reasons. 'Who' is considered an expert, and how these experts are identified, often depends on the individuals inhabiting the climate assembly's governance roles and the connections of these individuals.

Even in the face of research demonstrating the various roles and relative power of experts in climate assemblies, research has yet to a) offer a theoretical backing for the importance of EDI amongst these experts and b) investigate the existing role of EDI in the identification, selection, and participation of experts in climate assemblies which have already taken place. This is a notable oversight. As Moore (2021, 554) asserts: "if we assume that in complex societies reliance on expertise is unavoidable, valuable, and yet potentially threatening to democratic ideals, then we need to devote more attention to the question of how reliance on expertise is organised and how its legitimacy might be sustained". This is key to support citizens' decision-making in ways that are not detrimental for the democratic process, for example by using ideologies of 'meritocracy' (Sandel 2021) such that disproportionate decision-making power is given to experts rather than citizens. Here, we offer a theoretical framework justifying why attention should be paid to EDI amongst experts. Then, we investigate if and how UK climate assemblies have considered EDI for experts thus far.

3 Theoretical framework: The importance of EDI for experts

Here, we set forth our theoretical framework explicating the importance of taking EDI for experts seriously in the climate assembly process.

3.1 Improved fairness: The normative stance for EDI among experts

From a normative standpoint (what *should* be), ensuring that EDI principles for experts are embedded in climate assemblies will improve the fairness of these democratic decision-making processes. A 'powerful justice' argument from the political science literature on representation argues that it is unfair for powerful groups and individuals to

"dominate descriptive representation" (Childs and Lovenduski 2013, 493) to the detriment of those historically underrepresented, excluded, and disadvantaged. Phillips (1998) suggests that even in cases where binding mandates have been made by powerful groups to ensure equality for oppressed groups, these mandates are limited in their power and ultimately subject to the considerable autonomy of representatives as individuals, "which is part of why it matters who those representatives are" (Phillips 1998, 44). Particularly relevant to democratic decision-making processes, Phillips (1998, 44) asserts that "there is something distinctly odd about a democracy that accepts a responsibility for redressing disadvantage, but never sees the disadvantaged as the appropriate people to carry this through". Because it is more likely that disadvantaged groups will follow through in their self-advocacy when they represent themselves, it is unfair for their representation to be left to the fickle will of the over-represented group's 'commitment' to them (if such a commitment exists in the first place). Thus, in line with theories of fair and democratic representation, climate assembly experts should include participation of a wide range of demographics identities.

3.2 Improved representation of diverse perspectives

While experts are not 'representatives' in the electoral sense, they undoubtedly play a significant role in representing *ideas and information* to participants in climate assemblies. As we have outlined, experts are responsible for choosing who provides evidence and perspectives, what information to provide, what type of evidence should be prioritised, and the manner in which this information will be presented. Thus, even when climate assemblies' governance bodies curate or vet experts' contributions, individual experts often use their own discretion to choose to represent, or to not represent, information based on their own expertise, opinions, perspectives, and values.

The literature on descriptive and substantive representation suggests that identities indeed influence such decisions. Phillips' (1998, 44) explains that when over-representation of certain identities and interests persists in politics over time, it is likely that certain issues, preferences, needs, and ideas not only go ignored, but lack the opportunity to be crystalised as part of a political agenda. Underrepresentation creates "an additional problem of preferences not yet legitimated, the views not even formulated, much less expressed … [since] preferences are always formed in relation to what has been set as a norm". Phillips (1998) thus suggests that over-represented groups are simply unqualified to champion the interests of groups that are underrepresented and oppressed, as they have no basis for knowing what these interests are without such groups' direct involvement.

Building on both the political science literature and extant research on the role of experts in mini-publics, we argue that underrepresentation of marginalised groups and individuals in the pool of experts may play an important role in limiting the content of the evidence itself, which may have negative implications for the assemblies' outcomes. The social, economic, and environmental context of climate change and ecological

breakdown is far from inherently value-free, and as such experts' standpoints, experience, and professional or scientific perspectives on various matters are informed by a range of factors (Roberts et al. 2020). The evidence that experts choose to present to climate assembly participants is thus—purposefully or inadvertently—inextricably linked with their experiences of social privilege and oppression. Experts who belong to privileged social groups may maintain perspectives which fail to represent the interests of disadvantaged groups. By comparison, experts of less privileged backgrounds may be more effective at providing evidence in line with experiences and interests which have lacked the opportunity to be legitimated or formulated due to existing norms (Phillips 1998).

Empirical testing of theories of inclusivity in governance demonstrate that increased participation of disadvantaged groups in politics indeed impacts wide-ranging political outcomes (Mastracci and Adams 2021; Essener-Jedenastik 2017), oftentimes in ways that benefit these groups (Wittmer and Bouché 2013; Clayton et al. 2019). Thus, overall, we suggest that improving EDI for experts may indeed also influence the outcomes of climate assemblies and make them fairer, better, and more impactful.

3.3 Improved legitimacy perceptions of climate assembly processes and outcomes

Next, we argue that addressing EDI issues related to experts may impact the perceived legitimacy of climate assemblies. Within the literature investigating the impacts of diversity on legitimacy perceptions of a range of democratic activities, Christensen (2020) finds that inclusivity of mini-publics does not impact citizens' perceived legitimacy of these processes. Yet, other literature demonstrates the opposite. Mini-publics are seen as particularly legitimate by those who feel under-represented by traditional politics (Goldberg and Bächtiger 2022), suggesting that increased inclusion and diversity particularly distinguish mini-publics from existing political institutions. Goldberg (2021, 64) finds that survey experiment respondents prefer mini-publics to be "maximally representative and inclusive" while Pow (2021, 2) finds that citizens who value political equality view "the purest selection model… as particularly legitimate" when it comes to selecting participants

Arnesen and Peters (2018) find that decisions are more accepted when made by descriptively representative bodies, particularly when outcomes are unfavourable. Similarly, descriptive representation of women improves perceptions of legitimacy, especially when ultimate decisions are anti-feminist (Clayton et al. 2019). While descriptive representation of women did not impact substantive legitimacy of non-gendered issue outcomes, it still impacted perceived legitimacy of the *procedures*, indicating that "inclusion matters for broader reasons of justice" (Clayton et al. 2019, 124). Rassmusen and Reher (2023) find that citizens' legitimacy perceptions decrease when social justice-based interest groups are under-represented. Additionally, descriptive representation of Latino citizens makes their perceptions of government more positive and decreases

their belief that "government is run for the benefit of the few" (Sanchez and Morin 2011, 498). Similar research shows that diversity within bureaucracy improves legitimacy perceptions (Choi and Hong 2020), and that this increased legitimacy leads to increased trust and compliance with these organisations (Riccucci et al. 2016; Riccucci and Van Ryzin 2017).

3.4 Importance of EDI for the climate and ecological crises

Apart from considerations of normativity, representation, and legitimacy, climate assemblies should also put emphasis on issues of EDI because of their unique remit. While there is increased evidence that climate and ecological destruction will unavoidably affect all global citizens, different groups will face differentiated impacts based on their social, economic, and/or political statuses (Tubi and Feitelson 2019). Climate change vulnerability is informed by communities' and households' ability to "anticipate, cope with, resist, and recover from the direct and indirect impacts of extreme weather events and geophysical shift such as sea level rise" (Shonkoff et al. 2011, 486), all of which are determined by income, geographical placement, social and political rights. EDI considerations are therefore a main priority for the organisation of climate assemblies when it comes to the sortition of participants, which ensures that the pool of participants reflects a cross-section of the broader community.

Because individuals' experiences are contingent in many ways on their identities, experts' understanding of climate change and ecological breakdown is shaped by their backgrounds—which may then impact the type and content of the evidence that they present (Muradova et al. 2020). Thus, it is particularly important to examine and address EDI for experts in the context of climate action due to the disproportionate impacts of climate change on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups (Dietzel and Venn 2021; Tubi and Feitelson 2019).

4 Research design: Data and methods

We have outlined a theoretical framework emphasising why EDI amongst experts should be considered and assessed by climate assembly organisers. Yet, no research has yet been conducted to examine this topic systematically. To address this gap, we examined 23 cases in the UK to explore the processes in place to foster EDI among experts, their demographic makeup, and the measures taken to ensure EDI throughout the mini-public process.

We investigated the 23 climate change-related assemblies, juries, or panels (hereafter, collectively referred to as climate mini-publics) which have taken place in the UK, and for which public-facing reports had been published by March of 2022. We chose to include assemblies, juries, and panels to create the broadest dataset possible, and because these various types of mini-publics function in very similar ways and have

very similar remits (see Escobar and Elstub 2017 for an overview). We identified these climate mini-publics through systematic searches of Participedia and Involve's Citizens' Assembly Tracker which we cross-referenced with web searches. Of the 23 climate mini-publics included, 16 were citizens' assemblies, four were citizens' panels, and three were citizens' juries; two took place in Wales, three took place in Scotland, and 17 took place in England (see Table 4.1 for a full list of cases).

Table 4.1: Climate mini-publics included in the analysis

[n.] Mini-public name	Type of mini-public and number of participants	TImeline
[n. 1] Climate Assembly UK	Assembly (108)	Jan-May 2020
[n. 2] Scotland's Climate Assembly	Assembly (105)	Nov 2020-Mar 2021
[n. 3] Aberdeenshire Climate and Fairness Panel	Panel (23)	Feb-Mar 2021
[n. 4] Adur and Worthing Climate Assembly	Assembly (43)	Sept-Dec 2020
[n. 5] Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly	Assembly (44)	Mar 2021
[n. 6] Brent Climate Assembly	Assembly (53)	Nov-Dec 2019
[n. 7] Brighton and Hove Climate Assembly	Assembly (50)	Sept-Nov 2020
[n. 8] Camden Citizens' Assembly on the Climate Crisis	Assembly (over 50)	Jul 2019
[n. 9] Copeland People's Panel on Climate Change	Jury (30)	Jul-Sept 2021
[n. 10] Croydon Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change	Assembly (42)	Jan-Feb 2020
[n. 11] Devon Climate Assembly	Assembly (70 selected/66 participated)	June-Jul 2021
[n. 12] Glasgow Citizens' Assembly on the Climate Emergency	Assembly (50)	June-Aug 2021
[n. 13] Greater Cambridge Citizens' Assembly	Assembly (53)	Sept-Oct 2019
[n. 14] Kendal Climate Change Citizens' Jury	Jury (20)	Jul-Oct 2020
[n. 15] Lambeth's Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change	Assembly (52)	May-Jul 2021
[n. 16] Lancaster District Climate Change People's Jury	Jury (30)	Feb-Oct 2020

Table 4.1 *(Continued)*

[n.] Mini-public name	Type of mini-public and number of participants	TImeline
[n. 17] Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury	Jury (25)	Sept-Nov 2019
[n. 18] Leicester Climate Assembly	Assembly (of the 71 potential attendees, 53 [75%] took part on the day)	Jan 2020
[n. 19] Newham Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change	Assembly (43)	Feb-20
[n. 20] North of Tyne Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change	Assembly (49)	Feb-Mar 2021
[n. 21] Oxford Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change	Assembly (50)	Sept-Oct 2019
[n. 22] South Wales Valleys Climate and Fairness Panel	Panel (19)	Oct-Dec 2020
[n. 23] Thurrock Climate and Fairness Panel	Panel (20)	Jan-Feb 2021

We used content analysis to examine the reports published by each of the climate mini-publics. We paid particular attention to the reporting of the selection processes for citizens and experts, EDI considerations for experts, EDI considerations embedded in the design of the processes, and the listing of specific experts. Such information sometimes came from the climate mini-public website, rather than published reports. The 23 climate mini-publics included in our study involved a total of 476 experts, some of whom presented at more than one case in our sample.

Four climate mini-publics were completed before the COVID-19 pandemic and held in person. The remaining 19 were at least partially impacted by lockdowns, and thus conducted online. While some informed national policy (n. 1, 2) and had over 100 participants, most informed local policy (n. 3–23) and had an average of 41 participants (ranging from less than 20 to over 60 participants). The number of experts ranged from over 100 (n. 2) to less than 10 (n. 10) depending on the size and scope of the mini-public. The length of the process varied from 16 sessions (n. 16) to one session (n. 18), and almost all[1] were held entirely on weekends and evenings. Figure 4.1 shows the number of experts who were involved.

1 Specific timings were not explicitly reported for 5 Assemblies (n. 5, 10, 11, 15, 17).

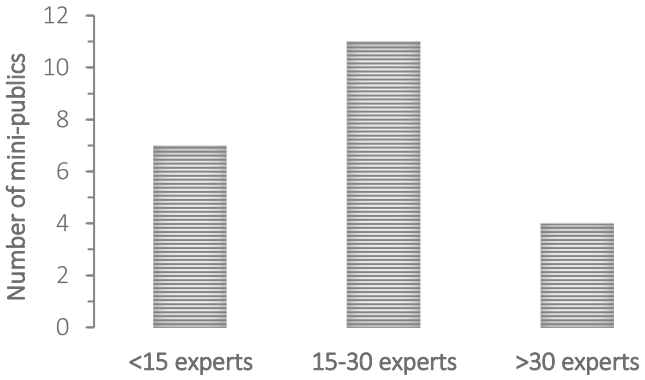

Figure 4.1: Number of experts involved in 22 mini-publics on climate action in the UK

5 Findings

Given that mini-public processes are (or should be) centred on transparency and representation, it follows that open reporting[2] on governance and selection processes would be expected, including with respect to experts' identification, selection, and diversity. Nevertheless, this is not the case for the 23 climate mini-publics we examined. Below, we outline our findings for each of the key areas of interest outlined above.

5.1 EDI processes for selecting experts

Through our content analysis, we find that most (19) of the reports explicate that the responsibility of expert identification and selection usually falls to climate assembly governance groups (called the Oversight Panel, Stewarding Group, Expert Advisory Board, Advisory Group, etc.). Yet, these reports do not make clear any specifics regarding the criteria or characteristics of the expertise being sought, how this was decided, or the specific manner in which experts were chosen. While one climate mini-public (n. 19) allowed participants to request additional speakers to cover topics they felt "would improve their ability to respond to the Assembly question", reports usually only offer a succinct statement such as "the identity of the commentators was decided upon by members of the Oversight Panel" (n. 20).

Our key finding is that none of the 23 reports explicate any EDI initiatives taken with regard to expert selection for either evidence-giving or governance roles. Four climate mini-publics do not mention how experts were selected at all (n. 8, 10, 18 and 21). Four (n. 4, 5, 8 and 16) report a desire for diversity among experts, but this is in refer-

2 We examined public information and reports available prior to June 2022.

ence to a diversity of perspectives, expert opinions, and/or affiliations rather than to inclusivity of a broad range of demographic categories or identities. While two assemblies report that 'lived experience' experts are included (n. 4 and 11), neither report makes clear the criteria for what counts as 'lived experience'.

In all the cases, the process of identification and recruitment of individuals into governance groups responsible for selecting experts is not clearly explained. As such, the steps that lead to establishing the management team(s) and the criteria used to appoint governance roles are unclear. Like the process of expert selection, no substantial information is available in public-facing materials to assess whether the process of recruitment into governance roles was fair and inclusive, as none of the climate mini-publics reviewed referred to EDI considerations.

Overall, it is impossible to ascertain exactly how experts were appointed because of the lack of information that is publicly available. This does not mean that the organisers or governing groups do not consider EDI during witness identification, selection and recruitment; a great deal of thoughtful and careful work may go on behind the scenes without being reported. However, without providing this information publicly, the question of whether the processes of expert selection were fair, inclusive, or EDI-informed is thus left unanswered.

5.2 Demographic data of experts

We next turn to the reporting of experts' demographic information. We find that names and affiliations of the experts are reported by climate mini-publics, either in their formal public-facing reports or on their websites, in all but one (n. 18). However, experts' demographic information is not reported by any of the climate mini-publics. Moreover, there is no indication that such demographic data is collected at all. This contrasts severely with the thorough reporting on participants' demographic information.

Expert names and affiliations are not sufficient for assessing EDI, as inferring gender or any other identity categories from this limited information is either impossible or unethical. Rather, to assess whether the group of experts is diverse and inclusive, there is a need for aggregated reporting of demographic information provided freely and anonymously by the experts to the organisers. We recognise that where the number of experts is small (e. g. less than 20 individuals, like in n. 7–10 and 12) it may not be appropriate to publish even aggregated demographic information for privacy reasons. Further, EDI issues are heightened for the climate mini-publics in which fewer experts participate, as it is more challenging to capture broad representation with small numbers. However, failure to report or acknowledge expert demographics in any way, or seemingly to record such information at all, inevitably results in a lack of transparency and may (re)produce or exacerbate existing inequalities.

5.3 EDI considerations for experts during climate mini-public processes

Finally, we reflect on whether expert-related EDI considerations are made during the climate mini-public process. We find that, while accessibility considerations are made for participants (e. g. accessible locations, technology support), no mention of such accessibility is made explicitly for experts; this is particularly problematic when considering lived-experience experts, who may not have the resources of other experts or have particular accessibility requirements. While 20 climate mini-publics report providing financial compensation for participation, remuneration or compensation for experts is not mentioned in any report. This is problematic, as participation may equate to working overtime for some experts. In other cases, experts may be volunteers for various political or social causes (e. g. conservation volunteers, environmental activists, urban gardening groups, etc.) giving testimony in that capacity, and thus there may be assumptions that these experts do not deserve or expect renumeration. While one case (n. 13) refers to a £3.5K budget for "Advisory group/ Speaker/ Expert lead honorarium / accommodation / travel / subsistence expenses", it remains unclear to whom this money was allocated, how much was allocated, and how this was decided. Further, there was no mention in the reports of measures such as the provision of childcare, to support their participation (this was covered for participants in at least one Assembly; n. 1). In fact, none of the reports acknowledge any potential barriers to expert participation, which is particularly important for those contributing insights from lived experience or community perspectives (Lightbody and Escobar 2021). For example, it is not clear whether the organisers assured potential experts from underrepresented or disadvantaged groups of the measures taken to ensure a supportive and inclusive space, or that accommodation and other such logistical support would be offered where required.

Overall, no substantial information is available to assess whether the process of expert participation is fair and inclusive in the climate mini-publics we examined.

6 Discussion and conclusions

We have offered a theoretical framework explicating why equality, diversity, and inclusion matter when it comes to recruitment and participation of experts in climate mini-publics. In practice, however, we find that these measures are, at best, not reported. While our findings do not imply that EDI issues for experts were entirely ignored in the climate assemblies which have taken place in the UK, given the lack of transparent and publicly available information, this might as well be the case.

Without attention paid to EDI issues, the influence of privilege may escape notice, and lead to outcomes which replicate existing power dynamics that (re)produce exclusion and oppression of already disadvantaged and marginalised groups. This is particularly important when considering the need to go above and beyond 'stopping climate

change' and instead focus on a Just Transition toward climate justice which is equitable for all (Just Transition Commission 2023). For this reason, we suggest that future climate assemblies, and mini-publics more broadly, take the EDI of experts seriously in decision-making about their organisation and execution. This internal dimension of a climate assembly is highly consequential for its external dimensions. It matters for both normative and practical reasons: it can elevate the legitimacy, capacity and credibility of climate assemblies and thus their potential for impact.

First, we assert that climate mini-publics should integrate EDI frameworks in the recruitment and inclusion of experts, which entails both a) setting targets to ensure a diverse and inclusive pool of experts and b) collecting and reporting experts' demographic data while ensuring their identities and privacy are protected. The multifaceted nature of experts' potential to impact processes and outcomes of climate mini-publics justifies increased attention to these areas. A lack of sufficient EDI measures may indeed raise compelling questions regarding the quality of the deliberative process. As discussed in this chapter, experts not only provide evidence to participants; in some cases, their influence extends far beyond this remit by contributing to the design and governance of climate mini-publics. For example, in Scotland's Climate Assembly (n. 2), not only did a selected group of experts (the Evidence Group) identify experts, but they also influenced the design of the assembly, gave evidence themselves as 'informants', and reviewed and fed back assembly draft outputs and recommendations. The same experts also reviewed and scored the quality of the Scottish Government's responses to the recommendations of the assembly; participants then relied on these scores to assess the Government's response one year after the assembly concluded. The influence of these experts calls for increased attention to ensuring barriers to their participation are lowered and demographic targets of inclusivity are developed and met.

Second, we argue that transparency of these processes is required. While it is possible that the UK climate assemblies we investigated indeed took some steps towards EDI without reporting them, this still poses a significant issue, as it contrasts directly with the fundamental pillar of transparency that in many ways differentiates mini-publics from traditional methods of political decision-making wherein we trust representatives to make decisions for us. EDI processes should be adequately reported to ensure that experts from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds are meaningfully considered for such influential roles. This would not only improve both fairness and the democratic quality of the deliberative process, but also ensure that a wide range of views are included. This is particularly important for issues of climate change and ecological breakdown that require radical approaches and have differential impacts across populations.

Our research also has implications for further research. While different roles and responsibilities in governance, design, and delivery of climate assemblies tend to be clearly outlined in official reports, how these groups interact is less clear. Who is ultimately responsible for what, who has the first say, and who has the final say should face academic scrutiny. In addition, research could more thoroughly investigate if

and how climate assemblies ensure that experts represent a broad range of viewpoints, particularly when these viewpoints are radical.

When outlining our recommendations, we recognise that these are based on a sample of climate mini-publics in the UK and that our findings are influenced by the context in which the study was undertaken. However, to stimulate future research and best practice, we also find it important to acknowledge that the global nature of climate change as a political issue calls into question the role of global expertise and perspectives in regional, city, and national climate assemblies and climate change decision-making more generally. It is therefore important for future research to unpack the role of incorporating global voices, particularly those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and climate action, into the deliberations and discussions surrounding sustainable transition and transformation at a range of scales. We believe this is key for climate action that is inspired by democratic principles of social justice and which (truly) leaves no one behind.

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Chapter 5
How does climate change expertise shape the form of a climate assembly? (and vice versa)

Abstract: Different types of randomly-selected citizen participation in environmental decision-making are taking place under the banner of 'climate assemblies'. This chapter illustrates how the political function of an assembly (external dimension) is shaped by the conception of climate change produced by the interactions between citizens and experts within the process (internal dimension). The research that underpins this chapter is based on an ethnographic study of the practices of expertise in four climate assemblies at different levels of governance (Wallonia Citizens' Panel, French Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat, European's Panel on Climate Change and Health, and the Global Assembly). Using the concept of co-production (Jasanoff 2004), the main contribution of this chapter is to analyse how different ways of conceptualising climate change and engaging with expertise can influence how citizens' assemblies relate to political institutions. Three types of political functions in climate assemblies are identified: citizens as public policy users; citizens as constituent assembly members; and citizens as legislators. Each entails a specific relationship between the way climate change is approached (place of emotions, contested debates, profiles of experts, etc.) and the different roles that climate assemblies can play in representative democracies.

Keywords: climate assemblies, expertise, Science and Technology Studies, coproduction, political ecology

1 Introduction

When climate assemblies deliberate about climate change, are they deliberating about the same issue?[1] Researchers have analysed the diversity of climate assemblies in terms of internal design (Courant 2020) or integration into climate governance (Boswell et al. 2023). Less have focused on the diversity of climate change conceptions developed in climate assemblies. However, these may differ widely, resulting in very different climate policy proposals and political functions for climate assemblies.

Based on the observation of four climate assemblies at different governance levels: the Walloon Citizens' Panel for the Climate (2021), the French Citizens Convention for Climate (2019–2020), the European Citizens' Panel on Climate change, Environment and Health (2021–2022) and the Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis

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(2021), this chapter categorises climate assemblies according to their relationships to expertise. Our assumption is that the political function of an assembly – its external dimension – is shaped by internal dimensions, specifically the conception of climate change produced by the interactions between citizens and expertise within the process. In other words, the relationship to expertise in climate assemblies produces and reveals the potential political roles of randomly-selected citizens (cf. Escobar 2017). Three different types are identified. The first gives to randomly-selected citizens a public-policy user function in a context where climate policies can lead to restrictive and, sometimes, unpopular measures. The second has more affinities with a constituent assembly. The ongoing global disaster pushes to transform the most fundamental frames of political decision-making and randomly selected people can make proposals to change the constitutions in a symbolic way. The third relates climate change to ideological and politically profound debates, and the functions of randomly-selected citizens are better able to be combined with other forms of political action, particularly non-institutional ones. Each of the three types – carried by different types of actors – involves a specific interrelation between the way climate change is approached (e.g. place of emotions, debates, and profiles of experts) and how it can find a place in political systems.

To develop this, the analysis crosses the literature on participation in political science with the literature on expertise in science and technology studies (STS). The concept of "co-production" as formalised by Sheila Jasanoff and others in the book *States of Knowledge* (2004), is particularly useful. Because it combines the way social hierarchies and knowledge are produced, diffused, and used, co-production offers a method to forge close links between inputs from political science and from STS, in order to better understand social transformation.

After a short literature review in section 2, we introduce the concept of co-production and its empirical implications in section 3. In sections 4 and 5, we present the cases and the method. Section 6 is devoted to the presentation of the typology.

2 Literature review

In the 1990s, a critical reflection on expertise began to be formalised, particularly from STS British researchers (Wynne 1989; Jasanoff 1987; Irwin and Wynne 2004;). This critique emerged in a broader period of questioning science as a pure and autonomous field of production (Knorr-Cetina and Mulkay 1983; Collins 1992). These researchers made visible the exclusion of citizens from political decisions based on technocratic values (Wynne 1989; Callon 1998;), and the social construction of experts' legitimacy (Jasanoff 1998). At the same time, scientific work has accompanied and even encouraged political experiments and institutional reforms aimed at broadening public participation in political decision-making, particularly with regard to health and environmental risks (Callon 1998; Callon, Lascoumes, and Barthe 2001; Sclove 2003).

At the turn of the millennium, research into expertise took two turns. On the one hand, the theoretical critique of expertise was lessened in favour of a confrontation with the conditions under which the opening of expertise could be limited – the "problem of extension" (Collins and Evans 2009). What this sociology of expertise has in common with political science on deliberative or participative processes is that they both propose principles, and normative procedures, for the intervention of expertise in deliberative systems, advocating the recognition of a diversity of relevant knowledge for policymaking (Sintomer 2008; Nez 2011), the need for expertise pluralism (Stirling 2008) or contradictory debate (Manin 2021). On the other hand, the enthusiasm of the early days was soon overtaken by a more critical view of the institutional arrangements for public participation in policymaking. These studies show that the transformation capacity of 'experts' and 'laypeople' relationships by mini-publics is very limited (Levidow 2007; Topçu 2013). It depends on the issues at stake, how these are framed, and the balance of power between concerned actors (Irwin 2001).

Studies of expertise in climate assemblies found that the initial choices of expertise given to assembly members are crucial in shaping the subsequent behaviour and choices of the assembly (Muradova et al. 2020; Thompson et al. 2021). One of the particularities of climate change as a subject for deliberation is its "wicked" character. This requires paying particular attention to climate change conceptions in assemblies. Involving assembly members as early as possible in the choice of expert witnesses and information is cited as a key practice in the process (Elstub et al. 2021), as well as varying the ways in which climate knowledge is communicated (Frøslee Ibsen 2023). While many studies have a procedural perspective on expertise provision in climate assemblies, and look for practical improvements, others have a more discursive point of view. At a global scale, deliberations on climate change have been studied through environmental discourse analysis, applied to global climate assembly experiments (Curato et al. 2023). The idea is either to advocate the importance of spaces for deliberation between these different discourses on the environment (Dryzek 2012), or to defend minority voices in the face of the dominance of certain discourses on the environment at an international level (Bäckstrand and Lövbrand 2007; 2019).

It is in this latter perspective that this chapter fits in, but by supplementing the discursive approach with a consideration of the materiality of expertise provided and used. Expertise is considered in a very broad sense. First, the term 'expertise' is used instead of 'expert witnesses' (even if they will have a great role in this analysis) to take into account the knowledge used by citizens that did not come from specific experts e.g. documents, books, media articles, audiovisual materials, citizens' testimonies. Second, expertise is not considered as the monopoly of socially legitimate expert witnesses. Expertise used to construct assembly proposals is analysed regardless of the source.

3 Co-production

The concept of co-production answers two pitfalls of expertise. The first one is the idea in early STS (Callon and Latour 2012) that social structures determine the production of knowledge. This does not mean that knowledge is false, but the concept of co-production tries to go beyond this basic notion. Secondly, that "nature" explains the way we structure our societies. From Jasanoff's perspective, both are co-produced simultaneously:

> In broad areas of both present and past human activity, we gain explanatory power by thinking of natural and social orders as being produced together. (…) Briefly stated, co-production is shorthand for the proposition that the ways in which we know and represent the world (both nature and society) are inseparable from the ways in which we choose to live in it. (Jasanoff 2004, 2)

This chapter proposes to see climate assemblies as spaces of co-production. They bring together different actors who do not have the same conception of what is, and what should be, public participation in climate policies. Because climate assemblies are not yet clearly integrated in political systems, the debates are particularly salient in and around them, and their future remains (relatively) open. In that sense, they represent suitable spaces to understand how an approach to the "nature" of climate change involves a certain form of political assembly, and vice versa.

The concept of co-production encourages us to conduct empirical research. The interactions between citizens and expertise observed within climate assemblies are shaped by social structures and inequalities that pre-exist and considerably reduce the room for manoeuvre of those who are not in a dominant position. To understand that better, and integrate larger social structures in the analysis, the research proceeded at different scales.

Three levels of analysis were used for each climate assembly, making links between their internal and external dimensions: the precise elaboration of climate policies by assembly members; the more general design of the climate assembly; the place and reception of the assembly in the relevant spaces of society.

4 Overview of four climate assembly cases

This study comprises different levels of governance at which climate change is discussed: regional, national, European, and global. The case selection was based on the idea of varying the main characteristics of climate assemblies as much as possible. The objective is not to compare them strictly but to historicise each case and the crossing of ideas, actors, and practices between them (Werner and Zimmermann 2003).

The analysis is based on a qualitative survey of the relations to expertise in four climate assemblies, whose main characteristics are summarised in Table 5. 1.

Table 5.1: Main characteristics of four climate assembly cases

	French Citizens' Convention for Climate (2019 – 2020)	Walloon Citizens' Panel for the Climate (2021)	European Citizens' Panel on Climate change, Environment and Health (2021 – 2022)	Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis (2021)
Context and initiator	Initiated by the French president in a very turbulent political and social context (Yellow Vests movement).	Initiated by the Walloon administration, after the appointment of the ecologist Philippe Henry as vice-president of the Walloon government.	Initiated by the three European institutions in the frame of the "European Green Deal".	Initiated by international NGOs and foundations[2].
Number of assembly members	150	50	200	100
Place	Paris, online	Online, Liège, Charleroi, Namur	Strasbourg, online, Warsaw	Online
Mandate	To "define the structural measures to achieve a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of at least 40 % by 2030 compared to 1990, in a spirit of social justice" (Philippe 2019). The president promised to pass them on "unfiltered" to parliament, referendum, or direct regulatory application.	To update the "Air Climate Energy Plan" with inputs from public participation.	To construct concrete ideas about the future of the European institutions, and about the European policies on different themes including climate change. During and after, the citizens' assemblies proposals have been discussed through Conference Plenary including a few assembly members and different representatives of the European institutions.	To answer the question "How can humanity address the climate and ecological crisis in a fair and effective way?" and feed the deliberations of COP26.
Format of the recommenddations	A report of 147 measures (Convention citoyenne pour le climat 2021), most of them very precise.	A report of 168 recommendations (Panel citoyen Wallonie 2022), most of them very general.	A general report of 49 proposals (six on "Climate change and the environment").	A *People's Declaration for the Sustainable Future of Planet Earth* including a Preamble and seven principles.
Main features of expertise	- A great number of expert witnesses interventions in plena-	- Process of "reverse expertise": development of ideas and	- Process of "reverse expertise": program based on the assem-	- A mix between different practices (Curato et al. 2023).

2 See: https://globalassembly.org/about-2 (accessed 20.09.24).

Table 5.1 *(Continued)*

	French Citizens' Convention for Climate (2019 – 2020)	Walloon Citizens' Panel for the Climate (2021)	European Citizens' Panel on Climate change, Environment and Health (2021 – 2022)	Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis (2021)
	ries and thematic groups in a "top-down" manner (Giraudet et al. 2022). - A "support group" consisting of fourteen experts – most of whom had an engineering or economics background – to help with the production of proposals.	proposals without expert witnesses input (except a pre-written technical "kit" on climate change). - Only three expert witnesses interventions almost at the end of the process.	bly members' knowledge and questions. - The few expert witnesses are mostly members of the European institutions.	- A collective reading of an "information booklet" written by the Knowledge and Wisdom Committee. - A dozen expert witnesses presenting on specific subjects through video recordings. - Some sessions devoted to the presentation of climate change experiences by assembly members themselves.
Impacts on climate policies	Only a few of them were implemented through the climate and resilience law (LOI N° 2021 – 1104 2021*)* or other legal texts ('Plan de relance'[3] 2020; LOI N° 2020 – 105 2020).	The "Air Climate Energy Plan 2030" written by the public administrations that launched the panel, includes most of the recommendations (Gouvernement Wallon 2023).	Proposals are still being followed up by the relevant institutions.	In the middle of the process, a few members presented the first version of their Declaration at COP26. No follow-up by specific institutions.

5 Method

The analysis of these cases is based on direct observation, interviews, and content analysis of documents and press coverage. The data gathering process was not identical for each case. It was constrained by the dynamics of the research groups, the practical aspects of the CAs, and access to the cases. Nevertheless, the amount and quality of data collected for each case enabled comparative analysis.

3 See: https://www.economie.gouv.fr/plan-de-relance.

Table 5.2: Overview of data collection

	Interviews	Direct observation
French Citizens' Convention for Climate	- conducted by members of the research team[4] and by myself - citizens 19, expert witnesses 4, organisers 5, facilitation team 2, members of the government 1	- group "Produire et Travailler" - plenary sessions
Walloon Citizens' Panel for the Climate	- conducted by members of the research team[5] and by myself - citizens 6, expert witnesses 2, organisers 3, facilitation team 2, NGO member 1	- working groups - plenary sessions - organiser committee meetings
European Citizens' Panel on Climate change, Environment and Health	- conducted by myself - citizens 2, expert witness 1, organisers 4, facilitation team 1	- working groups - plenary sessions
Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis	- transcriptions made by the research team[6] - citizens 14, expert witnesses 2, organisers 13, community hosts 9, facilitation team 3	- working groups - plenary sessions

Documents produced by the organisers, and online media articles in English and French, were analysed. The minutes of meetings of the Knowledge and Wisdom committee were also accessible for the Global Assembly case.

The focus of the analysis was on practices and discourses on expertise, according to each level of analysis identified in section 4. During fieldwork, we noticed that different relationships to expertise were visible, and produced various approaches to climate change and to the political functions of randomly-selected citizens. We then used the concept of co-production to understand this process and applied it to the four cases to construct the typology.

4 I thank Bénédicte Apouey, Nathalie Blanc, Simon Baeckelandt, Dimitri Courant, Maxime Gaborit, Laurence Granchamp, Hélène Guillemot, Laurent Jeanpierre, Jean-François Laslier and Bernard Reber for common interviews or for sharing their interview transcripts with the team.

5 I thank Maxime Gaborit, Elisa Minsart and Thé Nam Nguyen for common interviews or for sharing their interview transcripts.

6 I thank Nicole Curato, Azucena Morán, Melisa Ross, Lucas Veloso and Hannah Werner for leading and sharing the interviews in the deliberative experience research cluster.

6 Typology

This section presents a typology of the potential political functions of climate assemblies. This typology is based on the observation of strong affinities between a) the ways climate change is approached by the assembly b) the citizens' function in the elaboration of the proposals c) the possible integration of climate assemblies in political institutions. Three "forms" of climate assemblies are distinguished. Each form does not correspond to one assembly observed, as most of them mixed different forms in a varied equilibrium. The typology synthesises the variety of situations observed and aims to invite reflection on the various political ecology projects at play in current climate assemblies. The following sections describe the three types and Table 5.3 summarises them.

6.1 Citizens as climate policy users: deliberating on potentially restrictive measures

At the fourth session of the Citizens Convention for Climate (CCC) in Paris, in November 2019, the *Housing* group is refining one of its main proposals. The discussion centres on three questions raised by the expert witnesses: should the renovation of housing be partial or comprehensive? Should renovation be compulsory or an incentive? What amounts of aid should be available, and what thresholds should apply? As they move into the details of this climate policy, economic and legal knowledge play an important role in the discussions. Sébastien Treyer, director of the Iddri think tank[7], is a constant presence in the group's work: he frames the questions given to the members, answers their queries, and points out any omissions. The renovation methods chosen in the final proposal are more ambitious than those generally discussed between experts and politicians in traditional political arenas[8]. Afterwards, the government will revisit these terms and conditions to reduce their scope. In the Climate and Resilience Law, for instance, the renovation of buildings will no longer be compulsory, but rather an incentive[9].

In Namur (Belgium), the fifty assembly members are divided in small groups across a big room. Each group is working on a part of the proposals already elaborated by the different thematic groups. No expert witness or facilitator leads the discussions. The aim of this sequence is to "pass the proposals through a funnel". The funnel being designed according to criteria of impact on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and social acceptability. They sit in a semi-circle in front of a three-entry table. For

7 See: https://www.iddri.org/fr/iddri-en-bref (accessed 20.09.24)

8 I thank Louis-Gaëtan Giraudet for sharing this analysis.

9 At the "response to government response" session in February 2021, the assembly gave the government a score of 3.3/10 for how it took this proposal into consideration.

each proposal, they have to position themselves individually (using a post-it note), indicating where to place the measure (from 1 to 3 on the impact scale, from 1 to 3 on the acceptability scale).

Unlike the CCC, the Walloon panel saw no expert witness. Its organisation was underpinned by a certain suspicion about external expertise, which could constrain the citizens' considerations and imagination. The organisers highlighted the "day-to-day expertise" of assembly members, which would enable them to take a completely different look, "out of the box", at Walloon climate policies. At the same time, the assembly is meant to contribute to the most technical part of climate policymaking. The objective of the administrative and expert bodies is, above all, to better judge the social acceptability of the measures they propose – and to potentially come up with ideas that the administration had not thought of. The categorisation by citizens of their proposals is therefore an essential aspect of the final report.

According to our analysis, these two scenes share a co-productive process that gives shape to a certain conception of climate change and citizen participation in its governance: citizens are transformed into climate policy users deliberating on potentially restrictive measures.

Economic and engineering knowledge dominate approaches to climate action – with an important role given to private/public think tanks or senior officials in the framing of the issues at stake (through technical documents distributed at the beginning of the Walloon Panel, and through the choice of "support group" expert profiles in the CCC). The difference is that the division of roles between citizens and experts was chronological in the Walloon Panel (the panel was followed by the work of the experts) as opposed to the French CCC (in this case, the assembly had to produce a legally precise report). In both cases, the proposals are elaborated according to the most polluting sectors of human activity. Climate change is seen as a quantified problem of greenhouse gas emission rates to be reduced. One of the consequences of this frame is that the deliberation remains focused on climate change, and the articulation between climate change and other environmental problems is not considered. The tools used to frame the climate problem are mostly economic: taxes, subsidies, market mechanisms, in order to introduce the climate variable in the economic system. In some cases, as in the French example quoted, the proposals of the assembly go beyond the terms and conditions discussed in expert and political arenas, but they can also stay very close to them. Another characteristic of this form of co-production is that the randomly selected assembly works in a space quite "protected" from outside influences. The idea that the assembly should deliberate in a confined and "non-biased" space is relatively present among its organisers, following in that sense a deliberativist vision of the mini-public (Blondiaux and Manin 2021).

This first type of climate assembly is promoted mainly by public expert agencies, environmental ministers' private offices, governments, and liberal think tanks. The idea behind this type of assembly is summarised by Stéphane Cooks, the president of the AWAC, the Walloon expertise agency which organised the Walloon Citizens'

Panel and was then in charge of incorporating its proposals into the Air Climate Energy Plan.

> What we're asking is to change the world as a whole in a fairly record time, which is twenty, thirty years… What we're asking the population to do is something that has never been done before, in a system where mistrust has never been as high as it is now… So, I think we need to involve the public as much as possible in these processes. So that they are aware of what is at stake, so that they are involved in the measures, and so that they understand where we want to take them. (…) However, I think that citizens in general… are always faced with new constraints: "They're going to stop me driving"…[10]

Because tackling climate change involves potentially unpopular policies, involving citizens as soon as possible in the decision-making process is crucial. It allows experts, administrations, or governments to measure the acceptability of the (restrictive) solutions they promote. The main objectives are not in deliberation: citizens deliberate on the implementation conditions or choose between several options. In France, François de Rugy, the former minister of the ecological transition, judged that the CCC "missed" its mandate as soon as assembly members chose not to deliberate on the carbon tax because of its sensitive dimension (the Yellow Vests movement was still ongoing)[11]. According to him, the function of the assembly was clearly to pass a carbon tax law through a process that would be more legitimated by the population.

This co-productive form of assembly opens specific possibilities for their future. It has affinities with regular political processes, backed by clearly identified institutions to which they provide advisory opinions. This is the case for the follow-up to the European Citizens' Panels within the European Union. The European Commission has already reused this process on different subjects three times between 2022 and 2023, and wishes to make the use of citizens' assemblies a permanent feature of the European policymaking process[12].

A proposal to make the assembly's reports more binding in the policymaking process has also emerged in France after the CCC. Several authors, including Thierry Pech, the co-president of the CCC, director of the influential think tank Terra Nova[13], suggested allowing the government and the parliament to refuse a proposition of the assembly, but with the obligation to substitute a measure with equivalent effects (Saujot et al. 2020; Pech 2021, 87;). This political vision is typically produced at the same time as the climate problem: a problem involving measurable solutions that could be substitutable without losing their sense. This conception of the function of the assembly

10 Interview with Stéphane Cook, president of the AWAC, via videoconference, 03/10/2022.

11 Interview with François de Rugy, former minister for the ecological transition and solidarity, via videoconference, 14/12/2022.

12 Information given by Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul, member of the European Commission, during an interview via videoconference, 11/07/23. See: https://citizens.ec.europa.eu/index_en (accessed 20.09.24)

13 See: https://tnova.fr/ (accessed 20.09.24)

– focused on the quantified impacts of the proposals – could not work with the type of assembly that will be described in the two other categories.

6.2 Citizens as constituent assembly members: deliberating within the "planetary limits"

While the first form of assembly seems to dominate the climate assemblies observed, other types also emerged. First, because the assembly members themselves usually questioned and transgressed the mandate and the frame of the deliberation. In the French case, the members chose to elaborate proposals tackling the sixth extinction of species, even if it was seen as "out of mandate" by many. Second, the role of certain environmental associations, foundations and think tanks was important in the promotion of climate assemblies in Europe, and oriented their implementation in slightly different directions. This was particularly the case in France, because the collective Gilets Citoyens who negotiated with the government formed half of the governance team of the CCC, as well as in the Global Assembly, because it was organised and founded by international associations and foundations.

In the Global Assembly, the way the Declaration was written clashes with the elaboration processes described earlier. During the first sessions of the Global Assembly, the members discovered collectively the different chapters of the "information booklet" written by the Knowledge and Wisdom Committee, particularly centred around South/North inequalities, the role of colonialism in the environmental crisis, but also the IPCC and IPBES results and scenarios. After each moment of reading, the first question of the facilitator was about how they *felt* in front of the information. The members were encouraged to speak about environmental problems through their emotions. Local experiences, knowledge and beliefs were also welcome.

In the CCC, a proposal to criminalise ecocide was elaborated within the assembly, even if it did not cut greenhouse gas emissions directly. The proposal was first introduced in the assembly by the activist and legal expert Valérie Cabanes, who wrote an essay on this subject (Cabanes 2016). It was then carried on by an assembly member, particularly touched by this idea. He solicited the help of legal experts from within the process (from the "support group" but also a randomly selected legal expert) and out (he chose to get back in touch with Valérie Cabanes). After hours of work outside the process, he came back in the CCC with a USB key containing a formulation of the proposal. His discourse was received with an intense emotion by the other members, shown by a standing ovation.

In those moments, the assembly members of the GA and the CCC are not seen and do not see themselves as focussed on the "day-to-day", but on the "long-term". Those scenes of co-production shape a second form of climate assemblies. They are thought as avoiding the most important short-term biases of liberal democracies: the imperatives of polling, electoral rhythms, and the historical foundations of modern democracies (Rosanvallon 2014). The idea behind this type of relationship to expertise is that

due to the emergency and the seriousness of the environmental crisis –which are presented and reformulated by the assembly members with a catastrophist[14] tone– the frames of political policymaking must be rethought. Citizens work with different kinds of material (e.g. testimonies, figures, and emotions) in and outside the process, and are often helped by legal experts, particularly those specialised in environmental and constitutional law.

The "nine planetary limits" scientific model (Rockström et al. 2009) is one of the main frameworks for understanding climate change. This vision is often supported by environmental NGOs and those defending democratic ideals, involved directly or indirectly in climate assemblies. It links the inability of contemporary societies to cope with the climate emergency to a democratic crisis. Climate change is also primarily a global problem. A member of Missions Publiques, an agency specialised in citizen participation, explains that one of his colleagues who moderated the CCC proposed to use satellite images of the earth to remind the assembly of the subject of the discussions.

> Jean[15] proposed that between each discussion session, we should take four minutes to look silently at the earth as it rotates. Why should we do that? Because that's what we're talking about. We're not talking about increasing the bicycle allowance from 120 to 160 in the new law on what's-his-name, paragraph 2, article 50, but about... planet earth and that's what we're doing. The governance committee systematically refused, saying it was esoteric.[16]

The climate problem is considered in all its emotional and ethical charge. The way climate change is conceived pushes for a constituent function: it can help create a strong symbolic moment for the community concerned. The objective is less to build concrete solutions to tackle GHG emissions, than to bring the community together around a common challenge and/or amend foundational texts to take into account the ongoing environmental disaster.

6.3 Citizens as legislators: deliberating in the battlefield of climate change

This third form of co-production was observed only in one climate assembly, and at the margins. It was in the French CCC which, because of its important political crisis context, was flexible enough to allow for different kinds of co-production to emerge.

During the elaboration of the proposal to reduce working hours with no change in pay, disagreements and conflicts were clearly expressed. This proposal is the only one which was introduced in the assembly by a member, and not mentioned by any speak-

14 The use of this adjective isn't pejorative (Semal 2019).

15 The name has been modified.

16 Interview with a professional facilitator, member of Missions Publiques, via videoconference, 15/08/2023.

ers. The proposal provoked a lot of debate in the working group and in the plenary. For some, it was simply out of mandate: it had nothing to do with the climate problem. "We are not in a political meeting", said one of the opposing members[17] – referring to the fact that this proposal is historically very left-wing in France. The few members who worked on this proposal used knowledge coming from social movements (Yellow Vests), associations (ATTAC) and unions (CGT). It was the only one that was rejected at the final vote by the assembly. A few other proposals like this one were elaborated within the CCC, such as the proposal to change the CETA treaty and another to tax the dividends of the largest companies to finance the ecological transition.

This form of co-production favours a conception of climate change as a problem of limits that involves collective discussions on the productive activities of a society and on the obligation/incentive options. It also opens a reconsideration of capitalism and discussions on de- and post-growth. The controversies they give rise to are linked to conflicts of political ideology, because the proposals have already been articulated by some parties or movements as a politically-motivated response to climate change. By developing these kinds of measures, the assembly members strive for "valuation", in the sense given to this term by Dewey (2011; Prairat 2014): 'valuing' an end and 'appreciating' the means to achieve that end. In summary, climate change is seen as a battlefield (Keucheyan 2014), a space of ideological and social conflict that needs to be re-articulated with existing political oppositions, or thought in their novelty.

The expert witnesses have a less consistent role in this form of co-production than in the other two. The initial information can be used by the citizens in their elaboration, mainly the characteristics of emergency and the extent of climate change. In order to elaborate those proposals, assembly members read different types of material (newspapers; scientific articles mentioning experiments in other countries, *etc.*), exchanged views about their social positions and values (on work especially), and met different actors outside the assembly (experts they chose, social movements, *etc.*). It is difficult to observe a specific kind of science used in the elaboration of the proposals.

This form of assembly is much more unpredictable than the first two. It could not happen without a particular political and social context where the traditional instances of policymaking are strongly challenged. This form of assembly doesn't reinforce the legitimation of the existing institutions, but destabilises them and forces them to carry out more or less extensive reforms. In the CCC, the Yellow Vest context forced the assembly to take into account social actors beyond the mini-public and to incorporate political and contextual elements into their deliberations (Gaborit 2022). The "success" of this form of assembly cannot be prepared through procedural arrangements, because it is profoundly shaped by the spatial and time-related context in which it unfolded. In this sense, there is little point in exporting it as a design, even if it can influence other forms of assembly and is influenced by others.

17 Observation notes on the CCC.

Thus, this type of assembly works more smoothly with social movements, protest assemblies and other forms of non-institutionalised participation (Gaborit, Jeanpierre, and Rozencwajg 2022). The relative flexible relationship to expertise plays an important role in this openness. It moves away from the idea that good environmental decisions should be the result of deliberation based solely on people's practical knowledge, or of work closely monitored by experts in the ecological transition, or that a "slap in the face" by an alarming presentation of the climate situation is necessary for the assembly to be up to the challenge. These different spaces of expertise exist within the assembly, but are shaped and distorted, opening up other forms of mobilisation of expertise that are more porous to the outside world and initiated by the assembly members themselves.

Table 5.3: Summary of the typology[18]

	Citizens as climate policy users: deliberating on potentially restrictive measures	**Citizens as constituent assembly members: deliberating within the planetary limits**	**Citizens as legislators: deliberating in the battlefield of climate change**
Main characteristics about expertise	- economic and engineering knowledge dominate - constant expert support or promotion of the "day-to-day" expertise of assembly members - fluidity in the production of proposals - promoted by public expert agencies, environmental ministers' private offices, governments, liberal think tanks	- legal knowledge dominates - catastrophist tone based on IPCC report readings - emotions and ethical questions expressed and used in the production of proposals - promoted by environmental NGOs, participatory democracy NGOs	- no specific kind of knowledge dominates - use of knowledge and ideas coming from social movements, associations, unions, parties - openness, constant back and forth between use of expertise inside and outside the process - disagreements and conflicts clearly expressed (between social groups, political visions)
Approach to climate change	- climate change seen as a quantified problem of greenhouse gas emission rates - no link with other environmental problems - mostly economic solutions (taxes, subsidies, market mechanisms)	- climate change seen as a global problem framed in the planetary limits model - insistence on the emergency aspect of climate change - mostly institutional reforms / legal texts amendments solutions	- climate change seen as a space of ideological and social conflict that needs to be re-articulated with existing political oppositions, or thought in their novelty - a problem of limits that opens reconsideration of

18 Each column summarises and simplifies a kind of interaction with expertise observed in climate assemblies. The first line corresponds to the observed elements characteristic of a certain relationship to expertise. The next three lines correspond to what these "ingredients" co-produce.

Table 5.3 *(Continued)*

	Citizens as climate policy users: deliberating on potentially restrictive measures	**Citizens as constituent assembly members: deliberating within the planetary limits**	**Citizens as legislators: deliberating in the battlefield of climate change**
			capitalism and discussions on de- and post-growth
Randomly selected citizens function	- deliberating on the implementation conditions (detailed report), or choosing between several technical options (large recommendations) - showing levels of acceptability for different kinds of proposals	- rewriting founding political texts to take into account the unprecedented and serious nature of the environmental situation - representing the long-term (and even the more-than-humans) - bring the community together	- 'valuing' an end and 'appreciating' the means to achieve that end - decide between major economic options, rearticulate traditional political conflicts with the environmental crisis - develop positions on issues specific to political ecology
Possible integrations of climate assemblies in political institutions	- affinities with regular political processes, backed by clearly identified institutions to which they provide advisory opinions - proposal made to go beyond an advisory role: governments can refuse a measure but have to "compensate" its impact with another measure	- ad hoc, could help create a strong symbolic moment for the community concerned - constituent function, linked to a larger process of amending constitutional texts	- unpredictable, linked to social and political crisis - open to other kinds of political participation and assemblies

7 Conclusion

The typology presented in this chapter tries to answer the question: how does expertise on climate change shape the form of a citizens' assembly, and vice versa? The answer reveals several possible futures for climate assemblies. The typology departs from the description of particular scenes observed in different climate assemblies, that symbolise and reveal distinct relationships to expertise. Based on the concept of co-production, we believe that these relationships to expertise co-produce a definition of the environment –and more specifically of climate change– and of the political function of an assembly drawn by lot.

The first type –where citizens act as climate policy users deliberating on potentially restrictive measures– has been predominant in the CCC, the Walloon Citizens' Panel

and the European Citizens' Panel. The second type shapes the citizens function as constituent assembly members deliberating within the "planetary limits". It has been mostly observed in the Global Assembly, and partially in the CCC. The last one – where citizens take the function of legislators deliberating in the battlefield of climate change, was only observed at the margins of the CCC.

This typology helps us make some observations. First, it shows the extent to which neither the exact function of the citizens (and other actors) participating in climate policymaking, nor the definition of the climate problem, remains univocal and fixed between climate assemblies (Boswell, Dean, and Smith 2023) or even inside a single assembly. Second, it shows that the form of expertise in climate assemblies not only shapes assembly member's attitudes and proposals in the final report, but also the larger function of the assembly in the political system. This perspective goes beyond existing studies about expertise in mini-publics (Muradova et al. 2020; Drury et al. 2021; Thompson et al. 2021) by illuminating this internal aspect to climate assemblies' external dimensions. The typology also suggests a trend that makes the first form of co-production the most dominant in setting up assemblies. The quantified and consensual approach to the climate problem, combined with the procedural difficulties of dealing with conflicts within the processes, favours this form. Further studies could investigate whether the trend is towards a homogenisation, or rather a pluralisation, of the relationships to expertise in climate assemblies.

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Section 3: **External dimensions in climate assemblies**

Dannica Fleuss and Jane Suiter

Chapter 6
Climate assemblies and communicative flows: A conceptual framework for studying media and communication in deliberative systems

Abstract: Assessments of climate assemblies have devoted much attention to the quality of deliberation within assemblies and to their embeddedness in the existing system of representative-democratic institutions and the policy cycle. This has shed light on the design of climate assemblies and on strategies for making their results matter in collectively binding decision-making. Nevertheless, a comprehensive theoretical understanding of the potential for deliberative communication between elites and citizens to underpin climate action also requires a more differentiated understanding of political communication involving and/or concerning climate assemblies as well as mediatised communication. Assessments of climate assemblies need to account for 'communicative flows' between assemblies and diverse actors, as well as spaces in the broader democratic system including elites and the media. Consequently, this chapter develops an analytical framework for studying climate assemblies that builds on systemic deliberative theory. To allow for a more differentiated analysis of political communication about climate assemblies, and between assemblies and other democratic actors, we complement systemic deliberative theory with conceptual approaches from the fields of science communication and political communication studies. We illustrate the merits of our framework for a deeper understanding of climate assemblies' potential to counteract the impact of vested interests and strategic actors.

Keywords: climate assemblies; communicative flows; systemic theory; mediatised communication

1 Introduction

The primary objective of this chapter is to provide a framework to analyse the increasingly complex hybrid media landscape of the 21st century and to elucidate its potential impact on policy and the implementation of recommendations from climate assemblies. Additionally, it offers insights into why specific recommendations may be disregarded.

Since the first climate assembly in Ireland in 2016, a broad range of mini-publics in different local, regional, national and transnational/global contexts have focused on climate change, biodiversity and the development of environmental policies. Despite all these efforts on behalf of civil society organisations, public administrations, environmentally-conscious politicians, activists and citizens involved in these processes,

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there is a significant lack of consequential political action to achieve the goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) or by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Contemporary climate scholarship suggests that one of the significant impediments to climate action is the influence of vested interests, whose narratives often either deny or, more recently, seek to delay climate action they perceive as contrary to their interests (Lamb et al., 2021). In this way, misperception-generating communication strategies can be strategically utilised by actors aiming to prevent (or delay) disruptive measures (BBC 2020). Partly as a result, misperceptions about climate change are still prevalent among comparatively large parts of the population in different countries (e.g. Lewandowsky 2021; Poortinga et al. 2011; Weber and Stern 2011; Whitmarsh 2011).

These narratives form part of the deliberative system of climate discourses alongside those advocating for action originating, for instance, from climate assemblies. To comprehend how these discourses and flows operate within the broader information environment, it is imperative to introduce key communication concepts to the deliberative democracy scholarship. This approach facilitates the undertaking of research aimed at mapping the sites and actors involved in discourse pertaining to climate action.

So far, assessments of mini-publics have devoted much attention to the quality of deliberation within assemblies (Drury et al. 2021; Escobar and Elstub 2017). Boswell et al. (2023, 14) found that climate assemblies' actual impact on politics, polity and policy depends on several factors, e.g. their connections to different parts of a polity and the extent to which they engage in public outreach to media and civil society. However, in an increasingly complex hybrid media landscape (Chadwick 2017), we require a more nuanced analysis of climate assemblies' embeddedness in what we envisage as Habermas' proverbial "network of communication stretched across society" (Habermas 1996, 56).

Addressing this gap is crucial since a comprehensive theoretical and empirical understanding of climate assemblies' potential to impact policymaking requires a nuanced understanding of how different actors with vested interests utilise diverse media and platforms to disseminate misperception-generating communication strategies about climate change to avoid or delay consequential policy change. In other words, it requires an assessment of "communicative flows" within complex networks of media, platforms and actors. This chapter aims to develop a conceptual-theoretical framework that will enable empirical researchers and practitioners to analyse and make use of the mechanisms and dynamics that are at work in this context and to develop strategies that can guide consequential climate action.

To develop the conceptual communicative flows framework, we apply a problem-driven approach to political theorising (Green and Shapiro 1994; Shapiro 2002). Problem-oriented research starts from "puzzles" and relies on theoretically grounded depic-

tions of research problems or questions (Shapiro 2002).[1] This chapter addresses three research questions that need to be answered by our framework.

First, we ask: "How can we conceptualise 'the network of communication' that is relevant for assessing climate assemblies?". We have two sub-questions here, i. which *deliberative sites* must be considered to provide a conceptual background for understanding communicative flows in contemporary sociopolitical systems? And ii. which *actors* need to be included in studying climate assemblies, and which deliberative sites are dominated by what actors?

Second, we provide an operational definition of "communicative flows": How can communicative flows between different deliberative sites be conceptualised so that they also allow for systematic comparative analyses at a larger scale (i. e. are operationalisable to translate them into measurement approaches for large-n studies)?

Third, we ask: Which climate change discourses are prevalent in different deliberative sites, where do they "travel" throughout sociopolitical systems—and which actors strategically use different misperception-generating strategies to deny or delay climate change action?

Fourth, we summarise the overall framework and outline its merits for uncovering discourses by pointing to illustrative findings from applications to different climate assemblies and their communicative environment. We shall argue that our framework can develop a more profound understanding of climate assemblies' potential to achieve consequential policy change and the power dynamics in these processes.

2 Analysing communicative flows

Our chapter addresses a crucial gap: existing research primarily focuses on climate assemblies' embeddedness in political institutions or policy cycles but does not systematically analyse their embeddedness in (increasingly complex) hybrid media environments. Furthermore, they tend to ignore that the media –and/or corporations funding them– must also be considered as *actors* in climate change discourses and corresponding political processes, i. e. by (selectively) conveying messages of actors with vested interests (e. g. big fossil fuel companies, automobile industry, agribusiness).

Discourses matter for political action–as well as the lack thereof. Dryzek and Niemeyer (2008) define discourse as "a set of categories and concepts embodying specific assumptions, judgments, contentions, dispositions, and capabilities". With this, discourses "enable [...] the mind to process sensory inputs into coherent accounts, which can then be shared in an intersubjectively meaningful fashion". Different discourses conceive of different individuals or collectives as "relevant" and ascribe agency

1 In taking problems as a point of departure, researchers can avoid both the pitfalls associated with "method-driven" and "theory-driven" approaches. In their extremes, method-driven research constructs problems based on available data or preferred methodological strategies, while theory-driven research self-servingly constructs problems to validate a specific model (Shapiro 2002).

to those actors (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2008, 481; also see Dryzek 2022, 9–11). Briefly put, climate change discourses –and the extent to which they are spread across different deliberative sites– are crucial: different discourses suggest different accounts of the relevance of climate change, the urgency of (more radical, consequential) political action and distinct pathways for addressing climate change. These discourses will likely be utilised by different actors with different interests, including those with vested interests.

Systemic deliberative democrats understand democracies' legitimacy as the result of deliberative processes in "networks of communication" (Habermas 1996, 50; also see Mansbridge et al. 2012) constituted by diverse deliberative sites and the flow of communication between them. The focal point of normative deliberative theory is the uptake of lay citizens and civil society agents' arguments, demands, and perspectives in empowered institutions as particularly important for democratic legitimacy (Dryzek 2012, 11–12; Parkinson 2003, 191; also see Goodin and Dryzek 2006). Yet, most deliberative democratic theories conceptualise the public sphere as a comparatively homogeneous space. In contrast, communication studies suggest that understanding climate change discourses in contemporary sociopolitical systems requires a more nuanced approach to analysing political communication and deliberation that accounts for (a) an increasingly complex, hybrid 21st-century media landscape and (b) considers media as actors in their own right. How media act and intervene in political discourses arguably depends on whether those media are captured or independent (Schiffrin, 2017; 2021). Against this backdrop, this chapter's crucial task is bridging deliberative democracy research with insights from communication studies.

Chadwick (2017) proposes an account of hybrid media systems: 21st-century media environments are based on conflict and competition between older and newer media logics but also characterised by interdependence. Chadwick's approach thereby enables researchers to move "beyond dichotomous modes of thought and [...] to understand how the older and the newer are layered into each other in political communication" (Chadwick 2017, 285). He argues that on balance there are now greater opportunities for citizens to influence public discourse than during the "stultifying" duopoly of broadcasting and media logics (Chadwick 2017, 288). Based on his analysis of US and UK media landscapes' (ongoing) transformation, he concludes that "it seems to be inescapable that political communication in Britain and the United States is more polycentric than during the period of mass communication that dominated the twentieth century" (Chadwick 2017, 288).

Moreover, Schiffrin (2017; 2021) illustrates the distinction between captured and independent media outlets through examples of media capture in Tanzania, Latin America, Turkey, and Hungary. Unlike independent media, which operate autonomously, captured media are under the influence of corporate entities and serve as mouthpieces for their interests and those of government bodies. Despite discourses that tout the "liberating" or "democratising" effects of many-to-many communication facilitated by social media and digital platforms, the internet has also mainly enabled unregulated corporate monopolies such as Meta to wield significant influence over public discourse

(Schiffrin 2021, 3). Although scholars frequently had high expectations concerning the web's democratising effects, "digital media may have had the opposite effect: making capture less expensive and more likely and presenting even bigger policy challenges for those who want to prevent it" (Schiffrin 2021, 8; see Schiffrin 2017, 5–6). Focusing on these features enables researchers to identify actors that create, convey, and perpetuate particular discourses or narratives about climate change that aim either at preventing/delaying or promoting consequential policy change.

These analyses, therefore, provide a critical complementary perspective for understanding the dynamics involved in climate change communication and policymaking as attention is directed to actors and collectives who tend to occupy different deliberative sites in the public sphere and the broader democratic system. A more nuanced analysis of these deliberative sites and actors –and communicative flows between them– is crucial for a comprehensive, fine-grained understanding of climate assemblies' potential to counteract vested interests and the perpetuating of misperceptions and, therefore, needs to be included in our assessment of communicative flows. We apply a problem-driven approach to developing our conceptual framework. In line with Shapiro (2002), we base our theoretical-conceptual work neither solely on abstract normative theory nor exclusively on empirical findings but start from research problems.

3 Developing the communicative flows framework

3.1 Building block I: Deliberative sites, actors, and discourses

Systemic deliberative theory provides a suitable point of departure that aligns with the premises that guide the design of citizens' assemblies and ascribes a crucial role to public sphere communication. Achieving the Habermasian ideal of inclusive, uncoerced, respectful, and reasonable exchanges of arguments about collectively binding decisions among all affected members is impossible in large-scale communities (see Habermas 1996, 107). Deliberative democrats acknowledge this "problem of scale" (see Parkinson 2003, 181): systemic approaches understand democracies' legitimacy as the result of deliberative processes in multiple deliberative sites and the flow of communication between them. The classical model proposed by deliberative democrats such as Habermas or, more recently, Christina Lafont is a two-track model (Habermas 1996; Lafont 2019). In Habermas's terms, the political system is constituted by a "political centre" and "the periphery":

> The centre of the political system consists of the familiar institutions: parliaments, courts, administrative agencies and government. Each branch can be described as a specialised deliberative arena. [...] At the periphery of the political system, the public sphere is rooted in networks for wild flows of messages—news, reports, commentaries, talks, scenes and images, and shows and movies with informative, polemical, educational, or entertaining content. (Habermas, 2006, pp. 415–416)

Broadly in line with this approach, Dryzek (2012, 11–12) distinguishes "public" and "empowered spaces" in sociopolitical systems. The core features that distinguish public and empowered spaces largely overlap with Habermas's centre-periphery distinction: institutions in the empowered space have the capacity to make collectively binding decisions, while the broader public sphere is the space where lay citizens acquire information about political processes from peers as well as via the media and various media figures (e. g. journalists, politicians and other public opinion makers). These arguments are then, at least in well-functioning democracies, fed into empowered space debates, i. e. deliberative theorists tend to adopt a bottom-up perspective on political processes and their legitimacy (e. g. Drzyek 2012; Fleuss 2023).

The concept of the public sphere, which often serves as a conceptual basis in deliberative theorising, emerged from Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989) and built on a reconstruction of the evolution of political communication and debate in 19th-century Europe. Today's hybrid media landscape is much more complex: there is an increasing amount of online and offline media outlets, as well as interactions between these platforms, social media, newspapers, tabloids, etc. (see Chadwick 2017). Even before digitalisation-associated transformations impacted media landscapes, there was arguably no homogeneous public sphere –but with the advent of digital media, public sphere(s) arguably became even more heterogeneous (or, in Chadwick's terms, "messy") (2017, 288). As Habermas has argued more recently (Habermas 2023), the enclosed informational bubbles or echo chambers have split citizens into a plurality of pseudo-publics largely closed from one another, endangering democratic institutions and norms. Hence, our Communicative Flows Framework requires a more nuanced conceptual account of the public sphere. Therefore, we integrate deliberative democracy's accounts with communication studies that offer more fine-grained distinctions between different kinds of deliberative sites in hybrid public spheres. Furthermore, we account for Schiffrin's (2017; 2021) distinction between captured and independent media and platforms: this distinction is crucial for analysing power relationships that manifest themselves in environmental discourses and for understanding the ways in which actors with vested interests utilise diverse media or platforms.

In addition to citizens' assemblies and empowered space actors, we should also consider lobbyists, activists and civil society organisations (see Elstub and Escobar 2019), as well as digital and analogue media and platforms that, following the distinction introduced above, fall into two basic categories: independent and captured media –although we acknowledge there is a continuum, and it is a matter of gradation. This distinction is fundamental since our remarks above indicate that actors with different interests are likely to approach communication related to climate change in diverse ways. "[D]iscourses are bound with political power" (Dryzek 2022, 9). Since certain actors are likely to be equipped with more (e. g. financial) resources, the constellation of actors involved in climate change discourses is also expected to affect communicative flows, i. e. the quantity and impact of discourses on other deliberative sites –not re-

stricted to, but including empowered spaces where collectively binding decisions are made (also see Chalaye 2023).

Turning to our third question: "What discourses and communicative strategies are likely to be used by different actors?" While Dryzek's work (e. g. 2022, 14–17) on overarching environmental discourses provides an invaluable point of departure, research is needed to answer this question in a more nuanced, empirically-grounded manner. As we shall indicate in section 4, particularly denialist and delay climate change discourses are likely to be disseminated by captured media and by corporate or political actors who have an interest in avoiding the implementation of disruptive climate change policies.

Table 6.1 outlines the first conceptual building block for our Communicative Flows Framework. However, it must be somewhat tentative since actors dominating different sites are highly context-dependent. Nevertheless, it provides a theoretically and empirically informed point of departure for analysing communicative flows in diverse sociopolitical systems.

Table 6.1: Overview of roles and actors for the analysis of communicative flows in sociopolitical systems

	Roles in democratic processes	**Actors inhabiting these sites**
Empowered space: Parliament, government, public administration	Collectively binding decision-making, implementation	Politicians, policymakers, regulators, and civil and public servants are frequently influenced by lobby groups (corporate/political actors with vested interests)
The public sphere (a): Independent media	Traditionally a space for debate, information, public opinion, will formation and epistemic filtering of discourses and opinions. Increasing pluralism and complexity of public sphere(s) and opinion and will-formation processes in hybrid media environments.	Context-dependent: in many European countries, non-commercial TV and Radio stations (public funding); newspapers funded by publishing companies (no/limited influence of advertisers); freelancing journalists/blogs/podcasts; media/platforms funded by non-profit organisations.
The public sphere (b): Captured media	Increasingly a space for polarisation, propaganda, misperception generation, echo chambers and so on.	Social media, tabloids, and legacy mass media owned/strongly influenced by lobby groups; global social platform corporations; corporate actors such as the agrarian sector, car companies, fossil fuel interests, etc; and billionaire media moguls.
Informal everyday political talk	Roots of political communication in peoples' "lifeworld". Potential for inequalities that shape everyday political talk (Conover and Searing, 2005).	Everyone

Table 6.1 *(Continued)*

	Roles in democratic processes	Actors inhabiting these sites
Climate assemblies	Depending on the organisation: Bottom-up/top-down/hybrid forms of opinion/will-formation, action-guiding proposals.	Lay citizens, public administration officials, civil society organisations, advocates, interest groups and 'experts' of various kinds (including scientists as well as experts by lived experience).

3.2 Building block II: An operational definition of communicative flows

From the perspective of systemic approaches to deliberative democracy, dialogical communication is essential for well-informed, egalitarian, legitimate and broadly accepted decision-making, particularly when it comes to decisions about highly contentious and complex issues such as climate change policies. From a science communication perspective, Boykoff (2019, xi; 57) comes to similar conclusions: while previously dominant information deficit models promote communication from scientists to citizens,[2] Boykoff argues that these counterproductively provide oxygen to breathe more life into counterproductive claims (Boykoff 2019, xi). Instead, he proposes a dialogical approach to communication about climate change where climate scientists essentially "level" with so-called "lay citizens" and embrace their contextual knowledge and creativity in finding solutions to complex policy problems (Boykoff 2019, 9; also see Goodinand Cooper 2013). Climate assemblies are usually designed, moderated, and comparatively isolated forums, thus upscaling the results of deliberations in these assemblies –communicative flows between mini-publics and maxi-publics as well as other deliberative sites– are crucial goals (Niemeyer and Jennstal 2018; Suiter et al. 2020).

One essential task for developing an analytical framework is translating the metaphorical term communicative flows into an operationalisable concept that can be applied in systematic empirical analyses. In the first instance, our basic conceptualisation of communicative flows can be represented as a fourfold relationship:

1. First are climate change discourses or elements thereof –on the one hand, discourses demanding climate action, and on the other, discourses of delay/denial/or misperception-generating discourses.

2 "[T]he model assumes that public scepticism about the communication of scientific findings is principally due to the lack of public knowledge about the topic and issues communicated. Secondly, the provision of sufficient information about the topic to fill the knowledge gap is the ideal approach to alleviate public scepticism [...] and encourage the acceptance of risk messages." (Abunyewah et al. 2020)

2. These discourses (or elements thereof) can be located in a deliberative site (e. g., a citizens' assembly, a Facebook forum, a newspaper article, a blog post, a parliamentary debate, a press release, a lobbying campaign).
3. They then travel to another deliberative site (e. g., another debate in a citizens' assembly, Facebook forum, newspaper article, blog post, or parliamentary debate).
4. We need to take into account feedback loops: Our conceptualisation of communicative flows thereby explicitly includes a dynamic element that accounts for the dialogical character that communicative processes have, i. e. discourses/discursive elements that travel from one deliberative site to another, can receive feedback or responses, e. g. likes or shares or comments, discussion in the real world and so on.

The above is clearly a strongly simplified conceptualisation. It notably omits that there (ideally) are multifarious and iterative feedback loops between different deliberative sites, which are not merely normatively desirable but also to be expected in nuanced empirical analyses of these processes. Furthermore, discourses about climate change (or elements thereof) will likely be transformed while travelling through sociopolitical systems. Finally, the impact of actors who promote diverse climate change discourses will be crucial for analysing communicative flows. While this final point can be tackled with different methodological strategies, including, for example, qualitative analyses that trace different discourses back to actors in respective deliberative sites, as well as Natural Language Processing methods and even Large Language Models, assessing multifarious and interactive feedback loops already constitutes a significant challenge at the conceptual level.

The "network of communication" mentioned by Habermas (1996, 5) requires a conceptual approach for analysing communicative flows that is not restricted to *two* deliberative sites. Consequently, a more adequate conceptualisation and visualisation of communicative flows will build on a more complex account of sites and actors that can serve as a basis for tracking discourses and narratives (or elements thereof) throughout this network of deliberative sites. Thus these feedback loops should be understood as iterative processes. These processes are not merely iterative or necessarily feedbacked between two specific deliberative sites. Instead, we can expect more complicated travel routes: discourses or discursive elements may, for example, originate in deliberations in a citizens' assembly, be picked up in several newspaper articles where they are addressed with a different framing or wording, and then travel back to subsequent citizens' assemblies —or take an even more complicated route that involves multiple stopovers in social media debates, online forums, parliamentary debates, tabloids or legacy mass media. It may be important to point out here that more complicated travel routes are likely to also lead to more significant transformations of discourses or discursive elements.

While communicative flows and feedback loops are generally crucial for a healthy flow of communication in sociopolitical systems, the Communicative Flows Framework developed in this chapter also allows for a critical perspective on certain communicative flows: "healthy" deliberation (in mini-publics and at the systemic level) generally

require symmetrical communication conditions (Habermas 1984, 25). Hence, severe power imbalances resulting from inequality conditions –e. g., corporate actors, lobbyists, or captured media having access to more economic resources– lead to "systematically distorted communication" (Habermas 1985, 375). In this case, the impact of discourses disseminated to other sites of sociopolitical systems is not dominated by the proverbial "forceless force of the better argument" but simply by unequal access to resources (Habermas 1985, 108).

Our approach to analysing communicative flows between climate assemblies and other actors is visualised in Figure 6.1 below, which summarises our overarching strategy for analysing climate assemblies' embeddedness in a complex network of deliberative sites and actors in public and empowered spaces –including captured media and lobbyists (red colouring). The arrows represent (iterative, recursive) feedback loops between citizens' assemblies (and related actors) and actors within and between diverse public and empowered spaces. This more nuanced picture of "communicative networks" that climate assemblies are embedded in will serve as a point of departure for our outline of exemplary research questions and illustrative empirical findings in section 4.

4 Discussion and conclusions: Assessing communicative flows

4.1 Recap: The Communicative Flows Framework and its conceptual building blocks

The overarching aim of this chapter is developing an analytical framework suitable for conceptualising, analysing and assessing communicative flows between various deliberative sites and thereby providing a foundation for discerning and tracking discourses over different deliberative sites. This is necessary in order to account for the complex world of hybrid media and to elucidate the potential impact on policy of climate assemblies.

We proposed a problem-driven account for developing our Communicative Flows Framework by combining deliberative democracy scholarship and communication studies. We then elaborated on two fundamental conceptual building blocks: a map of democratic systems that accounts for differentiated, increasingly complex 21st-century public spheres and elaborates on the distinction between independent and captured media and different actors that are likely to dominate in diverse deliberative sites. We then develop a conceptualisation of communicative flows that explicitly accounts for the dialogical, iterative character of communicative processes within sociopolitical systems and rejects accounts that conceptualise communicative flows as a "one-way process" (see Fleuss 2022; Neblo 2005).

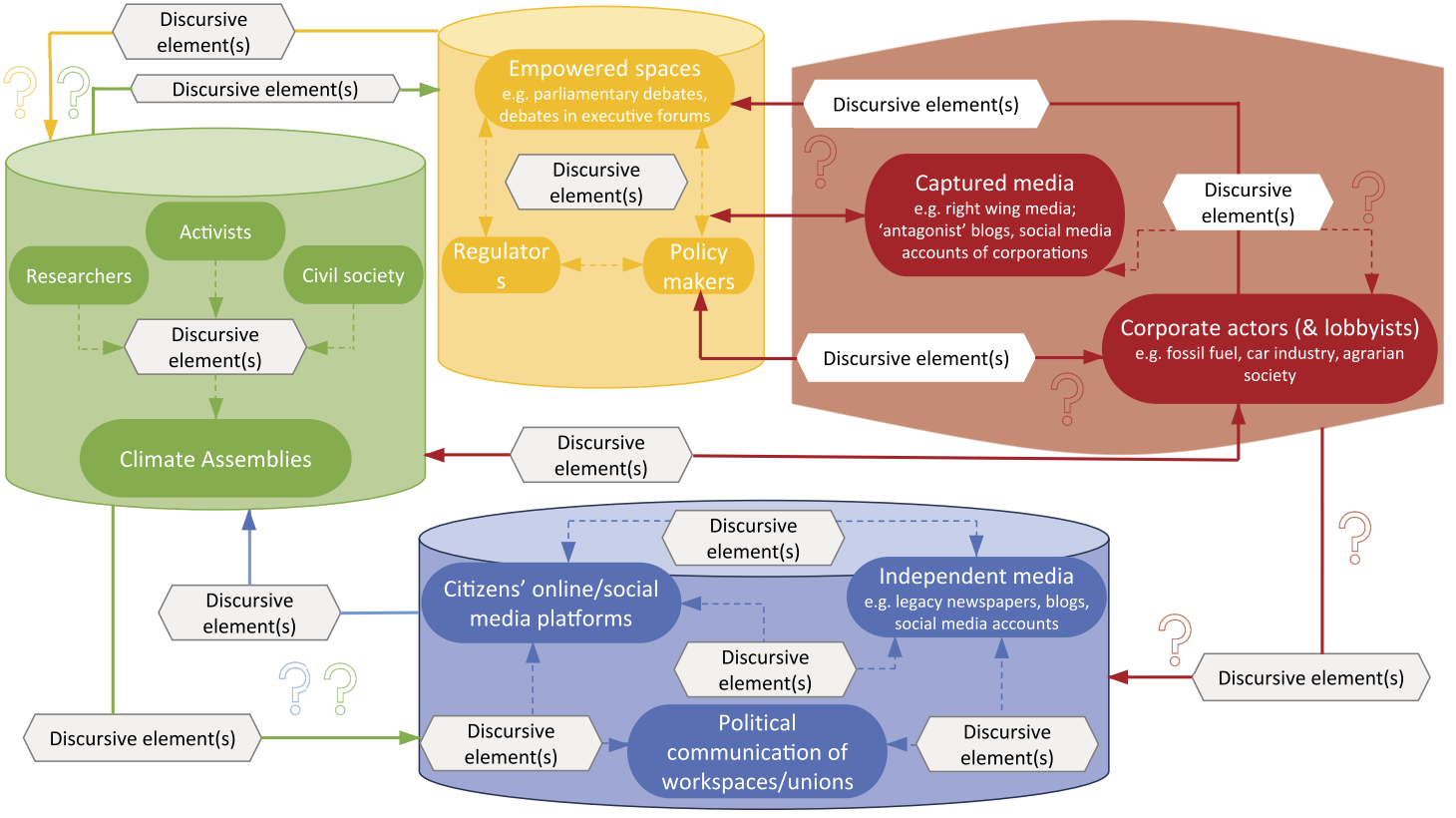

Figure 6.1: Synoptic overview of communicative flows, deliberative sites and actors.
Legend: Red cylinder and boxes: climate change antagonists. Yellow cylinder and boxes: empowered space (actors). Blue cylinder and boxes: (social)media. Green cylinder and boxes: climate assemblies, activists, researchers and civil society. Arrows: communicative flows. Dashed arrows: communicative flows within different constellations of deliberative sites. "??" signifies communicative flows that require empirical analysis. "?" signifies communicative flows from antagonists to other sites that are of particular interest.

Our conceptual framework thereby increases the complexity of existing models for studying interactions between climate assemblies, empowered spaces, and the public sphere in three regards. First, it outlines a more systematic and nuanced map of the democratic system that does not consider public spheres as homogeneous spaces for political communication. Second, it complements this account of public spheres by including different actors and deliberative sites into one analytical framework. This differentiation is crucial since discourse matters for political action, and different deliberative sites provide different opportunity structures for actors to disseminate their messages and thereby influence climate change politics. Hence, analysing the dynamics of political communication about climate change (policies) requires this more nuanced account because different actors are likely to utilise various media outlets, platforms, etc., to pursue their interests.

Third, the conceptualisation of communicative flows presented does not merely consider the uptake of particular discursive elements that, for example, originate in citizens' assemblies and are then transmitted to empowered spaces. The extent to which climate assemblies are integrated into a network of deliberative sites and communicative flows is crucial to making citizen deliberation count. Ensuring the results of citizen deliberation matter for political communication in the broader public sphere and empowered spaces is an intricate task. This applies particularly when it comes to complex, contentious political issues such as consequential climate change policies that are hardly in the interest of many powerful actors –and are therefore likely to be misrepresented in captured mass media which are owned or co-funded by economic actors who would (at least on the short run) suffer severe losses from fundamental structural changes demanded by many climate assemblies, activists, the COP21 agreement or the IPCC.

4.2 The Communicative Flows Framework: perspectives for future research

Climate change is not merely one of the most salient issues of contemporary political communication. Human-made climate change is, at least since the COP 21 agreement, also widely accepted as a fact in most mainstream discourses. Similarly, climate assemblies tend to recommend "far more progressive [measures for tackling climate change] than existing national policy"; moreover, citizens "have been willing to propose policy interventions in areas where governments have been unwilling to act" (Smith 2023, 5–6) in an increasing number of climate assemblies at the national and even the international level (e. g. Buergerrat Klima 2021; Climate Assembly UK 2020; Curato et al. 2023). However, despite this, action has been insufficient to meet targets.

Our Communicative Flows Framework provides a helpful analytical tool for developing a deeper understanding of this situation and underlying power dynamics between the different deliberative sites in the public sphere and the potential influence of differentiated media sites, admittedly somewhat simplistically classified into inde-

pendent and captured. It also helps to develop conceptually and empirically grounded perspectives for actions that conform with climate scientists' and lay citizens' proposals. On the one hand, our framework forms a bedrock for understanding where particular discourses (or elements thereof) originate and who disseminates them. On the other hand, it explicitly includes the broader communicative environment, i. e. diverse deliberative sites within and beyond the mainstream that address and reach diverse audiences and provide opportunity structures for different actors who disseminate discourses to achieve their goals.

With this, the Communicative Flows Framework bears promising potential for analysing climate assemblies to counteract misperception-generating information spread by actors with vested interests: first, our more inclusive assessment of political communication in diverse deliberative sites enables researchers to assess climate change communication, e. g. of climate-change policy antagonists, its origin and impact on policy-making. It thereby facilitates a more profound understanding of the broader impact and spread of diverse communication strategies that prevent (or promote) progressive climate change policies. For example, organisers of climate assemblies often bemoan an absence of media coverage, assuming a one-way transmission of their discourse should be achievable. However, conceptually, other ways exist for the people's discourses within assemblies to be heard. But first, we must map them. This framework will allow that work to begin.

Interestingly, recent research found that, in most contexts, straightforward climate change denial does not constitute a viable strategy anymore. In contrast to denialism, climate change antagonists now tend to use more sophisticated delay discourses to prevent or delay the implementation of disruptive policies, which would arguably amount to significant structural, particularly social-economic, changes (e. g. Lamb et al. 2020). Prominent subtypes of these misperception-generating strategies are diverse forms of individualism that "redirect responsibility to individual consumption choices" or "technological optimism" (or "scientific utopias"), which argue that technological progress can solve the challenges that originate in climate change. An illustrative example of this is "fossil fuel solutionism", i. e., the claim that the fossil fuel industry is "part of the solution to the scourge of climate change" (OPEC Secretary General Mohammed Barkindo, see Lamb et al. 2020, 3). In any case, these discourses are "at the heart of industry pushback against regulation" (Lamb et al. 2020, 3) and have been criticised in a targeted and rhetorically pointed manner in Naomi Klein's "This Changes Everything: Capitalism Vs the Climate" (2015).

The conceptual framework outlined in this chapter bears potential for analyses of climate assemblies' successes and failures in political practice —and for possibilities that make citizens' voices count. Subsequent empirical analyses can use the framework to study communicative flows and identify the discourses' spread systematically, as well as the actors responsible for their dissemination. Based on previous research, our framework allows researchers to explore the following overarching expectations and to test corresponding hypotheses:

- Expectation 1: Captured media and respective lobby organisations for corporate sectors are particularly prone to distributing denialist or delay discourses. Since they are funded by "big business" (Schiffrin 2021), they are likely to have the resources and networks which enable them to have a powerful impact on empowered decision-making –and thus aim at counteracting more "progressive" actors, among them many climate assemblies. Among other things, this means that we can expect misperception-generating strategies such as denial and delay discourses to be significantly more prevalent in captured than in independent media.
- Expectation 2: Successes in "upscaling deliberation" are likely to depend on the structure of (national) media landscapes, more specifically, on the extent to which mass media are captured or independent actors: if captured media dominate, the dissemination of misperception-generating discourses will be much more pronounced than in contexts where independent media are more common.

Recent research on illustrative German and Irish cases of climate assemblies indicates that the overarching propositions spelt out above are generally plausible. Indications for the validity of Expectation 1 are technological utopias, utilised in corporate actors' political communication –predominantly by German car companies (e. g. Mercedes 2022) or the Irish agricultural sector (see Teagasc 2021). This is obviously rooted in the fact that significant structural changes would be disruptive to these economic sectors.

With regards to Expectation 2, Boykoff (2008) and Saunders (2018) hint at the differences between (usually captured) tabloids –which reach significantly broader audiences than broadsheets– and have different news values when it comes to climate coverage. Our expectation is that they may be more prone to disseminate denialist and aggressive delay discourses than legacy mass media. This is likely a fruitful avenue for future investigation.

Although testing these expectations certainly requires systematic comparative analyses at a larger scale, the framework and tentative evidence for our overarching expectations outlined here illustrate that the Communicative Flows Framework provides a valuable point of departure for analysing the complex dynamics in "networks of communication" and the flows of communication between diverse spaces and actors. It can thereby provide a critical contribution to climate assemblies' potential to upscale the results of their deliberations and to advance substantive policy change – a (or maybe the) crucial problem that climate assemblies across Europe and the globe are struggling with (see Buergerrat Klima 2021; Curato et al. 2023 141 – 2; Smith 2023, 5 – 6).

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Chapter 7
Between closure and openness: The fragile legitimacy of the French Citizens' Climate Convention

Abstract: Like other deliberative mini-publics, the Citizens' Climate Convention (CCC) had to respond to a double bind: in order for its conclusions to be considered valid from the point of view of deliberation, it had to appear to be impervious to external influences; but in order for its conclusions to have weight, the members of the assembly were encouraged to develop alliances with other social and political actors, and thus to extend the debates beyond the walls of the assembly. The resulting tensions between openness and closure, deliberation and participation, mini-public and maxi-public, are increasingly problematised within theories of deliberative democracy. In the CCC case, such tensions were navigated through some of the design features of the process, such as the long inter-sessions where citizens were invited to assume certain roles that were decisive in the publicity of the debates. This chapter, based on ethnographic investigation throughout the process, shows how the boundaries of the CCC were constructed and renegotiated by citizens and other actors. We highlight a double movement of importation of external actors into the mini-public and exportation towards the maxi-public, as well as the phenomenon of the progressive separation between the 'We' of the climate assembly and the 'They' of the rest of the population. We argue that this dual movement plays a major role in understanding the political outcomes of the CCC and encourages viewing this experience as a model of "savage deliberative democracy."

Keywords: climate assemblies, legitimacy, deliberative democracy, radical democracy, climate activism

1 Introduction

The legitimacy and impact of citizens' assemblies do not solely rest on the procedural quality of deliberation but also on the relationship the process has and maintains with the general population and political actors and institutions. If the link between deliberation in a limited group and its diffusion in a larger-scale public is at the heart of the design of citizens' assemblies, there is no theoretical nor practical consensus on the form that link should take. The problem of the compatibility of these two criteria questions the very possibility of a renewed democracy that would be deliberative without renouncing the requirements of mass democracy. Indeed, deliberation disconnected from broader public participation could lose democratic legitimacy (Lafont 2020)

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and have limited political effects as closed mini-publics can lead to the rejection of their measures by the population (Chambers 2009).

Citizens' assemblies in contemporary electoral democracies, thus, are subjected to a contradictory injunction. On the one hand, the supposed formal quality of deliberation depends on several parameters, including participants' ability to avoid external influences that might interfere with the discourse of experts whose intervention is provided for in the deliberative gathering itself (Chambers 2004). Such a requirement calls for a certain degree of control and closure of the assembly vis-à-vis the outside world. But, on the other hand, the broad legitimacy of the proposals formulated by a citizens' assembly depends also on their capacity to relay the various points of view of civil society, and then on the approval by politicians and the population, and therefore on the overall degree of openness of the assembly. We could, of course, imagine that the closure required to ensure the serenity and integrity of debates would precede the openness needed to publicise and circulate their results. But this would be to overlook the need for participants, during their deliberations, to go beyond the simple statistical representativeness associated with their random selection, and to try to reflect the diversity of existing viewpoints on the subject under consideration.

This tension, that exists in any citizens' assembly, between the contradictory imperatives of closure and openness, may be even greater in climate assemblies because of the complexity of the phenomena at stake, which involves numerous sub-questions and a wide range of viewpoints. Without relative closure of the assembly, deliberations run the risk of going off in many different directions. But without openness, they also run the risk of getting lost in technical considerations cut off from the realities experienced by the population, or being ignored or rejected by political actors who resist putting climate issues and environmental policy measures on the agenda.

These generic characteristics of climate assemblies pose both a methodological and analytical challenge. Indeed, in a context where the assembly is understood as an entity that must simultaneously ensure its autonomy through frameworks of deliberation, and thus the elaboration of boundaries, while also creating relationships with the rest of the population, the assembly cannot be regarded as a pre-existing entity with stable borders and no connection to the outside. Thus, the categories of *assembly*, *interior*, *exterior*, *legitimate*, or *illegitimate influences* are not once and for all given before the deliberative process starts. They are defined and redefined through the very deliberative process itself. Using the French Citizens' Climate Convention (CCC) as a case, this article aims to shed light on part of this process, highlighting, in particular, the permeability of the boundaries of the mini-public and its consequences for the deliberative process as a whole, including its reception and outcomes.

The first section provides a literature review on the theoretical tensions between relative closure and relative openness and the dual requirements that citizens' assemblies, especially climate assemblies, must meet. The second section describes our methodology for studying these tensions. In the third section, we briefly present the case study to highlight the specifics of the process, particularly in terms of openness to the outside. In the fourth section, we present our main results concerning: 1. the ability

of assembly members to criticise and broaden the limits of authorised expertise; 2. the impact of differentiated relationships with external actors on the final recommendations; 3. the role of these relationships in shaping the group of assembly members as a political subject. The fifth section discusses these results focusing on the consequences of these relationships on the political outcomes of the CCC and characterising the type of democracy invented by climate assemblies.

2 Literature Review

Theoretical and scientific literature has extensively discussed the democratic dimensions of deliberation in mini-publics. One of the claims about some mini-publics, such as deliberative polls, is that they should be sufficiently small (and procedurally structured) to be fully deliberative and sufficiently representative to be authentically democratic (Goodin and Dryzek 2006, 219–220). Part of the legitimacy of a mini-public depends on its formal qualities, such as equal access to the floor for all participants (Blondiaux and Sintomer 2002), the plurality and contradictory dimension of the experts (Manin 2011), and an ideal "neutrality" (Smith 2009) of its organisers. In principle, in such mini-publics, good deliberation requires the control of the conditions needed for an enlightened discussion and reliable judgement, and thus a certain closure of the deliberation space which should not be open to external influences. However, for the founding authors of the deliberative tradition, a society is democratic when it provides for the public deliberation of all members (Cohen 1989). Thus, for Cohen as well as for Habermas, the opening of deliberation to all affected individuals is decisive. The *a priori* delimited public space of citizens' assemblies thus constitutes a test for deliberative theory rather than a direct application of its principles.

By involving a small portion of citizens, mini-publics can lead to "participatory elitism" (Chambers 2003, 347). As Manin notes, it is "problematic at best to consider mini-publics as legitimate substitutes for all citizens" (Manin, 2021, p. 18). Random selection recreates a distinction, as strong as that between representatives and represented, between those selected by lot and others (Girard 2019). Girard points out that random selection, by removing the selected from any accountability to the broader population, opposes a decisive democratic criterion. Thus, mini-publics, particularly in the form of "deliberative polls," constitute a "shortcut" (Lafont 2020) which cannot substitute for the collective deliberation of all citizens and which contributes to neglecting the issue of mass participation (Chambers 2011).

This normative debate involves not considering mini-publics as self-sufficient entities but as part of a larger space. This precaution is all the more relevant for climate assemblies, which seem to constitute somewhat unique entities: the extended duration of deliberation, the number of participants (50–150), and the inherently broad nature of the climate-related subject matter all contribute to this distinctiveness. Indeed, the transition from a "mini-public" to a broader public sphere has been addressed in the literature, primarily by framing citizens' assemblies as mini-publics requiring legitima-

cy within the broader public. However, the literature predominantly overlooks *how* citizens' assemblies need to be known by the broader public to have effects (Jaske 2019).

The duration of certain citizens' assemblies, which can be several weeks or months, partly relaxes the imperative of closing debates traditionally associated with qualitative deliberation. But it does not completely erase the tension that exists between the citizens' assembly and what lies outside it, nor the fact that the nature of the relationship between these two spaces is not stable during and after the assembly. To express this general idea, we say that the assembly's boundaries are variable and that these boundaries are more or less open or closed. This means that the space of the citizens' assembly may include varying numbers of stakeholders. Their nature may vary in diversity and representativeness of existing viewpoints on the issue addressed by the assembly. Conversely, the assembly and its participants may be in more or less intense contact with members of the population and the public, and maintain a range of direct or indirect ties with different segments of society and political life. This degree of openness and closure has effects not only on the form and content of the deliberative process but also on the effects of the citizens' assembly and its political effectiveness.

The study of climate assemblies held in various national settings in recent years does not invalidate this research hypothesis. While claims about the legitimacy of climate assemblies to improve the governance of climate issues have emphasised their internal properties, they have only recently paid enough attention to other elements of the deliberative system, in particular, political institutions, public space, and civil society (Boswell et al. 2022). To be normatively legitimate, climate assemblies need to combine several characteristics (Stasiak et al. 2021). They must be impartial, by being relatively distant from strong external influences and by partly closing their borders to dominant interests in public space or social life. They must be perceived positively, not just by assembly members, but by the wider public. The "visibility and publicity" of the assembly is even a decisive factor in its "resonance" (Stasiak et al. 2021).

To address this issue, it has been recommended to consider mini-publics within the framework of deliberative systems, that is, the entirety of actors participating in democratic deliberation and their relationships (Mansbridge et al. 2012; Curato and Böker 2016). However, the literature on the relationship between climate assemblies and the broader public takes for granted an opposition between these two spaces. It rarely questions how, during the deliberative process itself, external audiences can influence the content of the debate, thereby creating a tension between broadening the audience and threatening the quality of the deliberation. This chapter thus aims to shed light on the potential impacts of external influences on the deliberation process itself.

3 Case Study: The French Citizens' Climate Convention (2019 – 2020)

The Citizens' Climate Convention (CCC) held in France from October 2019 to June 2020, offers a fertile field of investigation for analysing this progressive construction of the effective climate assembly, as well as the effects of these processes on the final proposals. Indeed, due to its duration (nine months in total), the number of deliberation days (seven sessions of three days each), its wide media coverage, and the opportunity it provided for researchers to observe almost the entire process, it is a recent and fascinating example of a climate assembly (for a general overview, see Giraudet et al. 2022).

Following the Yellow Vests social movement and the Climate Marches that took place in France in 2018 – 2019, the French President announced in April 2019 the holding of a Citizens' Convention on Climate. 150 citizens were selected by lot to represent the diversity of the French population, according to various social and geographical criteria. Over seven weekends, they met in Paris in an official building to elaborate, as requested in a mission letter signed by the Prime Minister, proposals to reduce "greenhouse gas emissions by 40 % by 2030, in a spirit of social justice". The CCC had a governance committee composed of three experts in participatory democracy, three climate experts, four experts in the economic and social field, as well as two co-chairs (Laurence Tubiana, an economist and director of the European Climate Foundation, and Thierry Pech, General Director of the Terra Nova Think Tank) and a general rapporteur (Julien Blanchet, former president of a student association).

After listening to presentations by climate scientists during the first session and reflecting on the "levers" and "obstacles" associated with their mission, participants were divided, by lot again, into five thematic groups (Transportation, Housing, Alimentation, Consumption, and Production/Work) defined by the governance committee to "simultaneously" (Pech 2021, 110) establish thematic public policy measures. Each of these thematic working groups was assigned a facilitation team and offered consistent support from a cohort of embedded and external experts. During the following two sessions, speakers from civil society were invited to inform assembly members by presenting on the issues, means, and obstacles related to the themes they had to deal with. From the third to the fifth session, an interdisciplinary embedded team of economic, climate, and energy policy experts, as well as a legal committee comprising legal experts, assisted the citizens in the elaboration of policy measures through impact assessments and discussions, and later, through the legal translation of their original ideas. During the sixth session, the citizens of each group presented their measures to all 150 participants. The final session consisted of a collective vote, in the form of a plenary assembly, on the proposed policy measures and on the ideal procedure to communicate them to the French population at large, particularly to decide whether or not to use a referendum. Finally, assembly members met again in an eighth session in January 2021 to assess the fidelity of their work in the "Climate and Resilience" bill, which

was debated between February and August 2021 in Parliament and presented by the government as the legislative transcription of the CCC's work.

The President of the Republic repeatedly brought public attention to the CCC. He mentioned it, for example, in the customary nationwide New Year's address of 2020, and he organised a question-and-answer session with assembly members during the fourth session in January 2020. This spotlight on the Convention was intended to embody the democratic openness of the executive power and contributed to ensuring a continuous media coverage of the experiment. Journalists were allowed to follow the discussions, although they were not permitted to mention the policy measures discussed before these were made public. All these peculiarities led to a relatively large public audience for the CCC.

The publicisation of the assembly's deliberations and its final recommendations of policy measures entered the national public debate through the deliberation itself, as assembly members had to decide on the modality (e.g. referendum, parliamentary or regulatory) through which their measures would be transmitted into the political and legal spheres. Thus, the question of the CCC's place in the larger political and deliberative system also became, on its own, a topic of deliberation.

4 Methodology

We developed an observation protocol for the CCC that enabled us to pay particular attention to the relationships with external actors. We observed the entire process, particularly focusing on the discussions in the thematic group "Transportation". We chose this group in light of the debates that were animating French political life at the time. The Yellow Vests movement started as a mobilisation against an increase in fuel taxes. This strong social protest led environmental activists to take clearer stances on transportation issues, notably advocating for an increase in the price of kerosene. This demand aimed to articulate a discourse on greenhouse gas reduction with a discourse on social justice, emphasising the responsibility of the wealthiest classes, particularly those who fly frequently. Thus, monitoring discussions around transportation offered a privileged viewpoint to understand how external dynamics to the CCC might impact the content of the deliberations. To better understand it, this internal observation of the CCC was complemented by an observation of various deliberative and protest spaces outside the CCC (such as environmental demonstrations taking place in Paris and across France over the same period).

We also conducted interviews with 10 activists who followed the CCC and 10 assembly members[1]. The semi-structured interviews with activists focused on their rea-

1 The activists were selected because of their participation in monitoring, discussions, or support for the CCC. They were members of various French social movement organisations involved in climate change mobilisations, like Extinction Rebellion, La Bascule, and the Réseau Action Climat. All the inter-

sons for engaging with the Convention, their conceptions of democracy, and the concrete relationships they established with assembly members. These interviews with CCC members covered 1. their life experiences and socio-demographic characteristics; 2. their experience of the CCC, with a particular emphasis on the preparations between sessions; 3. their interactions with external actors; 4. their social and political commitments at the end of the process. These interviews shed light on the relationships maintained between different actors, primarily with environmental activists, throughout the deliberative process and afterwards. They also highlight the progressive construction of a collective identity, developed from the various direct and indirect relationships they had with external protagonists, such as elected officials, union members, senior civil servants, activists, journalists, social media figures or policymakers[2].

5 Findings

We sought to understand how the boundaries of the climate assembly were renegotiated throughout the process since it is these boundaries that define the discourses that can legitimately circulate among citizens and that define how the deliberations of the assembly can be publicised externally and primarily to whom. These questions are important for the challenge of climate change and climate assemblies, as climate advocacy movements, interest groups promoting democratic innovations, and other actors in civil society have contributed to the emergence of these political experiments. In this context, understanding the permeability between the interior and the exterior becomes an issue for the democratic governance of climate change, which cannot solely be satisfied with discussions in isolation. This is why we will analyse how tensions between openness and closure of climate assemblies were resolved in the case of the French CCC.

From this perspective, several findings can be established. First, citizens were able to challenge the expertise that was chosen by the governance committee through research conducted outside of the strict deliberative process. In addition to this, some of the assembly members built unique relationships with external actors, influenced by the CCC's mandate to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Finally, we stress the importance of the various relationships between citizens and external actors in shaping the identity of their collective body.

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viewed assembly members come from the studied "Transportation" group. We made sure to interview both prominent figures who played a major role in the discussions and more discreet members.

2 As we were not allowed to communicate formally with members of the convention during the CCC, the interviews conducted afterwards enabled us to complete the information coming from direct observations of the deliberations and behaviours of assembly members behind the scenes of their working group or of plenary assemblies. The size of this chapter also means that we have chosen to focus on presenting in our own words the key points that emerge from these interviews, rather than using some excerpts as illustrations or presenting a full analytical treatment of this material.

5.1 The renegotiation of internal expertise by citizens

The organisers felt that the theme of climate change could not be dealt with in a fully contradictory way, unlike those of assemblies which dealt with other subjects (e.g. abortion). The CCC governance committee therefore chose experts with different opinions, particularly on the levers and means of action, but not all the positions in circulation were represented. For example, no climate sceptic was invited. During the first and second sessions, citizens were thus invited to tell the moderators which experts they would like to hear from. In the phase of discovery of the themes they had to deal with, the CCC members indicated names of technical and economic experts, of local and national political personalities who could enlighten them on the workings of political power, and of a few media personalities from the field of personal development who they felt could help them understand the process of social change. Eventually, the lists of experts drawn up by the assembly members and the lists of experts who participated in the CCC were very different. Authorised expertise therefore seemed to be primarily delimited by the governance committee.

Yet, to support assembly members in their understanding of the interventions of the different experts, from the third session, CCC's actors (organisers, facilitators, and members) were joined by a "support group." Its objective was to "*follow the citizens throughout the process,*" be *"at the service of the citizens,"* and *"at their technical disposal without ever crossing the red line of giving personal advice*[3]." At first, the CCC budget had not considered the need for this stable expertise to serve the citizens' demands. While organisation and facilitation represented 34 % of the initial budget, the expertise was to amount to only 1.8 % of the budget[4] and was to be limited to fact-checkers whose mission was to "*respond in the fastest possible way (…) to citizens so that they did not have to go looking for the information they needed in the debates*[5]". The emergence of this support group in charge of accompanying citizens in their work and then evaluating the impact of the proposed measures, whose form had not been decided at the beginning of the CCC, raises questions.

These experts from the support group had a significant impact on the process. The position of one of them, a then climate specialist at the Institute for Climate Economics (I4CE) think tank, is significant to illustrate the blurred boundaries between the inside and the outside of the CCC. When he was invited as an external guest in session 2 as part of a plenary session, his remarks were noticed, and it led the members of the CCC governance committee to ask him to be part of the support group and to evaluate the impact of the proposed measures[6]. This evaluation work formally began between sessions 2 and 3 and continued regularly between sessions. Initially, it was simply a mat-

3 Quentin Perrier's interview by Maxime Gaborit, Laurent Jeanpierre, Dimitri Courant and Simon Baeckelandt.

4 https://www.conventioncitoyennepourleclimat.fr/budget/ (accessed 25.11.24)

5 Julien Blanchet, 1st Session, opening plenary session: presentation of the roles.

6 Quentin Perrier's interview.

ter of proposing an impact score –expressed through a number of stars– for the different proposals. Subsequently, the support group, and Quentin Perrier himself, were responsible for assessing the accuracy of the proposals, sometimes recommending, rewording, sometimes proposing their deletion, or sometimes simply asking for clarification of the objective (Courant 2020). Between two discussions with assembly participants, a member of the support group confirmed that *"people think that the Convention is 150 conventioneers deliberating. The reality is that we are there, the day before at 9pm, filling in documents for them*".[7]

However, this importance of the experts during the deliberations was not unquestionably accepted by the citizens. Some of the revisions to the initial scenario imagined by the CCC governance committee were provoked by their questions. The discussion on the carbon tax provides an example of the rejection of the proposed expertise. From the second session, we observed that assembly members strongly rejected the idea of the carbon tax. Their distrust led them to consider the possibility of a government-hidden agenda, which would consist of getting the CCC into accepting a proposal previously rejected by the Yellow Vests movement. The rejection of an economist defending the carbon tax during a plenary session, or the permanent reminder of the refusal of this measure throughout the sessions, even when it was not explicitly proposed within the "Transportation" group, shows the citizen vigilance on the proposed expertise and its boundaries.

While the need for expertise may have been initially underestimated, it emerged as an integral dimension of both the process and the establishment of the boundaries of the CCC. Rather than being a pre-existing reality implied by the mandate and its subject matter, the sanctioned expertise within the convention signifies a site of power dynamics that plays a role in shaping the assembly's limits.

5.2 Citizens' engagement with external stakeholders

As the CCC was a nine-month-long process, the established boundaries of expertise were also exceeded and displaced by the activities of citizens between sessions. During the multiple inter-sessions, assembly members quite frequently met with civil society actors to discuss before bringing back ideas to the deliberative space. Outside actors used these interactions to feed the debates with more information or with proposals that the activists considered as having limited presence, or even being absent in the deliberative process –e.g. the theme of air transport; the proposal of a carbon quota; alternative framings for the debates.

Between sessions 3 and 4, some climate activists began to build a group of reflection and action around the CCC. In January 2020, those from Extinction Rebellion, an international civil disobedience movement fighting against ecological collapse and cli-

7 Session 4 – during a discussion between members of the Support group and the researchers.

mate disruption, and activists from "La Bascule," a group of organisations determined to "transition" towards a resilient ecological society gathered to publicise the CCC to passers-by and to exchange with its participants. They organised workshops and invited some assembly members to attend and exchange with the participants and to feed off their proposals. They also organised "Clim'Apéros" –convivial moments where participants came to present their progress, followed by feedback from the public on the content of the measures.

Through the events, these activists reiterated their support to the citizens chosen by lot through the slogan "*You are legitimate, be radical.*" They believed that the legitimacy of the framework could reinforce the radicality of assembly members, and detach them from the injunction to take into account the social acceptability of the measures. Thus, the opening of the CCC to civil society did not only take the form of participation in the technical and political debates on the proposals but also modified the space of deliberation by making it less dependent on the reactions of public opinion. The emergence of these actors at the border of the CCC also reveals the possibility of complementing the exchange of rational arguments with other modes of discourse such as testimony (Mansbridge 1999; Mansbridge and *al.* 2010; Steiner 2011) and activist intervention, which are frequently sidelined from mini-publics (Young 2000; 2001).

Let's illustrate with one example of these interactions and their effect. Aviation occupied a distinct place in French public opinion during the CCC. Within this context, assembly members from the Transportation group and climate activists consistently addressed this issue in their discussions after session 3. These interactions[8] partly explain the emergence, during session 4, of a series of proposals aimed at curbing air travel, such as banning flights that can be replaced by train journeys under 4 hours, implementing significant restrictions on individual flights, or prohibiting the expansion and construction of new airports. Ultimately, all these measures were adopted during the final session and constituted some of the CCC's most widely publicised propositions. This example of interactions shows the fluidity of the boundaries of the civic institution which cannot be reduced to the group of 150 sorted citizens.

This openness and the ties with environmental organisations did not remain unregulated: following the attempts by certain environmental groups to influence the deliberation by proposing, for example, a carbon quota, one governance commitee member, who is also very close to the environmental networks, intervened by asking the various associative actors to stop trying to influence the participants. Movements of openness were thus almost always followed by closure mechanisms.

However, the ties with environmental movements had lasting consequences as assembly members continued to interact with activists following the CCC to create alliances to support the adoption of most proposals both in the street and alongside the parliamentary debate on the Resilience and Climate Law. The openness of the institution and the established ties created its specific space in environmental governance.

8 Based on our interviews.

In this case, external engagement broadened the discussion and encompassed topics overlooked due to certain presentation biases in expert discourse. Beyond being confined to a set of issues dictated by the choice of invited experts, external engagement allowed for an ongoing challenge of the boundaries of the selected policy measures and contributed partially to the relatively ambitious nature of the final report of the CCC.

5.3 From an assembly to a group

The interactions with the external environment also contributed to shaping the group dynamic and identity of assembly members. The fear present from the first sessions in plenary discussions that their work might adhere to a hidden agenda, or conversely (at the end of the process) be neglected by political representatives, helped to construct the citizens' identity in opposition to elected officials, with several elements highlighted in their discourses: their independence from economic lobbies, the absence of re-election aspirations, and their representativeness of the national population.

During the process, the construction of the group as fully independent from outside influence certainly reached its acme when thirty-five to forty citizens gathered within the CCC premises after asking the governance committee to allow them to meet autonomously, without moderators, and outside the official program, in order to be able to discuss collectively the international treaties that coerce France. That evening, the debate focused on the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), the trade agreement signed in 2016 and partially ratified in September 2017 between Canada and the European Union. This discussion was an opportunity for assembly members to point out that all international treaties represent obstacles to the CCC's goals and should be challenged, or that a moratorium should be called for.

This mechanism of constructing a specific identity culminated in the formation of "The 150" association. With this formalised setting, participants gained more autonomy and attempted to advocate for their measures and organise their follow-up, notably through the website "*sans-filtre.les150.fr*". In doing so, citizens established the boundaries of a specific entity structured by demands and a shared experience, to enhance the political impact of their deliberations. However, while this autonomy-building process was primarily grounded in distancing from political and economic power, nothing better illustrates the fragility of this group than its gradual detachment from the broader French population it was supposed to represent.

The assembly's growing expertise contributed to a gradual distancing. The voluntary activity of citizens on social media grew over time, as proved by the number of accounts and messages sent during the process. By the end of the CCC, it was estimated that there were nearly fifty active and updated accounts (our observations), some of which fed the CCC's media chamber. Some assembly members acquired, unsurprisingly, greater visibility than others. On their accounts, messages in defence of the process largely dominated over critics. The combined effect of all these distinct interactions be-

tween assembly members and the media seemed to made some of them feel they were no longer ordinary citizens and that they should behave above all as "ambassadors," as the co-chairs put it, of a legitimate collective experience. These interactions also contributed to building a sense of collective identity for the assembly, first distancing itself from the political institutions, then gradually, from the wider French population itself.

Furthermore, the largely negative media coverage of the assembly's proposals, portraying them as unpopular, progressively led the participants to perceive themselves as detached from the general population. This process culminated, in the final session, in the rejection of referendums on numerous measures, in favour of a singular referendum on constitutional change and the crime of ecocide. This constitutes one of the paradoxes of the CCC: the rise in expertise and the acknowledgement of the assembly members' evolution throughout the process, which appears as a sign of healthy deliberation enabling opinions and values to evolve, simultaneously engendered a sense of estrangement from the general population. This choice proved deeply disappointing for some of the members of the governance committee especially those more closely involved in activist circles advocating for deliberative democracy.

6 Discussion: Implications for the CCC's political reception

These findings open up discussions around different dimensions of the scientific literature on climate assemblies and citizens' assemblies. First, we will discuss how the relative openness of the CCC compared to other climate assemblies had an impact on its political outcomes. Secondly, and on a more theoretical level, we will discuss the democratic qualities of the CCC suggesting that while it may appear deficient from a strict deliberative standpoint, its original design invites us to consider the mutual contributions of deliberative theories and theories of radical democracy.

6.1 Political outcomes and openness of a climate assembly

The dilemma of climate assemblies having to choose between rigid and flexible boundaries was dealt with in unanticipated and variable ways throughout the CCC. These boundaries were the results of a negotiation and even a frequent contestation from a multitude of actors both inside and outside the initial perimeter of the climate assembly. However, even if the CCC appeared to be more open than other citizens' assemblies of the same type, it did not succeed in expanding its deliberations as much as would have been necessary to call it a political success. As we have suggested, only a few organisations in the climate movement have managed to both insert themselves into the CCC's deliberative game and integrate their content within the CCC's debates. This has

undoubtedly affected the CCC's ability to produce the lasting political effects it hoped for: see most of its 150 recommended measures implemented in law or regulation.

Until the end of its process, the CCC failed to articulate the two dimensions of its legitimacy i. e. informed debates of a high deliberative quality within the mini-public, on the one hand, and acceptance of the results of these debates within the wider population, on the other. These tensions in the reception of the measures were reflected, for example, in the resistance of a large proportion of parliamentarians to the CCC's work. Assembly members were throughout the process much closer to activists than to politicians. Members of the government, Prime Minister Édouard Philippe as well as Minister of Ecological and Solidarity Transition Élisabeth Borne, in session 1, and the President of the Republic, in session 4, on January 10, 2020, visited the CCC to debate with assembly members. Several municipal representatives (such as Anne Hidalgo, Mayor of Paris), some members of parliament (such as Barbara Pompili, then Chairwoman of the French National Assembly's Sustainable Development and Spatial Planning Committee) and members of the government (such as Bruno Le Maire, Minister of the Economy) attended some of the CCC's plenary sessions, their numbers growing with each session to peak at the final weekend of voting on the measures, on June 19, 20 and 21, 2020, the dates of the seventh session.

On the other hand, the direct involvement of elected representatives in the CCC's consultation process was minimal. They represent just 1% of those interviewed: this compares with 8% of trade union representatives, around 10% of think tank experts, an equivalent proportion of government officials, academics and researchers, and over 20% of business executives and managers, a proportion barely higher than that of members of civil society NGOs.

On the final day of the last session, some assembly members "called" for local elected representatives to implement some of the CCC's measures. Others, undoubtedly more sceptical, or more vindictive, asked elected representatives to assume their responsibilities with regard to the proposed measures, thus justifying their choice not to resort to a referendum on their proposals. The episode bears witness to a cleavage between those who have drawn closer to their elected representatives, sometimes even going so far as to identify with them, and others who keep them at a distance but rely on them, sometimes with a certain disillusionment on principle.

Thus, the relative openness of the CCC mechanism compared with climate assemblies in other countries ultimately had ambivalent effects on the reception of its conclusions. On the one hand, it made the CCC a national event, a must for both the media and political leaders. But, on the other hand, the parliamentary route favoured by the Convention helped to diminish its impact. However, the consequences of the CCC are not insignificant: the Climate and Resilience bill, voted on in April 2021, aimed to enshrine 46 proposals (30% of the measures) into law (Garric et al., 2021). That is why, at the end of the adventure –the complete process of the CCC and its final legislative and regulatory outcomes– the CCC appears more easily as a revelation of the limits of the institutions of the French Fifth Republic rather than a successful experiment in democratic innovation.

6.2 A savage deliberative democracy?

From the perspective of democratic theory, the experience of the CCC does not reveal the unveiling of a supposed general will of the people, embodied here by a representative mini-public, in the sense of being close to a description of the people (Sintomer 2013). Certain canons of deliberation, which identify the criteria for fair exchange, notably to prevent external influences, do not adequately account for this experience. Here, the democratic dilemma that deliberative proceduralism always faces, namely the impossible *a priori* delimitation of relevant positions in any debate –which become audible through the allocation of limited speaking time– finds in the CCC a precarious yet theoretically stimulating alternative. While the literature on deliberative democracy traditionally opposes particular interests or defends their legitimacy, provided they are well-regulated (Mansbridge et al. 2011), the CCC and its unprecedented characteristics (an extremely large mandate and lengthy deliberation) may explain a broader openness to the outside social and political worlds, allowing for a new articulation between contention and deliberation.

As we have seen, assembly members were free to introduce into the CCC the knowledge, practices and discourses they deemed relevant, notably through the appropriation of discourses from climate activist movements. In this way, they enabled the deliberative process initially anticipated, in particular by the governance committee and public authorities, to find, through these interstices, a way to overcome its limits. Outside assembly sessions, assembly members had the time to choose the events they initiated or took part in. They could also select the information they heard between sessions that they wished to discuss within the Convention. Although it may seem singular, this experience opened the door to a conception of deliberation as the construction of measures from an entanglement of actors exchanging within a political space broader than the assembly itself, and where activist and protest dynamics may find their place.

In this respect, while CCC has of course been influenced in its design by deliberative democracy thinking, it also has affinities with what Lefort, and Abensour following in his footsteps, have called "savage democracy" (Abensour 2004); what Castoriadis has called the self-institution of society (Castoriadis 2006); or what Balibar has called "democratic limitlessness" (Deleixhe 2014). Beyond their differences, all these expressions characterise democracy above all by the permanent questioning of the framework or boundaries that delimit the space of debate. Generalising this idea, we could say that the ecological democracy that may be emerging through the rise of climate assemblies, if it cannot bypass state instruments to assert itself, must not neglect the conditions of possibility for its own questioning.

This current model of the climate assembly, which is developing and distinguishing itself from the jury model (Sintomer 2022) –where all outside influence is proscribed– could pave the way for a hybrid model of democracy, both deliberative and savage, where the savage dimension does not necessarily imply protest or debate outside institutions, but rather deliberation in which the framing of debate can be called into question, through an inquiry with boundaries not fixed once and for all.

7 Conclusion

If mini-publics were first conceived as largely insular collectives, meeting behind closed doors and only benefiting from certain experts chosen by the organisers and, sometimes, the assembly members (Blondiaux and Sintomer 2002), the CCC never really resembled this idealised model and was from the start open to the outside. The differentiated relationships with actors considered external to the process had a decisive impact on both the content of the deliberation, the proposals issued at its conclusion, the impact of the proposals on society, the political arena, and governmental institutions, and on the identity formation of the group of assembly members. Using our case as a reference point, our main argument is to demonstrate that a climate assembly cannot be understood as a clearly defined and immutable entity.

Thus, while much of the observational scientific literature on this type of device starts from a narrow conception of deliberation, we have proposed to describe and analyse climate assemblies by adopting, on the contrary, a broader conception of the deliberative scene. With this type of analytical framework, our attention can no longer be focused exclusively on the internal conditions of quality collective deliberation. It must also focus on the relationships maintained by the protagonists of assembly deliberation with the external social and political ecosystem (Curato and Böker 2016) either by including new actors in the deliberative space, or by extending deliberation to arenas other than the assembly.

By adopting such a point of view, we have shown that the CCC's imperative of openness has enabled a partial renegotiation of the perimeter of the actors involved and of its initial objectives. We thus suggest that it is not self-evident that citizens' assemblies should be considered mini-publics in the strict sense of the term. In the French example of the CCC, the opening features of the deliberative scene were likely more important than in other recent and comparable cases, such as Climate Assembly UK (Elstub et al. 2021). Indeed, these assemblies involve plural interactions, unequal in their intensity and their consequences on deliberation, which are certainly partly linked to the framing of debates, but which nonetheless make it possible to renegotiate the boundaries of deliberation, the sayable and the legitimate.

These considerations lead us to propose a methodological suggestion and a recommendation. From the point of view of developing citizens' skills and their active participation, the CCC has been a success. This progress and commitment cannot be fully captured without taking external influences into account. This is one reason why future investigations could focus on exploring the assembly's external relations, as much as its internal politics, to better understand the dynamics of deliberation.

From a normative point of view, the openness of the process played a crucial role in elevating CCC to a national priority and encouraging citizen involvement. As an innovative experiment in an outward-looking climate assembly, its success depended largely on the positive reception of its results. This reception was limited by the assembly members' refusal to use referenda as a way to translate their propositions into law

or regulation. But the fact remains that this singular experience of "savage deliberative democracy" that took place in France could be revisited in the future on a more conscious basis.

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Dániel Oross and Zsolt Boda

Chapter 8
Can democratic innovation work in an unfavourable political context? Assessing the effectiveness of the first Hungarian climate assembly

Abstract: In September 2020, the first Hungarian Citizens' Assembly on Climate Policy was organised by the new Mayor of Budapest. This chapter analyses how this local democratic innovation worked and what impact it had on the participants' attitudes to environmental issues and governance. The viability and success of the process was not evident at the outset, as citizens' assemblies, citizens' juries and other participatory democratic mechanisms have not been used in Hungarian governance. The past decade of illiberal politics has led to reduced citizen activism and shrinking spaces for policy participation. However, the Citizens' Assembly was a success in terms of organisation, outputs and evaluation by participants. In terms of policymaking, the recommendations did not generate original ideas compared to the 'business as usual' of environmental protection; and they did not require sacrifices or radical behavioural changes from citizens or institutions. Regarding the impact of the assembly on the participants' attitudes concerning environmental issues, we found that participants felt more informed about those issues after the event. The chapter concludes with reflections on the prospects for democratic innovations such as climate assemblies in illiberal political contexts.

Keywords: climate assembly, Central Europe, deliberation, local governance, illiberal democracy

1 Introduction

Acknowledging the urgency of the climate crisis, climate assemblies as a specific form of mini-public are becoming popular in established democracies. Governments have used them at all levels of governance to involve citizens in generating recommendations to minimise the impacts of the crisis. There is empirical evidence that deliberation (Hara et al. 2019; MacKenzie and Caluwaerts 2021) in citizens' assemblies (Kulha et al. 2021) can promote concern for future generations and that, through the prioritisation of the commons over self-interest, the 'talk-centric' deliberative approach of climate assemblies can lead to support for ambitious climate policy solutions (Niemeyer 2013; Muradova et al. 2020; Torney and O'Gorman 2019). However, we know very little about how climate assemblies function in an illiberal context where elected govern-

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ment officials not only focus on short-term goals and promote climate delay discourses but systematically weaken environmental politics.

To support systemic understanding and to establish under what conditions climate assemblies can meaningfully contribute to reflexive environmental governance, we address this gap through a case study analysis of the climate assembly convened by the Budapest City Council using an exploratory research design. Hungary is a typical case of an illiberal democracy (Bozóki 2015; Pap 2017) having had a right-wing populist government in power since 2010 that has weakened checks and balances, and reduced opportunities for direct participation in policymaking. While issues like immigration, gender politics, and family are intensively present on the agenda of the government, environmental policy has been systematically neglected and even partially dismantled (Hajnal and Boda 2021). However, at the 2019 regional elections, a coalition of opposition parties scored some local victories, including Budapest, where the new Mayor, Gergely Karácsony, was the candidate of the green-left party Dialogue for Hungary. This opened a window of political opportunity for local environmental initiatives.

Focusing on the climate assembly in Budapest (Hungary), earlier research has revealed why the event occurred. Even though it was initiated by civil society organisations, the prime mover of the deliberative process was political: local politicians pursued this objective to fulfil their election pledges, ensure ideological consistency, and promote sustainability (Oross et al. 2021). Focusing on the internal and external dimensions of climate assemblies and how the two are related, this paper investigates how this local democratic innovation worked and what impact it had on the assembly members' attitudes to environmental issues and governance. The main goal is to give a preliminary answer to the broad question of whether climate assemblies can be effective tools for revitalising democracy in an unfavourable, illiberal political context.

The paper proceeds as follows. In Section 2, based on the literature on climate and citizens' assemblies, we note some theoretical issues and expectations concerning the potential effect of the illiberal political context on public legitimacy, mediatisation, and the impact of such processes. Section 3 presents the case itself, the Budapest climate assembly. Section 4 deals with the research questions and the methodology used to answer them. Section 5 presents the main findings of the paper. Section 6 discusses our analysis of the climate assembly with respect to its effectiveness in revitalising democracy in an illiberal context.

2 Theoretical considerations: Illiberal politics and climate assemblies

This section provides a review of theoretical expectations concerning how both the external and internal dimensions of climate assemblies are affected by illiberal politics. The literature on mini-publics in general (see Escobar and Elstub 2017) and climate assemblies in particular offers very sparse clues about what to expect in an illiberal po-

litical context since it focuses on the practice of deliberative politics, which typically happens in the context of liberal democracies (see Elstub et al. 2021; Torney 2021). Therefore, in the following section, we present some problems found in the literature that may be especially relevant to an illiberal context.

The success of climate assemblies obviously depends on the broader social context, which is influenced by politics (Thompson et al. 2021). The most important problem discussed by the literature in the context of established liberal democracies is how much decision-makers are committed to taking seriously what climate assemblies propose. It has been shown (in France, the UK, and Poland) that despite ex-ante commitments expressed by politicians, decision-makers have cherry-picked from assembly recommendations or been reluctant to implement them effectively (Torney 2021; Willis et al. 2022). This is hardly surprising, given that addressing climate change needs radical or even paradigmatic policy reforms – and a general observation is that such policy changes are difficult to enact (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). Pre-existing contracts, ongoing programmes, dedicated resources, complex policy interests, a lack of knowledge and funds and a shortage of political attention may all contribute to the slowing of effective policy action. However, both the public in general and the participants of assemblies in particular may feel betrayed by perceived inaction, hindering willingness to participate in further such initiatives or even becoming a barrier to taking part ex-ante. We assume that this kind of perception and expectation may be even stronger in the illiberal context of Hungary for the following reasons.

First, in Hungary, there is no tradition of mini-publics. At the same time, the participatory opportunities associated with policymaking have radically shrunk since 2010 (Boda 2023). Quasi-participation has been offered through so-called 'National Consultations' organised by the government, through which citizens can fill out questionnaires with clearly tendentious questions and biased options for answers. These represent more an abuse of participatory governance than its effective use (Batory and Svensson 2019; Oross and Tap 2021). Although the climate assembly we studied was organised by the newly elected Budapest City Council, governed by a coalition of opposition parties (made up of six parties, not equally supportive of the green initiatives of the new Mayor), it is hard to imagine that the general political context had no adverse effect on expectations concerning this initiative. We assumed that the public would be suspicious concerning the political commitment behind the climate assembly proposal and that this would affect both its organisation and its outcomes.

Second, although the City of Budapest has some autonomy to make decisions about local matters, its political opportunities depend heavily on the right-wing Fidesz national government and the parliament where Fidesz has had –and still has– a constitutional two-thirds majority. The fact that the opposition took over Budapest from Fidesz in the 2019 local elections represented a major defeat to Fidesz (Kovarek and Littvay 2022). A rational expectation was that the government would do anything in its

power to block and undermine the initiatives of the city.[1] That is, even if citizens had put some trust in the commitment of the City Council to take the climate assembly seriously, they might still have shied away from participating in it, expecting the central government to oppose any politically meaningful local initiative. Even if they decided to participate, they may have been suspicious and reserved concerning the deliberative exercise, seriously affecting the quality of the process.

The attitudes of the public could have had a significant effect on the setting up and operation of the climate assembly. Climate assemblies are sometimes criticised for not being radical enough regarding policy recommendations (Willis et al. 2022). This may be an even more pronounced problem in the illiberal context of Hungary, in which politics has not thematised the danger and challenges of climate change, the whole environmental field has largely been neglected, and environmental issues are low on the political agenda (Pokornyi and Sághy 2021). In light of some theoretical considerations concerning the policy choices of illiberal regimes, this should not be seen as a random feature of the Orbán regime. The neglect of public goods and services which do not offer direct rewards in terms of power relations and/or fail to generate financing for the regime and its supporters is typical of illiberalism (Boda 2021). Evidence about the green attitudes of Hungarian people is mixed. At the general level, the majority acknowledges the severity of environmental problems, but only a tiny fraction of respondents take individual action to address them (de Moor *et al.* 2020, 139–149). Qualitative data on Hungarians' perceptions of green issues has provided evidence that people are interested in a safe and clean environment if it personally benefits them. However, they feel poorly informed and even misinformed about specific green policies and technologies (Bíró-Nagy et al. 2023). According to public opinion research, people's policy attitudes are generally unstable, and the public agenda, with its priming effect, plays an important role in activating them (Zaller 1992). Therefore, while the hostile and negligent political environment in Hungary makes climate assemblies even more necessary than elsewhere, it is also reasonable to assume that the former did not contribute to the success, acceptance, and legitimacy of the climate assembly.

Another issue concerns how climate assemblies are mediatised, as this greatly impacts the relationship of such processes to other parts of the political system. Well-publicised citizens' assemblies may increase trust in government, a lack of which is a key issue in tackling climate change (Howarth et al. 2020; Willis 2020). Public engagement beyond the formal process associated with the event (e.g., media coverage of the latter, and follow-up events) can contribute to engaging and communicating with the public more deeply about the outcomes of the process (Devaney et al. 2020). Proper media coverage may also increase the public's trust in the event and help recruit participants.

Citizens' assemblies struggle to get much media coverage anywhere. However, the situation is especially problematic in Hungary, where a large part of the media is con-

1 In fact, in 2021–2022, the government significantly curtailed the financial autonomy of local governments, including that of Budapest.

trolled by the government or its cronies (Polyák et al. 2020). Public broadcasting is under direct political control and opposition politicians are practically never given the floor, while most commercial television broadcasters, radio stations, and printed newspapers (including all the regional dailies) are owned either by Lőrinc Mészáros, a crony of the government who has become Hungary's wealthiest businessman over the past decade, or the media foundation set up by Fidesz. The City of Budapest has very limited means of communicating with the public, and we expected that the media coverage of the climate assembly would remain very limited. A further development of the past decade is that policy debates have faded away: members of the government very rarely appear in the media, and when they do so it us usually in pro-governmental media where they do not have to face critical questions or in-depth inquiries about policies. The policy process has sped up considerably, and its transparency has declined substantially (on these aspects of the policy process, see Boda 2023). Accordingly, we expected very poor media coverage of the climate assembly before, during, and after the event.

Based on these considerations, the general research question that guides our chapter concerns the effect of the illiberal political context on the climate assembly organised by the city. Namely, *How did the illiberal political context influence the organisation and the success of the climate assembly?*

Further specific research questions aimed at operationalising the general inquiry:

- *What was the impact of the assembly in terms of policymaking?*
- *What was the impact of the assembly in terms of media coverage?*
- *What was the assembly's impact on participants' attitudes concerning environmental issues? How did participants perceive the quality and success of the process?*

3 Introducing the case

The citizens' assembly on climate policy was run as part of the revision of the city's climate strategy. In November 2019, the declaration of a climate emergency resulted in the creation of a climate assembly in collaboration with the NGO DemNet. The aim was to identify what Budapest inhabitants should do to address the climate emergency.

Although it was commissioned by City Hall, the assembly was not designed around the latter's political needs or expectations; it was developed by civil society members. DemNet coordinated meetings with the participation of several civil society experts and the support of the Sortition Foundation (UK), the European Climate Fund, and the Municipality of Budapest.

The random selection of assembly members followed international good practice, using a two-step random selection method. The first step was encouraging the online application of participants: 10,000 invitation letters were sent, and 333 invitations were registered in Budapest during the two-week registration period, meaning a registration rate of 3.3%. This was followed by the stratified, random selection of participants: a list

of fifty assembly members was compiled who represented the population of Budapest over 18 years of age according to gender, age, education, and place of residence. This selection process was carried out using an open-source algorithm that has been used to select participants for more than 40 citizens' assemblies around the world (Flanigan et al. 2021).

The citizens' assembly was organised over two weekends. During the first weekend (16–17 September), experts on different areas of climate change gave factual presentations to the assembly members about climate change and its effects. The presentation topics covered the meaning of climate change, opportunities to reduce household emissions, transport and climate, and social adaptation (see Table 8.1). Assembly members also had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with more radical perspectives as stakeholders (e.g. activists from *Fridays for Future*) participated in a roundtable discussion. During the first weekend, the assembly members worked in small groups, assisted by trained facilitators, in continuous collaboration.

Table 8.1: Budapest Citizens' Assembly on Climate Policy: Topics, meetings and outputs

Topic	Meeting and Discussion	Output (and % of support by assembly members)
Climate change Energy use of households	1.5 h	Recommendation: Media campaign on climate change (90%)
	1.5 h	Recommendation: Development of energy conservation programs for buildings (94%)
Transport and climate change Health and climate change	1.5 h	Recommendations: Development of public transport (91%) Restriction of downtown car traffic (88%)
	1.5 h	–
Sustainable rainwater management Green surfaces Social adaptation	1.5 h	Recommendation: Projects for better use of rainwater (85%)
	1.5 h	Recommendation: Increase in green surfaces (94%)
	1.5 h	Recommendation: Construction of climate-friendly experimental streets (90%) Measures to stop climate-damaging projects (75%)
Visions about the future of Budapest	2 h	–

Notes: The report was sent to the City Council on 11 November 2020. The draft strategy on Climate Change of the City Council (published in January 2021) accepted all proposals and included them in the text. The final document was accepted in March 2021.

During the second weekend (September 26 – 27), assembly members developed 21 proposals for how the Municipality of Budapest should respond to the climate emergency. The proposals considered the best were discussed in detail on the fourth day. Finally, members of the assembly weighed the pros and cons associated with eight proposals, identified other considerations, and voted on the extent to which they supported the recommendations. The assembly did not have a social media account to enable media coverage. Reports about the assembly were posted on the municipality's and the Mayor of Budapest's accounts, and press releases were also sent out by these two entities.

4 Data and methods

Our research is exploratory: the goal is to describe phenomena and unveil relations between them (Stebbins 2001). In order to answer the research questions, we used several datasets comprising quantitative and qualitative data as part of a mixed methods research design (see Escobar and Thompson 2019). First, the political attitudes of the assembly members before and after the event were surveyed. The survey questionnaire included items concerning political interest, trust in political actors, political participation, opinions about climate change and environmental policy, measures of political efficacy, and populist attitudes. The response rate was 39 %. The basic goal of the survey conducted by DemNet, the coordinating NGO of the assembly and two academic partners (the HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences and Corvinus University of Budapest) was to understand how the experiences of the climate assembly affected the way of thinking of the participants.

Six semi-structured interviews were conducted with politicians and experts involved in the process: the Mayor of Budapest, the Deputy Mayor, an advisor to the Mayor, one city councillor in charge of the process, the main organiser from the NGO in charge, and one facilitator. These individuals represented information-rich sources in relation to the research aims (Braun and Clarke 2018, 85). The face-to-face interviews were conducted from June to October 2020. Interviews were transcribed and analysed using NVivo software. We employed data-driven thematic analysis, a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data, because of its flexibility and advantages in highlighting similarities and differences across the dataset (Braun and Clarke 2006, 97).

Data on media coverage was also collected. Media monitoring was commissioned by the assembly's organisers between August and October 2020. The content analysis focused on narratives about the event. We analysed how public service news programmes captured the complexity of the event and presented different interpretations. During the analysis, key messages were identified, with a particular focus on regularly repeated messages.

To understand how the illiberal political context influenced the organisation of the citizens' assembly, we undertook document analysis focusing on election manifestos

used in the 2019 municipal elections, climate-related policy documents (e. g. the draft of the climate strategies of Budapest), and documents that were circulated to invite citizens to take part in the process. We then added a comparative component to the analysis (Boswell et al. 2021) by using the reports on Climate Assembly UK (2020) and the Citizens' Assembly of Scotland (Elstub et al. 2022). Finally, one of the authors (Oross) was present at the assembly and gathered fieldnotes and personal impressions about it.

5 Findings

This section provides empirical analysis of the climate assembly with regard to policy impact, media coverage, and impact on assembly members.

5.1 Impact on policy

We evaluate the impact of the climate assembly on policy from two different angles. First, we look at the content of the specific policy recommendations that the assembly produced and assess the originality and radicality of the proposals in relation to addressing climate change. Our expectation was that, in an illiberal context where environmental issues have been systematically neglected, the recommendations would not reflect very radical viewpoints and would be coherent with mainstream green policies. Second, we look at the direct impact of the recommendations and how they have been integrated into the city's policies.

Table 8.1 lists the recommendations adopted by the assembly and the share of support for them. One of the most popular policy recommendations among assembly members was improving the energy efficiency of buildings by providing grants, loans, and support for project development. With this policy option, citizens aimed to improve air quality, make homes more comfortable and valuable, and reduce their overheads. According to citizens, the renovated houses could be recognised with a diploma or plaque. Another favoured policy recommendation was to increase green surfaces to protect against urban overheating and increase rainwater drainage and greenhouse gas sequestration, thereby also creating a better living environment (e. g. through noise protection and dust binding). To achieve these goals, assembly members mentioned solutions such as transforming parking spaces into green spaces, planting trees, creating green walls and green roofs, greening inner courtyards, greening tram rails, running plants on house walls and putting pots and flower boxes on walls, and greening unused parts of roads and bus stops.

Our assessment was that these recommendations did not represent very radical or original ideas compared to the 'business as usual' of environmental protection, nor required sacrifices or radical behavioural changes from citizens. The recommendations instead propose projects that would create direct and short-term benefits to people.

While there is nothing wrong with adopting 'win-win' solutions in environmental policy, one may wonder whether proposals of this kind really address the challenge of climate change and whether it was worth convening a climate assembly to reach those conclusions.

Apart from the content of the recommendations, the direct policy impact is crucial: how effectively have the recommendations been integrated into the City's policy plans and implemented in the two years following the assembly? When talking about the impact of the process, a representative of the City's Department of Climate and Environment explained that it confirmed her conviction that it is worth talking about climate change as people come to understand the challenges, and that the climate assembly had been effective in translating the messages of "engineers" and experts into everyday language. Regarding the impacts, she emphasised that "I was primarily interested in the output of the event ... in fact, I was there as a user who wants to use the results from this and incorporate them into decision-making". It was underlined that the recommendations have helped policy advisors convince politicians about the most important measures that need to be taken. This should be seen as a direct political accomplishment of the assembly. While it may not have reached and influenced the wider public (due to the poor media coverage of the event), it helped in policy formulation and in the work of experts from the City Council.

The City Council took into account the recommendations of the climate assembly: the Climate Strategy mentions the recommendations, referring to how parts of the Strategy are linked to assembly proposals. A chapter deals with attitude formation and the population's involvement in decision-making, and contains several sub-goals related to these aims. Again, this was probably the effect of the climate assembly: participatory governance is now taken for granted. This was also stressed by the Mayor:

> The logic of participation is that it is insatiable. When you open a door, people come in through it, and then they don't want to go out anymore. This is why participation should only be expanded continually, which is why I think we need to proceed using careful steps.

The Strategy describes the recommendations and the order of the goals is almost the same, although it does not describe the recommendations according to support by assembly members and puts the objective of reducing downtown traffic before increasing green spaces. However, several objectives in the Strategy are not associated with concrete measures for implementation (for example, specifying the amount of resources intended for development) but merely repeat what was described in the previous Strategy for the city and list the scope of action and opportunities of the capital. Our overall assessment is that the recommendations were integrated into the City Council's Climate Strategy, but instead of revolutionising it, they led to only piecemeal improvements. A major problem with the Strategy is that its implementation has not been prepared and planned. This lack of attention to implementation is a general feature of policymaking in Hungary.

5.2 Media coverage

One important topic when analysing the external dimensions of a climate assembly is the mediatisation of the event. There are several ways organisers can give insights into the process to the public: for example, the Citizens' Assembly of Scotland had a 'convener', a person whom the media could identify as a public figure for the assembly, while organisers also shared stories about members' experiences that were covered by local media (Elstub et al. 2022, 63–68). The organisers of the Budapest assembly were aware of the results of the British cases. In an interview we conducted, the Advisor on Citizen Participation was rather satisfied concerning the impact of the City's communication:

> I think the bigger impact of the event is actually the way it appears in the news. We published news statements right after the event, and I saw it today in one of the papers, and I was really impressed, because those were exactly the messages I wanted to see about climate change.

In order to see how effective organisers were in this regard, we collected details about media appearances that reported on the assembly (see Table 8.2).

Table 8.2: Media coverage of the Budapest climate assembly

Type of media	Items of news/articles (n)	Positive/neutral/negative tone
National newspaper	1	neutral
Commercial television	2	neutral
Radio channel	3	neutral
Blogpost	2	neutral, negative
Online portal	7	neutral

Due to the state-controlled nature of public media in Hungary, organisers could not reach out to the national public television or radio; therefore, these channels did not broadcast any news about the event. One national newspaper published an article interviewing politicians, organisers, and participants. There were reports on national commercial television broadcasts: one report was in the daily news, and one morning talk show involved a discussion with the organisers. Based on this evidence, the organisers were not particularly successful in spreading their message in traditional media. The picture is a little bit brighter when we consider online media outlets. One voluminous analysis appeared on a thematic blog, and one right-wing pro-government blog criticised the process. Seven online portals reported about the event, covering right-wing, liberal, green, and left-wing ideological approaches and the economic perspective.

We conclude that the media coverage was relatively meagre, especially if we consider that this was the first climate assembly in Hungary. Previously, deliberative proc-

esses have been used only on a few occasions in Hungary and exclusively with local development projects or plans of a much smaller scope. Here, the goal was to propose policy recommendations for the capital city of Hungary, with some 1.7 million inhabitants. Given the project's ambition and nature, we can safely state that more media interest could have been expected. First, no national broadcasting channel, television or radio, provided substantial coverage of the event. This is hardly surprising, given the tight political control of public broadcasting in illiberal Hungary and the fact that the climate assembly was organised by the City of Budapest and its Mayor, Gergely Karácsony –the most significant political adversary of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his party. Second, only two television broadcasters reported on the event – although one of them (RTL Klub) broadcasts nationwide. At the time of this report, it was the most-watched TV channel in Hungary. Finally, only one newspaper and only one local radio station reported about the event, which should be seen as truly disappointing by the organisers.

It is striking that only independent media or media related to the opposition covered the assembly. On the 'right', we could identify only one blog post, which was overtly critical of the initiative. The whole media universe close to the government was silent about the process. This is due to the effect of illiberal politics, where the majority of the media strictly follows the government's agenda and does not allow dissident voices to be heard. This behaviour can be partly explained by voluntary compliance, but many sources of evidence point to the fact that the government and the Fidesz party, in fact, directly steer the media close to them (Polyák et al. 2020).

5.3 Impact on assembly members

We expected that the illiberal political context would undermine the event's legitimacy, which would be reflected in increased difficulty recruiting participants. We also speculated that citizens' weak trust in political institutions and participatory governance would undermine their willingness to participate enthusiastically and seriously, which could have affected the overall quality of the assembly.

Regarding recruitment, the proportion of those registering for the climate assembly (3.3%) is in line with international experience, which reports figures of between 3% and 5% (Flanigan et al. 2021). Organisers put much effort into helping the 10,000 citizens who were invited to apply: during the registration process, permanent in-person, online, and telephone assistance was provided. Further, assembly members were offered 50 euros as an incentive to participate. Even so, the dropout rate (22%) may be considered relatively large as only 39 citizens showed up from the selected 50; this can be considered a sign that they shied away from participating.

Regarding the assembly members' behaviour during the event, our expectation concerning their reserved and distrustful attitude was not supported by the unfolding of the climate assembly. Our observation was that during the event participants were

active, enthusiastic, and constructive. This is supported by the opinion of the Advisor to the Mayor of Budapest on Citizen Participation:

> People left the room saying, "I actually did not know about this, you should do much more communication and education about climate change", and it is not like no one is doing anything right. It is just the way the world works, and you never really stop thinking about these issues, and you [citizens] never really have the chance to talk to experts, and ask questions, above all.

Our survey data indicates that participants perceived the event as successful in terms of the provision of evidence and learning. The surveys shed light on the positive effect of deliberation on participants' knowledge about climate change, the reasons why Budapest had declared a climate emergency, and the City's Climate Strategy, as participants felt more informed about these issues after the assembly (see Figure 8.1).

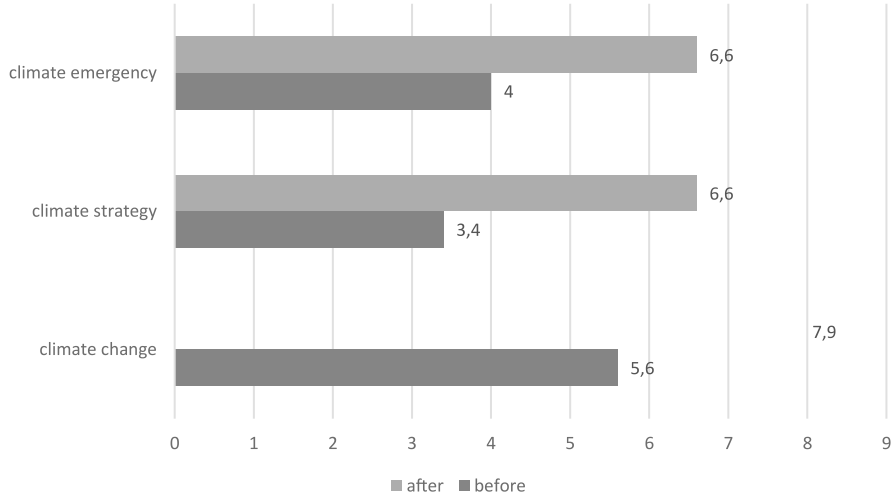

Figure 8.1. Self-reported knowledge in the Budapest climate assembly.
Question: How informed do you feel about … (n=19, 1–10 scale, mean values, $p \leq 0.05$)

Assembly members expressed outstanding satisfaction with the deliberative quality of the process, awarding scores of around 9 out of 10 in all of the relevant dimensions. Participants felt that they had an equal opportunity to speak and participate in the discussion and that the participants had listened to each other. In these two dimensions, the average opinion was remarkably positive (in both cases, 9.8 out of a maximum of 10 points), and the participants' opinions did not vary much. The openness and compassion of the participants was also highly valued and agreed upon. In contrast, access to information about ideas showed greater variance, with some dissatisfaction, but overall, the average response rate was also positive (8 out of 10). A simple explanation might be that the event was well-organised and achieved its objective of creating a de-

liberative space. However, these outstanding satisfaction levels may also be linked to a kind of 'aha!' moment that participants experienced. Our assumption is that the illiberal political context made the deliberative exercise especially memorable to participants. If this is so, it suggests that the culture of illiberal and populist politics is not endemic in Hungary and that further deliberative and participative opportunities may play a role in changing it.

Participants' satisfaction with the event is also reflected in their high level of agreement with the proposed recommendations. According to our data, participants supported the proposals to a very strong extent.

6 Discussion and conclusions

We assumed that the unfavourable conditions engendered by the illiberal political context would affect the organisation, development, and social and political impact of the Budapest climate assembly. We studied these effects according to three external and one internal dimensions: broader social impact measured through the media coverage of the event; the policy impact measured through the quality of policy recommendations, as well as the openness of the City Council to integrate and implement them; and the attitudes of the assembly members measured through a before-and-after survey. All in all, we conclude that climate assemblies may be effective tools for revitalising democracy in an unfavourable, illiberal political context to only a limited extent.

Regarding external dimensions, we found evidence that the illiberal political context influenced the organisation and success of the assembly. In the case of the recruitment process, the 3.3% proportion of those registering for the process did not support our initial expectation that participants might shy away due to the central government's opposition to politically meaningful local initiatives. However, the last-minute dropout rate (22%) can be considered a sign of reluctance to participate. Civil society organisations had effective avenues for promoting citizens' engagement in decision-making, as the Municipality of Budapest was responsive to civil society initiatives. This is particularly relevant regarding a salient topic like climate change that affects future generations. Concerning how the climate assembly would be mediatised (media coverage), we expected this to be very poor both before and after the event. In line with our expectations, only independent media or media related to the opposition covered the process, while the whole media universe close to the government was silent (no public broadcasting television or radio channels covered it). The lack of interest from this part of the Hungarian media was unlikely to be accidental. It may be explained by the fact that the climate assembly was organised by the municipality of Budapest and led by opposition parties. It is an open question how much the very topic of climate change added to this silence. Since the Hungarian government is somewhat reserved about environmental issues, to say the least, we may speculate that the green focus of the mini-public further motivated pro-governmental media to neglect it. In any case, the fact that only two television stations, one newspaper, and one local radio sta-

tion covered the event was disappointing for the organisers. These problems of media coverage clearly hinder the efficiency of climate assemblies at revitalising democracy and addressing climate change in an illiberal political context.

As for the impact of the event in terms of climate governance, our expectation that the policy recommendations would not be too radical was fulfilled. The recommendations of the event do not represent original ideas compared to the 'business as usual' of environmental protection, and they do not require sacrifices or radical behavioural changes from citizens. This might be partly explained by the unfavourable illiberal political context of Hungary, in which policy debates in general, and environmental and climate policy debates in particular, have faded away over the past decade. However, the event had direct political benefit as it helped with policy formulation and the work of the experts inside the City Council. Contrary to our expectations, those citizens who decided to participate did not express suspicion or reservations regarding the internal dimensions of the process. Instead, both the organisers' experiences and the survey results about the event's quality and success indicate the positive effect of deliberation on assembly members' climate change attitudes, suggesting that the culture of illiberal and populist politics is not endemic regarding climate governance.

Our findings are based on one case study, and due to the absence of research in this area, the study is exploratory. Therefore, further mixed methods research (Escobar and Thompson 2019) should bring more empirical evidence on this vital topic and is clearly required. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to determine whether the above-described impacts of the Hungarian illiberal political context are general characteristics of climate assemblies convened in unfavourable political contexts. Future research could critically assess climate assemblies in such contexts – for example, in Poland, where the first nationwide citizens' assembly on energy costs was convened by an NGO without government participation (Brzozowska et al. 2022) – and create typologies to distinguish them better.

The somewhat disappointing findings about the overall effects of the climate assembly should not imply that organising such processes in illiberal contexts is futile. In such an environment, some factors should probably be paid even more attention by organisers than in liberal democratic contexts. For instance, the supporting institutional and political coalition behind such assemblies is of greater importance because state institutions and governmental actors tend to be hostile to these types of initiative. Also, more emphasis should be paid to communicating about the event before and after, relying on social media, the internet, and other communication channels independent of the government. Our analysis revealed some promising phenomena even under the constraints of an unfavourable political macro-context, such as citizens' satisfaction with the event. We speculate[2] that illiberal politics makes people hungry for

2 Unfortunately, for data protection reasons, we are not allowed to recontact the assembly members to survey the possibly long-lasting positive effects of participating in the first Hungarian climate assembly. However, we would like very much to believe that such a survey would indeed provide further support for our speculation on the democratic potential of such mini-publics under illiberal circumstances.

true democratic experiences. In this sense, it may be that the effects of the climate assembly were more favourable than they appear at first sight, but these effects are more indirect. They are linked to the positive lived experience of being part of a democratic initiative of this kind.

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Chapter 9
The Global Climate Assembly: A new global deliberative space?

Abstract: While some argue that a challenge as urgent as climate change requires putting democracy aside, others propose that deliberative democracy may be the most effective approach for tackling a socio-ecological problem of such complexity and lament the democratic deficit in existing global governance institutions. This paper contributes to discussions on democratising climate governance by examining the 2021 Global Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change –a pioneering democratic innovation. This assembly, comprising 100 participants worldwide, aimed to amplify citizen voices in global climate governance, a realm where they are typically absent. Our methodology draws on the concept of deliberative capacity, defined as the extent to which a system allows for deliberation that is authentic, inclusive, and consequential. Findings reveal both the assembly's innovative contributions and its limitations. We conclude with reflections about the shortcomings and possibilities demonstrated by the Global Climate Assembly and how this learning may inform the development of new global spaces for citizen deliberation and climate action.

Keywords: Global Climate Assembly, global governance, deliberative capacity, COP 26, democratic deficit

1 Introduction

Climate change is a multilevel crisis which demands a coordinated global response. The socio-economic complexity of climate governance makes it particularly important to democratise (Stevenson and Dryzek 2014; Dryzek and Niemeyer 2019). Yet the enormous challenge of conceptualising, let alone realising, democracy at the global scale is widely acknowledged (Scholte 2002). But even in democratic contexts, representative governments routinely fail to address longer-term issues like climate change due to electoral incentives and short-term priorities (Fischer 2017; Smith 2021). This bolsters the argument for more deliberative approaches to democracy, for example through the use of mini-publics (Escobar and Elstub 2017; Elstub and Escobar 2019). The idea of assemblies is an increasingly popular approach to remedying democratic deficits in climate governance, though until recently the idea had only been implemented at local and national levels, and predominantly in Europe (Roberts and Escobar 2015; Elstub et al. 2021; Boswell et al. 2023).

While the idea of a global citizens' assembly was theorised in 2011 (Dryzek et al. 2011), it was not put into practice for another decade. In 2021, the world's first Glob-

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al Assembly (GA) was established, bringing together a group of a hundred randomly selected citizens from across the globe to deliberate about how to address the climate and ecological crisis. They presented their recommendations (the People's Declaration for the Sustainable Future of Planet Earth) at the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Glasgow in November 2021. The GA was thus a unique opportunity to research the contribution that mini-publics, and in particular citizens' assemblies, can make in global climate governance.

In this chapter, we evaluate the extent to which this first global citizens' assembly contributed to a more deliberative approach to global climate governance, and what lessons can be learned for the design and implementation of future assemblies. To do so, we apply the concept of deliberative capacity, defined (following Dryzek 2009) as the extent to which the GA promoted deliberation that was inclusive, authentic and consequential. The chapter proceeds as follows. In the next sections, we (2) review the literature, (3) present the theoretical framework and explain how it was adapted to the case of the GA, (4) outline the methodology used to assess its activities and (5) present the results.

2 Literature review. The theory and practice of global citizens' assemblies

International relations theory generally conceptualises the global system as 'anarchical' in the sense that there is no ultimate global legal authority. There are, however, many institutions that seek to facilitate cooperation and influence action through norm and rule setting. Citizens, however, are rarely present in these institutions, despite growing public awareness of their activities (Zürn, Binder and Ecker-Ehrhardt 2012). Several suggestions have been made to democratise institutions at the global level and directly bring the voices of citizens to participate in global governance – as opposed to entrusting civil society organisations to represent them.

It is acknowledged that some democratic institutions will work better at the global level than others (Dryzek 2006; Bohman 2007). Dryzek et al. (2011) argued that elected parliaments, for example, would not work well at the global level for a number of reasons. Firstly, there might be opposition from countries such as the United States (US) that would not accept challenges to their democratic institutions. Countries that do not have a history of national-level competitive elections, such as China, might see the endeavour as a threat to their sovereignty, and be unwilling or unable to support democratic selection of candidates. It would also be challenging to identify the appropriate electoral system to use given the significant sociocultural diversity of a 'global public'. Even if countries were to accept an elected global parliament, and an appropriate electoral system could be identified, it might not be considered legitimate due to the electorate being so far removed from their elected representatives. Accountability

would be difficult to achieve, especially given the inevitably huge number and diversity of constituents each member of a global parliament would have to represent. Furthermore, it would be hard to avoid competition between national interests, in a context in which forming a 'global public' is challenging.

Dryzek et al. (2011) proposed that deliberative global citizens' assemblies could overcome many of these problems. The problems with elections would be avoided through the use of sortition to recruit participants. Pragmatically, countries like the US may feel less like the mini-public challenges domestic legislatures; single-party states like China would not feel pressured to alter their domestic electoral processes. Normatively, a global mini-public would be more likely to promote global public goods when dealing with issues like climate change and less bound by national interests. Such a proposal is imbued by the ideal of deliberative democracy: "Deliberative democracy means citizens communicating about and reflecting upon preferences, judgments and values regarding common concerns. The aspirational ideal is inclusive and meaningful communication joining citizens, activists and leaders" (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2019, 411).

In practice, however, there are only a few examples of transnational mini-publics that have enabled researchers to explore these claims empirically and these have primarily been part of European Union governance rather than global (Luskin et al. 2008; Isernia and Fishkin 2014; Elstub 2014; Böker and Elstub 2015; Abels et al. 2022; Youngs 2022). A notable example was the WWViews process which has been used to address global warming, climate and energy, and biodiversity (Mikami 2010; Bedsted et al. 2012; Rask et al. 2019). These consultations were organised prior to key COPs in 2009, 2012 and 2015. However, they were a networked series of nationally based mini-publics, rather than a global citizens' assembly bringing citizens from different parts of the world into collective deliberation. The evaluation of these initiatives is mixed. Rask *et al.* (2012, 3) noted for instance that the policy impact of WWViews on global warming was limited. Blue (2015) also wondered whether the consultations were truly deliberative, as they lasted only one day and did not extend across national borders.

By contrast, the 2021 GA was a unique initiative, aimed at bringing together a demographically diverse sample of the global population to discuss possible action and make recommendations. It was composed of a Core Assembly –the focus of this chapter– and of Community Assemblies, organised all around the world. The Core Assembly brought together 100 members from 49 countries who spent 68 hours deliberating online, over 11 weeks between October and December 2021. Members of the GA deliberated on the following overarching question: How can humanity address the climate and ecological crisis in a fair and effective way? The initiative was led by a team of practitioners specialised in deliberative methodology and citizen empowerment.

3 Conceptual approach. The deliberative capacity of the GA

Scholars of deliberative democracy have looked at deliberative processes in individual events or institutions, but also increasingly in broader governance systems (Mansbridge et al. 2012; Elstub et al. 2016). The concept of deliberative capacity was originally developed to allow researchers to evaluate whole deliberative systems, as opposed to individual instances of political communication. What we are proposing here, though, is to use this analytical tool to evaluate the role that the GA was able to play in and of itself, as well as within global climate governance. We assess this contribution both within the GA and, where necessary, in relation with other institutions and coalitions of actors.

Dryzek (2009) offers three criteria for evaluating the deliberative capacity of a system: the extent to which it allows for deliberation that is (1) inclusive, (2) authentic, and (3) consequential. *Inclusiveness* refers to the extent to which all relevant interests and/or discourses are meaningfully and equally represented in decision-making processes. Different visions of inclusiveness exist. The literature can be divided between the proponents of socio-geographical representativeness –as Landemore (2013, 1229) puts it, the "politics of presence"–, and the advocates of discursive representativeness –the "politics of ideas". The former associate inclusiveness with a set of socio-demographic criteria (age, gender, social status, etc.) and/or geographical criteria (rural, suburban, urban, etc.). The second focuses on the emergence of ideas, whatever the socio-demographic and geographical configurations. These two perspectives are not mutually exclusive but complementary: public opinion research has indicated a link between socio-demographics, geography, and political attitudes (Lax and Phillips 2008). Inclusiveness is therefore a function of both the socio-geographical representativeness of the members and the discursive representativeness of the deliberations (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2008). In the case of climate- and environment-related deliberative processes, participants can speak in their own name (reflecting where they come from) while at the same time consciously or unconsciously conveying specific discourses, i. e. narratives to which they subscribe and which enable them to link facts in a coherent way and give meaning to their beliefs and experience (Hajer and Versteeg 2005; Dryzek 2022).

Inclusiveness must also, we argue, be approached paying particular attention to the populations or interests that are both more affected, and may be marginalised or under-represented in political or economic institutions (Gherghina et al. 2021). The idea that all those who stand to be affected by a decision should be able to influence it (the 'all-affected' principle) is a widely accepted norm of democratic inclusion (Koenig-Archibugi 2017). However, it can be critiqued on a number of grounds including its expansiveness and indeterminacy. Afsahi (2022) for example proposes replacing it with a 'most-deeply affected' principle. When it comes to socio-environmental issues, some sections of the population are likely to be more affected (or affected earlier)

than others by sudden or gradual environmental catastrophes, including the poor, displaced people, or socio-cultural and demographic minorities (Martinez-Alier 2003; Nixon 2011).

Apart from the composition of the mini-public (socio-geographic and discursive), another way to approach inclusiveness is to examine to what extent and under what circumstances marginalised or under-represented groups are included, or excluded, in the governance of a deliberative event, in the deliberations themselves and in the production of recommendations (Gherghina et al. 2021). In this chapter, we consider inclusiveness in terms of both the composition of the assembly and the deliberation process (from design to facilitation).

The inclusiveness of the deliberation process is closely related to its *authenticity*. For instance, if the process is dominated by one social group, or by a single (hegemonic) discourse, its quality will be limited. *Authenticity* refers to the extent to which deliberations "induce reflection noncoercively, connect claims to more general principles, and exhibit reciprocity" (Dryzek 2009, 1382). Reflection can be induced noncoercively by setting conditions for deliberation that allow participants to properly think about relevant issues and different interests, and create opportunities to discuss, ask questions, and challenge each other's ideas.

Deliberation, that involves technical information, should provide sufficient time for participants to study relevant materials and ensure the availability of resource persons (e. g. expert witnesses, facilitators or 'community hosts'), if possible, locally. Facilitators can also create opportunities for reflection by asking questions or encouraging participants to discuss or challenge each other's opinions or beliefs. Authentic deliberation also involves thinking more in terms of the common good than personal benefits or particular interests. One way of achieving this is to ensure that a diversity of discourses and interests (particularly of the most marginalised) are represented in the deliberations or expert witness presentations.

Reciprocity (a feature of authenticity) refers to communicating and formulating arguments in terms that others can accept, for instance by linking claims to common or shared principles (Gutmann and Thompson 1996; Dryzek 2009). Reciprocity, which is important for building trust, can be supported by facilitators, for example when participants are made aware, or see in practice, that deliberating on difficult or contentious topics can be done in respectful ways. When deliberating on issues involving highly scientific or technical information, reciprocity enables participants to engage with each other and with expert witnesses in a meaningful manner. When reciprocity is high, participants are not only open to learning with other participants and expert witnesses, but also know that their life experience, by itself, can offer rich contributions for the deliberation. At the global level, creating reciprocity can be particularly challenging due to the backgrounds of participants that involve multiple languages, cultures and histories.

Finally, *consequentiality* refers to the extent to which deliberative processes influence collective decisions or underpin a cultural change. Citizens' assemblies have the potential to be impactful; policymakers may consider their recommendations seriously

as they indicate what people might think about an issue if they had the time, information, and inclination to consider it in detail (MacKenzie and Warren 2012). The influence of mini-publics on policy in general, however, has been limited, with their recommendations often being cherry-picked by policymakers (Smith 2009; Elstub 2014), or used to legitimise decisions already made in the formal public sphere (Böker and Elstub 2015). The direct policy impact of transnational mini-publics has certainly been low (Rask et al. 2019). At the global level, such impact is even more challenging (Dryzek 2006; Bohman 2007).

Taking a broader view of consequentiality, MacKenzie and Warren (2012) argue that the public can be influenced by a mini-public, if they perceive the participants to be 'people like them' who have considered the issue in a deeper manner than the rest of the public (see also Curato and Böker 2016). Relatedly, Niemeyer (2014) suggests mini-publics can stimulate and influence public debate. To influence public opinion and debate, mini-publics need a good level of media exposure, which can be hard to achieve (Carrick and Elstub 2023; Rask et al. 2019). This is especially the case at the global level where the public sphere has not been developed to the same extent as the national level due to the absence of a common language, cultural base, and mass media outlets (Dryzek 2006; Bohman 2007). WWViews, for example, did not get much media exposure (Schneider and Delborne 2011).

Existing research identifies significant challenges to achieving impact in climate governance. The impact of climate assemblies is highly variable and context matters (Boswell et al. 2023). For example, from their analysis of a case study of a local climate assembly from England, Sandover et al. (2021) concluded that it provided only a minor challenge to the power of existing local authorities. Research by Wells et al. (2021) on the impact of local climate assemblies and juries indicates that they are primarily being used to support already existing policies rather than to determine climate change responses themselves. Elstub et al. (2021), while researching a national climate assembly in the UK found that the impact of the assembly was affected by design choices, including the scope of the assembly. Researching the same national UK case Carrick and Elstub (2023) found that the lack of public awareness of the assembly reduced the pressure on policymakers to respond to the assemblies' recommendations in a meaningful manner. Some politicians in France, predominantly from the Right, felt threatened by the national climate assembly (Buge and Vandamme 2022).

This emerging body of research on climate assemblies, and their influence within climate governance, are invaluable yet limited. The terrain for global climate governance is considerably different to national and local politics (Stevenson and Dryzek 2014). The challenges for achieving consequentiality at this level could therefore be significantly different and consequentiality may need to be interpreted differently (see e. g. Demski and Capstick 2022).

4 Methods

We build our analysis on an evaluation of the GA conducted between 2021 and 2023 by a team of sixteen researchers (including ourselves) located in eleven universities in seven countries (Curato et al. 2023, 14–17). The evaluation was based on mixed methods (Escobar and Thompson 2019):

- semi-structured interviews (63) with people who held different positions in the GA, including organisers, community host, facilitators, notetakers and assembly members;
- surveys of assembly members, conducted during and after the GA (response rate of 70–90 %);
- direct observation of breakout group deliberations and plenary sessions;
- discourse analysis of the transcripts of breakout groups, in particular of the deliberations concerned with "Reviewing Scenarios, Pathways, and Principles" – one of the key blocks of the GA, focusing on issues of fairness and effectiveness in addressing the climate and ecological crisis. The analysis was informed by existing typologies of climate discourses (Stevenson and Dryzek 2014; Bäckstrand and Lövbrand 2019; Hulme 2021; Dryzek 2022);
- content analysis of various documents produced by the GA and expert testimonies available on YouTube, including the Report of the GA (Global Assembly Team 2022), the information booklet distributed to assembly members, the People's Declaration, and minutes of the Knowledge and Wisdom Committee (KWC)'s meetings;
- content analysis of all online media articles (56) and a random sample of social media posts (28 from Twitter, 16 from Instagram and 9 from Facebook), available in English, published from May 2020 – August 2022.

These methods allowed the evaluation team to study the GA from various angles and to evaluate its demographic and discursive diversity, its deliberation process (including the inequalities that it created), its governance, and its impact (see Curato et al. 2023). This chapter builds on the Evaluation Report and focuses on a subset of the data collected. To answer our research question on the inclusiveness, authenticity and consequentiality of the GA deliberations, we focused our analysis on the aspects reflected on Table 9.1.

Table 9.1: Guiding questions used to operationalise the concept of deliberative capacity and main data sources for each dimension

Inclusiveness	Authenticity	Consequentiality
How inclusive was the GA? How diverse was the membership at different levels (the assembly and its governance)	How authentic were the deliberations? How reflective were the deliberations?	How consequential was the GA? On global climate governance (UNFCCC and COP26)

Table 9.1 *(Continued)*

Inclusiveness	Authenticity	Consequentiality
How diverse were the discourses represented? To what extent were the most affected people and interests included? How inclusive was the deliberative process?	How did the deliberations connect to general principles of common interest? How reciprocal were the exchanges among participants?	On the public (assembly members) and media (traditional and social media) On other actors (e. g. civil society, UN institutions)
Main data sources		
Report of the 2021 Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis; Transcripts of breakout groups; Interviews; Minutes of the KWC's meetings; Information booklet.	Transcripts of breakout groups; Interviews.	Interviews; Online media articles; Social media posts.

In the next section, we discuss the extent to which we observed these aspects of deliberative capacity in the GA. While inclusiveness and authenticity draw attention to the internal workings of the assembly (e. g. governance, selection, deliberation processes), consequentiality focuses on the relationship between the assembly and other parts of the political system (governments, the general public, civil society, media, etc.).

5 Analysis

5.1 Inclusiveness

To assess the inclusiveness of the GA, we examined the socio-geographic diversity of its members and organisers, discursive representativeness, and the inclusiveness of the deliberative process. Through these categories, we place particular emphasis on the extent to which those more vulnerable or marginalised were included in the GA.

The organisers sought to compose a demographic sample of the global population, taking into account geography, gender, age, education and attitudes towards the climate and ecological crisis. They used sortition to select participants, which is often described as a more inclusive mode of representation than election, nomination or certification (Courant 2017). At first glance, the socio-demographic and geographic data of the assembly members shows a relatively representative sample of the world's population, especially from the Global South (77 % were from the Global South) (Curato et al. 2023, 48 – 54). Several members also came from countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, including least-developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS) – although there was only one representative from SIDS.

The socio-economic diversity of those involved in the governance of the GA was mixed, with high-level decision-making power resting in the hands of actors located in the Global North. Diversity was not actively sought at the level of the Central Circle (the organisers responsible for the conduct and design of the GA) whose members mainly came from Europe (6/10). Members of the Knowledge and Wisdom Committee (KWC) –formed to provide input on the selection of witnesses and the information material made available to assembly members– were also mainly from the Global North (5/9 were based in Europe and North America). In contrast, those in charge of "making the GA happen" (the facilitators, note takers and editors) were mainly located in the Global South (Curato et al. 2023, 87).

The exchange language was English, and real-time translation was provided for those who needed it. In spite of the provision of interpreters, the choice of English affected the inclusion of the members for whom English is a foreign language. For example, native English speakers could respond directly to comments made by other speakers, and tended to find it easier to engage in the nuances of debate, while others had to wait for their interpreter to translate each remark. Many assembly members expressed feelings of intimidation for not speaking English and felt that native speakers were more confident and dominated the discussions (Curato et al. 2023, 103).

As far as the discursive representation of the GA is concerned, the record is equally mixed. Firstly, the organisers attempted to ensure that participants' attitudes to climate change were broadly representative of the global population's attitudes by asking potential participants whether they thought "climate change is a global crisis". Doing so, they sought to mirror UNDP data on global attitudes to climate change (Global Assembly Team 2022, 54). This question proved to be problematic both conceptually and pragmatically, as the terms 'global' and 'crisis' may be translated and interpreted in multiple ways –meaning that a 'no' response did not necessarily indicate climate quietism, scepticism or denial. In practice, many Community Hosts found it difficult to recruit participants in their local area who answered 'no' to this question. This may explain why discourses of climate scepticism were not featured in the deliberations (Curato et al. 2023, 51).

Our analysis revealed that the deliberations focused on climate science (drawing heavily on discourses of ecological modernisation and mainstream sustainability, cf. Dryzek 2022) and climate change mitigation, but also considered various forms of climate injustice (whether socio-economic, historical or environmental). While this is valuable, we noted the absence of some discourses, such as those addressing climate change adaptation or loss and damage (major concerns for Global South countries) or deep critiques of capitalism (green radicalism, cf. Dryzek 2022). This could be a consequence of the framing of expert evidence by the Central Circle and the KWC. As noted by Curato et al. (2023, 59) "a possible reason for the 'missing discourses' relates to the decision of the Committee to focus the Global Assembly on what can be done now, i. e., in the next five years, instead of opening debates with a twenty-year horizon. The discourse of degrowth, therefore, is put aside in favour of topics like 'reducing overconsumption.'"

In terms of inclusiveness of the deliberative process, the organisers took a number of steps to support equitable participation between assembly members. The challenge of organising a deliberative process (from conception to facilitation) is particularly accentuated on a global scale, because of the great diversity of socio-cultural, linguistic, and material situations of the populations that are to be represented. Differential ability to access and engage in deliberative sessions illustrates both the material and socio-cultural challenges of achieving inclusive deliberative process on a global scale. All participants received a stipend as financial compensation for their time, and those for whom English was not a first language were provided with an interpreter and translated documents. As the deliberations were entirely online, the (many) members who did not have access to the internet were given temporary internet access near their homes. In some cases, this took place in the home of the community host whose on-the-ground support with logistics and understanding of the process was often key to the accessibility of the process, though the level of support varied.

Despite the welcome technical considerations involved in enabling people to access the internet easily, as well as support from translators and community hosts, several members reported problems with security or disclosure of identity (offline). For example, for some women, it was not possible or safe to walk to the wi-fi zone to attend late-night sessions. The scheduling of the deliberations was also not always inclusive, as the organisers devised it assuming (sometimes incorrectly) that assembly members lived in socially secure and inclusive contexts, had fewer duties and activities in the evening and had easy access to the internet. Finally, assembly members who were not used to online meetings found it more difficult to engage, given the formal and 'procedural' nature of online engagement (to facilitate turns and avoid speech breaks) and the limitations of non-verbal communication (Shortall et al. 2022).

5.2 Authenticity

To assess authenticity, we asked the following questions, in line with the principles of noncoercive reflection, pursuit of common interest and reciprocity: How were participants introduced to the scientific aspects of the climate and environmental crisis? Were there opportunities for reflection? Were participants able to discuss a variety of solutions encompassing the concerns of wealthier and poorer countries? What was the nature of interactions among participants, facilitators, and expert witnesses?

The deliberation process fostered learning and meaningful exchanges of views. Assembly members were particularly eager to learn about the effects of climate change and biodiversity loss and felt more confident discussing these issues after the GA (Curato et al. 2023, 68). The organisers and facilitators, however, also faced challenges in promoting authentic deliberations due to the dispersed and diverse backgrounds of assembly members (Curato et al. 2023, 54) that involved multiple languages, cultures, and time zones. The knowledge and literacy levels of members and facilitators varied and, in some cases, created huge disparities between them. This posed some barriers for au-

thentic deliberation, e.g when facilitators or more knowledgeable members were viewed as authority figures by other members. There were also challenges posed by time constraints and the complexity of the issues under discussion (the climate problem and global climate governance). In some cases, the role of the facilitators, seen as 'teachers' by assembly members, contributed to limiting, rather than encouraging, participants' authentic engagement in the deliberations (Curato et al. 2023, 39). The discussions took a more pedagogical turn, where members were more inclined to take a deferential position.

The design of the GA was organised around presentations by expert witnesses and group deliberations, with members required to absorb and understand a lot of information in a limited time. In the initial stages, assembly members familiarised themselves with the current climate and ecological situation and debated various scenarios and pathways toward decarbonisation. While this learning stage was necessary, it in fact largely conditioned the nature and boundaries of the ensuing exchanges. During group deliberations, members tended to view the GA like a classroom, where the main point was to learn. Indeed, it seems that participants focused less on questioning and deliberating and more on digesting and quoting scientific arguments. This resulted in a situation where reflection tended to be minimal, i. e. participants may not have fully internalised and reflected on these arguments, formulated their own opinions, or engaged deeply with each other's perspectives. As a facilitator noted, "it often happened that… I felt people were repeating the text [given to them]. They would say the same thing in different ways. What was written there, but in other words. Whenever you wanted to know what they thought or how they felt, it just didn't [work]" (Curato et al. 2023, 76).

Authentic engagement was also constrained by a relatively narrow understanding of the climate and environmental crisis. Although the GA's remit was broad, the agenda set by the organisers focussed on mitigation rather than adaptation, which could be interpreted as a prioritisation of the concerns of wealthier countries over the urgent and sometimes existential adaptation concerns of poorer countries. Further, when invoked, discussion on climate justice focused more on rich vs. poor countries than on injustices occurring within and across countries. For instance, the information presented to assembly members emphasised CO2 emissions by country rather than by '(socio-) ecological class' (Latour and Schultz 2022).

A major constraint to reciprocity and reflection was that facilitators tended to lead and structure the conversation more than the assembly members themselves. This was partly a symptom of having limited time to cover large amounts of information while managing other constraints such as pauses for translation and internet issues, but the result contributed to limiting the organic flow of ideas. Facilitators often found themselves in a delicate position: on the one hand, they expressed appreciation for receiving a clear and standardised process plan; on the other hand, they sometimes felt overburdened by the large amount of material they needed to go through to prepare for each session (Curato et al. 2023, 91–92).

There was also a noticeable gap, both actual and metaphorical, between the members and the expert witnesses. The latter (and sometimes facilitators) were seen as holders of knowledge, perhaps for cultural reasons as well as the format of deliberations, and assembly members were unlikely to question them or the learning materials. While a congenial and harmonious environment between members could have facilitated reciprocity, participants felt in this case uncomfortable or reluctant to challenge or debate with each other.

5.3 Consequentiality

The organisers of the GA envisioned three "routes to impact" (Global Assembly Team, 2022, 30). They wanted to activate: (1) institutional actors (governments, businesses, etc.) and (2) the public (especially GA members) to take action to address the climate and ecological crisis, and (3) to propose a new governance model of decision-making at the global level. One of the organisers stated that the GA "is not a campaign or NGO, it's a new operating system for global governance" (GA media release, 2021).

With regards to institutional actions, the organisers sought to connect, or "dock" (in their own words), the GA to the UNFCCC. This was done by seeking endorsement of high-profile figures and presenting the People's Declaration at COP26. This, however, did not disrupt the intricate and lengthy path of deliberations in the public and empowered spaces of the COP (Dryzek and Stevenson 2011). A concrete impact could have been observed if, for instance, a group of actors (states or civil society groups) had endorsed the People's Declaration, if a new agenda item had been identified, or if a COP decision had been issued. However, none of these happened. External factors limited the influence of the GA, such as the configuration of power in the UNFCCC, and the complexity, technicality and inflexibility of its procedures. As such, although the UNFCCC is open to a wide range of stakeholders, major decisions are taken by government representatives.

Design choices also constrained this route to impact. On the one hand, because the organisers privileged an independent and bottom-up initiative, it meant that the GA did not have any formal link to the UNFCCC –although its Secretariat proved helpful in supporting the GA organisers to navigate the UN bureaucracy. Key individuals (e. g. Alok Sharma, the UK COP president; Nicola Sturgeon, the First Minister of Scotland; and António Guterres, the UN Secretary General) endorsed the GA, raising its public profile. António Guterres called the GA "a practical way of showing how we can accelerate action through solidarity and people power" (Global Assembly Team 2022, 2).

No endorsement, however, came from individual countries. While some civil society groups felt inspired by the work of the GA (Global Assembly Team 2022, 247), many also remained unaware of its existence (Simangan and Pham 2024). This may be due to the fact that advocacy was limited in time, as outreach mainly targeted COP26. The decision by the organisers to support a broad remit of discussion, which contributed to

rather generic statements in the People' Declaration, also made it challenging for the GA to have a targeted imprint on the UNFCCC (Curato et al. 2023, 126).

The impact of the GA on the public was also limited. While it had concrete impacts in participants' everyday lives, encouraging many of them to adopt environmentally-friendly practices, it struggled to reach other audiences and advance a 'cultural wave[1]' (Curato et al. 2023, 133). Media coverage was also limited. Across the GA lifespan, we only identified 56 online media articles available in English[2]. This coverage was distributed across 20 countries in total, but predominantly appeared in British and Indian media outlets. Media coverage was also uneven across the globe, as only 18 of 56 articles were reported in the Global South media. This coverage peaked at the launch of the GA at COP26 and in the period after the launch. The coverage primarily focused on the GA itself and was positive. The social media coverage of the GA was also limited and varied across the different social media platforms. Content creation and responses were uneven across platforms. The most GA related social media content appeared on Twitter (794 posts) and messages on this platform also received the most attention (2,225 followers).

While there was sufficient media and social media activity to raise the idea of citizens' assemblies at the global level, especially amongst political elites, ultimately, the GA did not receive enough media coverage across the globe to generate significant public awareness or to stimulate global debate about international climate action. There are several reasons for this. First, this was always going to be a significant challenge due to the lack of a global public sphere (Fraser 2014), even for transnational events such as COPs, which generally receive a high level of media attention (Neff et al. 2022). Second, it is likely that as found in other climate assembly studies (Carrick and Elstub 2023) the lack of impact on COP26 and other global governance arenas meant there was not a sufficiently news-worthy story to attract more media attention. Thirdly, with limited resources, the organisers concentrated primarily on the challenging logistics of delivering the GA and less on its communication and advocacy strategy.

6 Conclusion

Ten years ago, in their analysis of the deliberative capacity of the UNFCCC, Stevenson and Dryzek (2014, 9) noted that they found it "wanting, though not completely irredeemable". The GA represented a first step toward making the UNFCCC, and global climate governance more broadly, more democratic by conveying to it the informed opin-

1 The cultural wave is defined by the organisers of the GA as "an invitation to artists and creators to develop work that expressed the idea of the Global Assembly and the climate and ecological crisis in a way that would reach people through popular culture" (Global Assembly Team 2022, 25).

2 Only a handful of articles were published by non-English speaking media (in France, Italy, Spain, Finland, Brazil, Germany, Mexico). See the appendix of the Report for the 2021 Global Assembly (Global Assembly Team 2022).

ions of a diverse sample of global citizens. Intended as a 'proof of concept', the GA set a precedent and generated many useful practical lessons and conceptual and ethical insights to inform future global-scale citizens' assemblies, both on the issue of climate change and more broadly.

In this chapter, we used the concept of deliberative capacity to evaluate the quality of the GA in terms of its inclusiveness, authenticity and consequentiality. This framework proved particularly helpful in the way it links the internal and external deliberative dimensions of citizens' assemblies. We found that the inclusiveness of the GA was encouraging; the organisers took this aspect into account when recruiting members and designing the process of deliberation. Greater inclusiveness could, however, have been sought in the governance of the GA (such as sharing the design and management of the assembly between the Global North and South), and in the diversity of discourses and interests reflected (ensuring an openness, for example, to more radical philosophies and subaltern voices). We also found that despite efforts to foster authentic deliberations and learning between participants, the discussions often resembled a classroom exercise, with 'knowledge' flowing uninterrogated from the experts or facilitators to the participants. Finally, we found that of the three criteria of deliberative capacity, consequentiality was the least developed: beyond the enthusiasm of a few political leaders and civil society representatives, the GA had very limited influence on international climate negotiations or the worldwide public debate on climate change. While some of the points we raise relate to structural constraints that are difficult to overcome (e.g., the digital divide, the UNFCCC as a country-driven process), others (e.g. greater diversity in the governance of an assembly, greater focus on deliberation than on learning) deserve attention.

Despite these limitations, the case of the GA successfully demonstrated that it was feasible to transform such an ambitious global project from theory to practice. As noted by Curato et al. (2023, 121) the GA demonstrated "that global citizen deliberation was possible", thus setting the stage for the next iterations, or similar projects. It showed that citizens can unite for a common cause and make informed recommendations. The GA thus "made significant first steps in establishing itself as an actor in global climate governance" (Curato et al. 2023, 117). We believe that the GA was crucial in highlighting the need for ordinary people to be able to weigh in on UNFCCC decisions and processes, in a context in which *all* stakeholders are asked to take action (cf. preamble of the Paris Agreement). While more could be done to enhance the relevance and legitimacy of any similar future initiative, this world-first GA expanded our imagination towards empowering citizens to take part in the deliberative system of global governance.

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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

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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

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