

DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Exploring the Potential of Climate Assemblies in
the Global South



DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Exploring the Potential of Climate Assemblies in the Global South

Nicole Curato, Graham Smith and Rebecca Willis



International IDEA
Strömsborg
SE-103 34 Stockholm
SWEDEN
+46 8 698 37 00
info@idea.int
www.idea.int



Agence Française de Développement
5, rue Roland Barthes
75598 PARIS CEDEX 12
+33 1 53 44 31 31
www.afd.fr

© 2024 Agence Française de Développement and International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

International IDEA publications are independent of specific national or political interests. Views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the views of International IDEA, its Board or its Council members.

The development of this Report was supported by a grant from the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), a public institution at the heart of the French development aid system, which has been working for 80 years to tackle poverty and to foster development in developing countries. The information and views set out in this publication are those of the authors. Nothing herein constitutes the views of AFD. Any use of this work should acknowledge the authors and the contribution by AFD.



With the exception of any third-party images and photos, the electronic version of this publication is available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence. You are free to copy, distribute and transmit the publication as well as to remix and adapt it, provided it is only for non-commercial purposes, that you appropriately attribute the publication, and that you distribute it under an identical licence. For more information visit the Creative Commons website: <<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0>>.

International IDEA
Strömsborg
SE-103 34 Stockholm
SWEDEN
Tel: +46 8 698 37 00
Email: info@idea.int
Website: <<https://www.idea.int>>

Cover illustration: Women attending the special Gram Sabha. Panchayat Kankradara, District Dungarpur, Rajasthan. Photo credit: UN Women/Gaganjit Singh
Design and layout: International IDEA
Copyeditor: Accuracy Matters

DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2024.34>>

ISBN: 978-91-7671-767-7 (PDF)
ISBN: 978-91-7671-770-7 (Print)

Foreword

The necessary transitions of the 21st century highlight the essential need to rebuild trust between public institutions and citizens, key to supporting and reinforcing democracy in the world. Current crises around the globe translate complex phenomena, becoming more and more difficult to apprehend by traditional patterns mobilizing public institutions and technical expertise. Citizen participation has a role to play in complementing and enriching public action and supporting the values of democracy.

Challenges of this century cannot be faced without engaging populations in its diversity, bringing dynamism, resonance and innovation.

Heading towards 2030, combined efforts need to be made to close the existing gaps to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. As a public development agency, Agence Française de Développement (AFD) seeks to embrace these global challenges by supporting our partners in developing and implementing fair and legitimate public policies, among others by putting forward citizen participation mechanisms.

In that framework, AFD Group supports democratic trajectories carried by citizens and institutions. Citizen participation has been a key issue at AFD for many years, both in projects and in studies conducted with partners. Indeed, co-construction and citizen participation are two ways of improving the ownership of projects and public policies by the final beneficiaries and guaranteeing the success of public action in terms of impact and results. The Group's objective today is to do more and better: by helping our partners more closely to co-design their public actions with all the stakeholders in the ecosystem and to involve citizens throughout the cycle of their projects, programmes or public policies.

The prism of climate change and just transition enables the emergence of frameworks for democratic dialogue and the emergence of innovative mechanisms for citizen participation. The climate change emergency offers opportunities to engage in in-depth consultation processes, create debate to aim for a consensus on policy choices and put in place tools to allow genuine co-construction on the choices of trajectories.

Several formats and tools to make citizen participation happen already exist: climate assemblies but also other forms of deliberative practices. The aim of the collaboration between International IDEA and AFD is to shed light on these practices, take stock of current trends, achievements, and successes but also

highlight limitations and paths for improvement. Both in the geographies of the North and Global South, we believe that these practices offer a strong role to play when it comes to solutions definition but also consensus and trust building.

AFD Group is eager to continue to support partner countries in the participatory development of their adaptation strategies and the promotion of resilient development trajectories, underscoring the principle that climate adaptation should constitute a cooperative and participatory procedure, particularly for those who are the most impacted by the effects of climate change. Inclusive decision-making processes hold the potential to expedite transformative adaptation initiatives with enduring impact.

We are pleased to present this study that not only discusses existing literature to date but also provides inspiring examples and recommendations for the opportunities to bring these deliberative practices further. Creating new spaces for dialogue, for innovative sustainable solutions, *du côté des autres*.

Marie Bjornson-Langen
Deputy Executive Director, Sustainable Development
Agence Française de Développement

Preface

Climate change is a central challenge of our time. Our success in meeting this challenge will define the fate of coming generations and, indeed, of humankind's presence on our planet. Current trends do not bode well: the *Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* from 2023 shows how today's emissions pathway will push the planet's life-supporting ecosystems beyond irreversible tipping points. Climate action taken since the 2015 Paris Agreement shows that solutions are available; however, political will continues to fall short. Even when national governments make climate commitments, implementation is another story.

Part of the problem lies in the complexity of the climate crisis. The causes of climate change are many. Its effects transcend national borders. And while responsibility for this era of climate change rests with past and present generations, the consequences will rest disproportionately on the planet's future inhabitants. Yet there are other topics that share these realities, and the international community has in some cases proven capable of effective initiative. The ozone layer is recovering, to name just one example.

Similar concerted action will be required to address the planetary challenge of climate change. And as part of this effort, democratic institutions must adapt to the cause—not just for the sake of the atmosphere but also for the sake of democracy. Indeed, climate change is an existential risk for democracy. If democratic institutions are unable to find effective solutions to the climate crisis, democracy will struggle to remain a credible and legitimate political system.

This is why International IDEA launched a new workstream in 2023 focused on the intersections between democratic decision making and the climate crisis. This line of effort adds to International IDEA's long-standing work on strengthening the processes and institutions of representative democracy. Among other contributions, it includes looking at how democratic innovations may improve climate policy.

Climate assemblies are an example of such innovation. By including citizens directly in developing climate policy, climate assemblies can raise ambitions and strengthen the legitimacy of hard choices needed for the transition towards net zero. Climate assemblies and similar deliberative mechanisms can potentially turn protest demands into actionable recommendations and help build or amplify social mandates for change.

This Report examines lessons learned from the first wave of climate assemblies in the Global North and discusses how deliberative practices may help build more ambitious and citizen-owned climate agendas. It also locates deliberative practices in Global South traditions and suggests how climate assemblies can help communities there take effective and inclusive climate action, going beyond specialized actors to engage everyday citizens.

While climate assemblies are no silver bullet for climate policy, this Report shows how they can form an important part of the democratic toolbox for climate action. As the global climate and global democracy face critical challenges, renewing democracy to support effective climate action is a vital priority for our time.

Dr Kevin Casas-Zamora
Secretary-General
International IDEA

Acknowledgements

This Report was conceptualized and developed by Nicole Curato, Graham Smith and Rebecca Willis together with International IDEA's Climate Change and Democracy team.

We would like to sincerely thank Alina Averchenkova, Daniel Lindvall, Owen Gaffney and Rebecca Willis—members of International IDEA's Expert Advisory Group on Climate Change and Democracy—who formed an Editorial Board whose review and feedback greatly benefited this Report.

We thank International IDEA's Secretary-General, Kevin Casas-Zamora, for writing the Preface to this Report. International IDEA staff, including Elin Westerling, Massimo Tommasoli, Matthias Jäger and Sharon Hickey, provided invaluable feedback on the content. David Rosén was the project manager for the Report. The editorial guidance received from Lisa Hagman helped us to further improve the Report throughout the production process.

- Chapter 1 was written by Rebecca Willis, Nicole Curato and Graham Smith (led by Rebecca Willis).
- Chapter 2 was written by Graham Smith.
- Chapters 3 and 4 were written by Nicole Curato. Tables and boxes in Chapter 4 were written by:
 - Table 4.1. Friedel Marquardt, Research Assistant in the Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance, PhD student at the University of Canberra;
 - Box 4.1. Muzna Al-Masri, Senior Research Fellow, UCL Urban Lab;
 - Boxes 4.2. and 4.4. Felipe Rey, Professor of Public Law at Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Colombia, and Indira Latorre, Professor, Law Department, Universidad del Rosario, Colombia;
 - Box 4.3. Felipe Rey, Indira Latorre and Nicole Curato; and
 - Box 4.5. Nicole Curato.
- Chapter 5 was written by David Rosén on the basis of the preceding chapters. We are grateful for the valuable feedback from Nicole Curato, Graham Smith and Rebecca Willis on this chapter.

Abbreviations

CAUK	Climate Assembly UK
COP	Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
DMPs	Deliberative mini-publics
EIAs	Environmental Impact Assessments
GHGs	Greenhouse gases
KNOCA	Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies
NED	National Endowment for Democracy (USA)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Contents

Foreword	iv
Preface	vi
Acknowledgements	viii
Abbreviations	ix
Executive summary	1
Chapter 1	
Democracy and climate change: The state of play and options for future action	5
1.1. The climate challenge and its implications for democracy	7
1.2. The track record of democratic and non-democratic regimes on climate	11
1.3. Democratic innovations for climate	15
1.4. Concluding thoughts: Options and strategies for democratic responses to the climate challenge, in a global context	19
References: Chapter 1	22
Chapter 2	
Learning from the first wave of climate assemblies	26
2.1. What is a climate assembly?	26
2.2. Why climate assemblies?.....	30
2.3. Climate assemblies and the policy process	32
2.4. Key features of climate assemblies	34
2.5. What do assemblies recommend?	38
2.6. Impact of climate assemblies	39
2.7. Success factors	43
2.8. Remit	44
2.9. Future trends	46
2.10. Concluding thoughts	51
References: Chapter 2	52
Chapter 3	
Deliberative practices in the Global South	55
3.1. Introduction	55
3.2. Deliberation in the Global South	57
3.3. Deliberation in invited spaces	59
3.4. Deliberation in claimed spaces	68
3.5. Lessons for climate assemblies	71
References: Chapter 3	73

Chapter 4

Climate assemblies in the Global South	76
4.1. Introduction	76
4.2. Why climate assemblies?.....	77
4.3. Design features, governance mechanisms and impact of climate assemblies in the Global South	84
4.4. Emerging debates and preliminary lessons	90
4.5. Concluding thoughts	102
References: Chapter 4	103

Chapter 5

Conclusion and recommendations	107
5.1. Can climate deliberation improve how democracies address climate change?	107
5.2. Concluding thoughts	120
References: Chapter 5	124
Resources.....	125

About the authors	126
--------------------------------	------------

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past few decades, the scientific evidence for the severe consequences and existential risks that climate change poses to societies and the planet as a whole has been demonstrated by successive reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Despite the increasing global ambition expressed in the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) of the Paris Agreement, no country, democratic or autocratic, has yet crafted policies that fully respond to the severity and urgency of pursuing the net zero transition through climate mitigation while also adapting to inevitable climate consequences. In this context, critical questions have been raised about the capacity of democratic institutions and processes to successfully address climate change. High-carbon economic interest, political blockages and competing short-term policy priorities have been identified as factors delaying effective climate action.

Citizens' assemblies on climate (climate assemblies) and other innovative practices of citizen deliberation have been proposed as ways of overcoming some of these challenges. By including citizens directly in deliberation and in the formulation of recommendations on climate policy, climate assemblies can raise climate policy ambitions to allow societies to move towards net zero and strengthen the legitimacy of difficult climate policy choices.

This Report aims to increase the knowledge and understanding of the potential and challenges of citizens' assemblies and other forms of deliberative democracy, as well as their capacity to improve climate policies and climate action, with a particular focus on the Global South. It describes how and when citizens' assemblies and other practices of citizen deliberation can work towards such a purpose.

Climate assemblies can raise climate policy ambitions to allow societies to move towards net zero and strengthen the legitimacy of difficult climate policy choices.

It draws lessons from the first wave of citizen deliberation practices, which has taken place mainly in the Global North, and examines the applicability of climate assemblies and other practices of citizen deliberation in Global South contexts.

The Report uses academic research, reports, databases and case studies, and combines these sources with original research and an inventory of climate assemblies in the Global South.

Climate assemblies require strong political support, well-considered remits and carefully designed follow-up actions to be successful.

This Report presents lessons on how to plan and design climate assemblies to maximize their impact. Climate assemblies require strong political support, well-considered remits and carefully designed follow-up actions to be successful. This Report suggests that climate assemblies and other practices of citizen deliberation can:

- **deepen climate governance** by involving everyday citizens and their ideas and experience in policymaking;
- **empower citizens** to consider trade-offs, generate informed judgement and co-develop mutually acceptable outcomes;
- **break political deadlocks on climate action**, giving political leaders the confidence and willingness to take action;
- **help reduce polarization** around climate action by including citizens across political divides in deliberation on the common good;
- **transform protest demands** into actionable policy recommendations;
- **decentre elite control** of the climate policymaking process;
- **make social mandates visible for policymakers** by allowing citizens to consider challenging trade-offs and policy issues and arrive at shared conclusions;
- **build the deliberative capacity of communities** to resist disinformation and resolve civic conflict; and
- **contribute to public deliberation** by engaging wider publics with climate assembly remits and recommendations.

Surveying the emerging track record of climate assemblies and other practices of citizen deliberation in the Global South, the Report identifies emerging lessons:

- **Climate assemblies can help raise climate policy ambitions.** While climate assemblies are no silver bullet to more ambitious climate policy, the emerging experience shows that they can play a role in this direction.
- **Climate assemblies can extend democratization agendas** beyond local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and businesses to reach everyday citizens as well.
- **There is a growing body of experience and lessons on climate deliberation from the Global South** about both the purpose and design, and the broader applicability of deliberative principles in new environments—for example, in post-conflict contexts.

Among its recommendations, the Report emphasizes the need to:

- **Locate climate assemblies within the wider political context.** As democratic innovations, climate assemblies need to balance competing needs: to be embedded in the political contexts in which they occur while also disrupting the unequal power relations that undermine climate action.
- **Overcome constraints in participation.** Climate assemblies and other practices of citizen deliberation can be designed with inclusion in mind and lower barriers to political participation for citizens with less formal education or knowledge about climate change.
- **Design for impact.** The impact of a climate assembly needs to be assessed in light of its remit. While the limited number of climate assemblies held in the Global South makes the evidence about the policy impact limited, there is emerging evidence about the role of citizens' assemblies in building citizens' capacity to develop communicative skills in handling climate-related conflict, a central element in climate-vulnerable countries in the Global South.
- **Anchor design choices** on randomized sortition and democratic deliberation in an understanding of how they are perceived by relevant communities. Such considerations help introduce these

democratic innovations to the local political environment in a sustainable and impactful way.

- **Apply the growing body of experience from the Global South on climate deliberation.** Countries in the Global North and the Global South can draw valuable lessons from the experience and innovation of climate assemblies and other practices of citizen deliberation in the Global South.

This Report tracks and expands the evidence base about the use of climate assemblies and practices of citizen deliberation to improve climate policies and action in the Global South. It distils and presents key considerations about adapting the planning and design of climate assemblies to new political contexts, and presents recommendations to increase the likelihood of climate assemblies having a positive impact on climate action.

Chapter 1

DEMOCRACY AND CLIMATE CHANGE: THE STATE OF PLAY AND OPTIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

Rebecca Willis, Nicole Curato and Graham Smith

Two defining crises of the 21st century are the urgent and growing threat to people, nature and earth systems posed by climate change (IPCC 2023) and the erosion of democratic norms and freedoms in many countries across the world (International IDEA 2023). These crises are coupled.

Almost all the world's nation-states signed the 2015 Paris Agreement to aim to stabilize global average temperature rises at well below 2°C, and aiming for 1.5°C, which would require achieving net zero emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs) by the mid-century, in order to prevent the most severe impacts of climate change (UNFCCC 2015). Yet the Paris Agreement cannot, in itself, halt climate change. Given the lack of a binding global governance regime, achieving these climate goals depends on action within each country. Each nation must develop and implement plans to reduce and then eliminate GHG emissions. In democracies, these plans must attract support and engagement from wider society. They require people's commitment, both as citizens—advocating, voting for, supporting (or at least not opposing) strategies, policies and legislation designed to reduce emissions—and as consumers and members of civil society, acting in ways that reduce their own impact. In short, climate strategies require a social mandate, which in turn is enabled by a well-functioning democracy.

However, recent years have seen significant erosions in democratic cultures and institutions. These include: increased polarization, such as in Hungary (Vegetti 2019) and through the Brexit schism in the United Kingdom (which was both a result of polarization and a

Two defining crises of the 21st century are the urgent and growing threat posed by climate change and the erosion of democratic norms and freedoms in many countries.

cause of further polarization; see Hobolt, Leeper and Tilley 2021 for a discussion); the refusal of some political elites to accept democratic norms and institutions, most prominently with the rejection of election results by some political leaders, such as Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro; and decreasing levels of participation in elections (Kostelka and Blais 2021). Overall, the trend is of reduced democratic performance in every region of the world (International IDEA 2023). There is emerging evidence that such challenges are already—and will increasingly be in the future—exacerbated by climate impacts (Lindvall 2021). Climate shocks will increase social and economic insecurity, which in turn has an impact on democratic institutions. As a result, these two crises of climate and democracy are intricately intertwined.

This introductory chapter begins this Report with the fundamental question on the link between climate change and democratic processes. It focuses in particular on ‘deliberative’ approaches, which, as discussed in section 1.3, involve considered, two-way dialogue between citizens and decision makers. Climate assemblies are one form of deliberative approach. The Report uses the term ‘citizens’ assemblies’ to refer to processes of citizen engagement that use sortition and random selection. The term ‘climate assemblies’ is used to refer to citizens’ assemblies specifically focusing on the topic of climate change. This chapter provides the context for Chapter 2, which considers the recent rise of climate assemblies as a way of improving democratic engagement. Chapter 3 then focuses on deliberative traditions and practices specifically in the Global South, with Chapter 4 looking at the experience of and prospects for climate assemblies in the Global South.

The introductory chapter first briefly surveys the climate challenge and its implications for democracy. It then reviews the empirical evidence comparing democratic with non-democratic regimes, in terms of performance on climate change. This is followed by an examination of the growing recognition of the importance of deliberation and democratic participation and its role in climate action. The chapter then introduces the concept of democratic innovations for climate, in different contexts. Last, it looks ahead to consider the different ways in which democracies could respond to the climate challenge in ways that strengthen democratic institutions and processes.

Box 1.1. Defining the Global South

The term 'Global North' is used in this Report to refer to countries that industrialized early (some of whom were significant colonizing powers) and which now tend to have higher than global average economic wealth (including many European countries, the United States and Australia, for example). The term 'Global South' is used to refer to countries that industrialized more recently, which may have been subject to colonial rule and which tend to have lower than average economic wealth (including, for example, many African, Latin American and Pacific nations). This categorization is crude and it should be emphasized that it is important not to overlook the particular cultural, social, economic and historical contexts of each nation.

This Report uses the phrase 'Global South' to refer to countries connected by shared histories of colonial domination, including in regions of Africa, Asia, Latin America and

Oceania. The use of the term 'South' does not refer to countries below the equator but to politically, economically and culturally marginalized peoples (see Mignolo 2011; Dados and Connell 2012). As Nour Dados and Raewyn Connell put it, the use of the term "Global South" marks a shift from a central focus on development or cultural difference toward an emphasis on geopolitical relations of power' (2012: 12). More than a synonym for 'underdeveloped' or 'low-income' countries, the term 'Global South' foregrounds the historical legacies of colonialism and its consequences for creating unequal global conditions in terms of standards of living, access to resources and, indeed, experiences of climate impacts. This, however, must not be taken to mean that actors from the Global South are passive victims waiting for the support of the Global North. Instead, the Global South is a critical site where 'new visions for the future' are emerging and solidarities are formed (Mignolo 2011: 3).

1.1. THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR DEMOCRACY

1.1.1. The transition to net zero

The Paris Agreement centres on a commitment to reach net zero emissions of GHGs by the mid-century, to reduce risks from climate change and aim to limit global average temperature rises.¹ Eliminating GHGs primarily means preventing emissions to the atmosphere. There is also a limited role for the removal of GHGs from the atmosphere through biological processes, such as tree

The Paris Agreement centres on a commitment to reach net zero emissions of GHGs by the mid-century, to reduce risks from climate change and aim to limit global average temperature rises.

¹ The text of article 4 of the Paris Agreement commits parties 'to achieve a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of GHGs in the second half of this century, on the basis of equity and in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty'. This is often referred to as 'net zero' emissions, because any remaining anthropogenic emissions of GHGs must be 'balanced'.

planting or changes to land use, or through mechanical or chemical processes. Eliminating GHGs requires a transition to different technologies and practices across all sectors of the economy. These cannot be described in any detail here (for a full account, see IPCC 2023), but the key challenges can be summarized. First, there is the required shift in electricity generation, from burning coal, oil and gas to renewable and nuclear supply, while simultaneously growing the overall supply of electricity, both to improve access for all, and to allow for electrification of transport, heating and some industries. Electrification needs to be accompanied by greater energy efficiency, which tends to improve social outcomes (see, for example, Grubler et al. 2018). Second, there is the need to change patterns of transport and mobility to eliminate petrol and diesel vehicles, shift away from car dependence, and reduce or at least stabilize emissions from aviation. Third, a change in patterns of land use and agriculture is needed, to free up land for storage of carbon and to prevent GHG emissions from livestock farming. Fourth, the elimination of emissions from industry is necessary, focusing particularly on high-emitting industries such as steel and cement, through electrification and changes to industrial processes. Last, the GHG emissions that cannot be eliminated must be removed from the atmosphere—although the potential for removals is limited and cannot be relied upon (Anderson and Peters 2016).

Many of these shifts will result in changes to people's everyday lives, with altered buildings and settlements, transport systems, types of employment, and patterns of land use. Overall, meeting emissions targets implies lower demand for many goods and services and more efficient resource use, although these changes will be markedly different for different regions and countries. There are significant co-benefits from many actions to eliminate GHG emissions, including: the reductions in air pollution and associated health problems that result from phasing out internal combustion engines; greater health and well-being from better-managed transport and buildings; and healthier diets through reduced meat consumption (IPCC 2023). However beneficial, though, these are changes that will involve alterations in people's lives and which will only be possible if people understand and support them (Willis 2020a).

It is clear that the state's role in steering economic outcomes is increasingly important.

1.1.2. Implications of the transition for democratic states

Taken together, these changes imply a shift in the role of the state and a change in the way that democratic institutions operate. Since the 1980s, many governments, democratic or otherwise, have followed a broad free market logic, aiming for economic growth and

increased consumption, with a close coupling of states and global corporations and increasingly globalized patterns of trade (this is often referred to as the 'neoliberal' consensus, although the term is much contested). However, many have called into question whether this approach is compatible with efforts to control GHG emissions (Wiedmann et al. 2020). Current state–market arrangements are already under intense challenge from shocks including the Covid-19 pandemic, concerns over access to and supply of critical resources and the energy crisis resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Together with the imperative of decarbonization, it is clear that the state's role in steering economic outcomes is increasingly important. State action may include, for example, setting rules and expectations, providing or incentivizing changes to infrastructure, changing price signals, and direct public investment (Geels 2014; IPCC 2023; Urry 2011). Recent examples of state action include: the landmark Inflation Reduction Act 2022 in the USA, a comprehensive programme of federal investment in zero-carbon infrastructure and technologies; the European Union's Green Deal; China's emissions trading scheme launched in 2021; and Costa Rica's National Decarbonization Plan, which includes specific commitments on phasing out fossil fuels (for details of national action plans, see Climate Action Tracker n.d.).

Although the overall goal of net zero emissions is the same for all, countries face radically different challenges in responding to the impacts of climate change and the decarbonization imperative. For many countries in the relatively wealthy Global North, the question is how to shift from an economy dependent on fossil fuels and high consumption patterns, against the backdrop of stagnant economies and growing inequality. While some states have managed to reduce GHG emissions significantly, none yet have a firm plan that is compatible with the Paris Agreement (Climate Action Tracker n.d.). In the Global South, tackling climate change must accompany a reduction in poverty and an increase in access to services, including health and education. There are particular challenges for states for whom fossil fuel extraction is a crucial source of income, such as Nigeria, Norway, Russia, Venezuela and the Gulf States, including Iran. Some states, such as Bahrain, have no need to impose income taxes to fund public spending, thanks to fossil fuel export revenues (Thompson 2023).

Alongside the urgent need to eliminate GHG emissions, countries also face the challenge of climate impacts. These manifest themselves both as impacts directly linked to the changing climate, such as extreme weather events and sea level rise, and as indirect

Countries face radically different challenges in responding to the impacts of climate change and the decarbonization imperative.

impacts, such as decreased food security and political instability as a result of changes to the climate. Climate change can therefore be seen as a 'threat multiplier', exacerbating already-existing social and economic instabilities. For some countries, such as some Pacific and Caribbean, South Asian and African nations, direct impacts—including sea level rise, hurricanes, drought and intense heat—threaten the existence of the nation itself (IPCC 2023).

Despite the very different circumstances of different states, the challenge that climate action poses to democratic states can be summarized, in very general terms, as follows:

- establishing clear direction—over the short, medium and long term—for transitioning economies and societies to eliminate GHG emissions;
- increasing state involvement to guide, incentivize and enforce this transition;
- managing significant changes to lives, lifestyles and livelihoods;
- cultivating a social mandate for these changes by harnessing civil society action and responding effectively to rising levels of concern about climate change;
- addressing resistance to change, especially from powerful economic and political interests; and
- navigating these challenges amid heightened climate-related instability and political and economic insecurity.

So, it is an understatement to suggest that climate change poses challenges to democratic states and institutions. Given this predicament, it is legitimate to ask whether democracy—either in theory or as currently practised in varied ways by different states—is able to handle these challenges. Is there evidence that some other form of political regime would be better suited to driving climate goals?

1.2. THE TRACK RECORD OF DEMOCRATIC AND NON-DEMOCRATIC REGIMES ON CLIMATE

Given the challenges outlined above, some may be tempted to conclude that the transition process would be best steered by a leadership that can respond directly to scientific evidence, implementing technically optimal solutions in ways that are deemed best for populations as a whole, without having to seek a democratic mandate. This might be popularly termed a ‘benign dictatorship’ or ‘eco-authoritarianism’ (Shahar 2015). China’s economic success in industrial sectors such as solar panels and electric vehicle components is cited as evidence for such an approach.

Few voices explicitly advocate for the removal of democratic processes and institutions to achieve climate goals. Yet a yearning for top-down, technocratic ‘steering’ of the transition is implicit in many prescriptions for climate action. For example, the 2012 Planet Under Pressure declaration by leading scientists states that ‘fundamental reorientation and restructuring of national and international institutions is required’ (Brito and Stafford-Smith 2012: 8), without stating how such reorientation would happen, or who might bring it about. The governance scholar Maarten Hajer coined the phrase ‘cockpit-ism’ to describe the illusion that responses to climate change can be governed in the same way one might fly a plane. ‘Cockpit-ism’ implies that there are committed actors—the pilots—assessing the evidence and possessing the freedom to respond accordingly, steering the planet to a safe landing (Hajer et al. 2015; see also Willis 2020b for a longer discussion). These clean, technocratic accounts are at odds with the realities of climate governance. They may not explicitly advocate autocracy, but they are silent on the question of how such governance changes would come about—by what means, or under whose authority? Who are the pilots and who appoints them? Such accounts also tend to pessimism about the general population’s ability to understand the climate threat or to support the measures necessary to counter it. Neither are they explicit about concerns regarding the ethical acceptability of experts (pilots) taking control.

Turning to empirical evidence, analysis of actually existing autocratic and democratic regimes provides little succour for those advocating technocratic or autocratic, rather than democratic, oversight. A recent review of the literature (Lindvall and Karlsson 2024) shows that democracies generate better climate policy outputs than autocracies, in terms of the adoption of policies, laws and regulations. However, if

Few voices explicitly advocate for the removal of democratic processes and institutions to achieve climate goals.

Analysis of actually existing autocratic and democratic regimes provides little succour for those advocating technocratic or autocratic, rather than democratic, oversight.

measured in terms of reductions in GHG emissions, the evidence is more mixed: climate policy measures do not necessarily lead to GHG reductions, which are also influenced by factors such as levels of economic output and income distribution. However, the same review did not find ‘any evidence suggesting that autocratic regimes perform better on climate policy than democracies’ (Lindvall and Karlsson 2024: 87). More generally, poor information flows and corruption correlate negatively with climate outcomes (Povitkina 2018).

Neither is it correct to assume that in non-democratic regimes leaders can simply do as they please. They still need to garner a certain degree of support, or at least avoid active opposition, from their citizens. This is sometimes described as ‘performance legitimacy’, whereby citizens expect or demand certain outcomes from their leaders (Zhao 2009). This evidence, combined with the ethical justifications for democracy, strongly suggests the need to strengthen, rather than weaken, democracy.

The fact remains, however, that no state—democratic or otherwise—has yet implemented a climate strategy fully compatible with the Paris Agreement goals (Climate Action Tracker n.d.).

In comparative terms, democracies have performed better than autocracies. In absolute terms, no state has yet done well enough.

1.2.1. Limitations of existing democracies

As described above, in comparative terms, democracies have performed better than autocracies. In absolute terms, no state has yet done well enough. There are a number of ways in which existing democracies fall short, which are explored below, namely, difficulties with translating public concern into action, the ubiquity of fossil fuel economics and interests, media distortions and short-termism.

It might be expected that high levels of public concern about climate in democratic states would lead to ambitious action. Yet political action lags behind public concern. Overall, concern about climate change is high and rising, across the world, with polls suggesting that 75 per cent of the global population see climate change as a major threat to their country (Poushter, Fagan and Gubbala 2022), with concern particularly high among young people (Bell et al. 2021). As discussed below and in Chapter 2, emerging evidence from many citizens’ assemblies and other deliberative mini-publics (DMPs) also points to a strong social mandate for action, which politicians are not heeding (Lage et al. 2023). Evidence suggests that politicians underestimate public support for proposed net zero policies (Climate Barometer 2023; Westlake and Willis 2023). More generally, people systemically underestimate the willingness of their fellow citizens to

act (Andre et al. 2024). This can be seen as a failure of democracy—a failure to translate citizens’ concerns into a workable agenda for climate action.

One of the reasons for this failure is the historical and current centrality of fossil fuels in industrial economies and societies. Economies were created and sustained through fossil fuel use, and the extraction, supply and use of fossil fuels are still primary drivers of geopolitics (Thompson 2023). It is well documented that high-carbon economic interests, such as oil majors and airlines, have disproportionate influence in political circles, and this limits current democracies’ ambitions on climate action, as well as damaging democracy by drowning out other voices (Franta 2022; Lamb et al. 2020; Meckling and Nahm 2022). Media, including social media, also has a distorting effect on political discourse (Tucker et al. 2018). For example, some media coverage, particularly from right-wing sources, overemphasizes the ‘costs’ of climate action, distorting debate and making politicians more cautious about policy options (Painter et al. 2023).

More generally, democracies tend to struggle with complex challenges that do not fit well with short-term political cycles—including not just climate but also other issues, such as public health or pension provision. The demands of electoral cycles and competition for votes, combined with media pressures, lead politicians to focus on short-term electoral advantage over the longer-term challenge of articulating and building broad coalitions of support (Smith 2021). This has led many thinkers to propose different institutional structures and processes that could be used to consider the longer term and the needs, views and values of future peoples, as well as non-humans (Krzynaric 2021; Smith 2021).

1.2.2. Strengthening climate action by strengthening democracy

It is clear from the discussion above that, although democracies tend to perform better on climate than autocracies, democratic regimes are nevertheless failing to listen to citizens and to craft workable climate strategies. This has led many to argue that greater and more meaningful citizen participation is essential: in short, that more responsive democracy is a central part of the climate solution (Dryzek 2016; Willis, Curato and Smith 2022).

Greater levels of citizen engagement can bring people’s insights into decision making in a way that increases the robustness of climate

Greater levels of citizen engagement can bring people’s insights into decision making in a way that increases the robustness of climate policy.

policy. Citizens bring their values, lived experience and knowledge of their local context to the table. They bring new ways of approaching problems and articulating solutions that are attuned to their interests, needs and attitudes (Willis et al. 2024).

Participation promises to challenge social and climate injustices. If politics is about who gets to be in the room and who defines what needs to be done, then involving citizens can redress existing power imbalances. The politically disenfranchised and those vulnerable to the impacts of climate change can challenge high-carbon economic interests that profit from the status quo.

Engaging citizens in deliberation can break political deadlocks on climate action. As noted above, citizens may well support more ambitious climate measures than politicians had assumed, so greater participation can give political leaders the confidence and willingness to take action.

Participation may increase the legitimacy and public acceptance of social action on climate. As the transition to low-carbon futures unfolds, it will have an impact on people's everyday lives more directly. Knowing that fellow citizens have been part of the decision-making processes increases public confidence in and consent for challenging decisions, creating a social mandate for change. The term 'social mandate' is used to describe a situation where society offers support to another actor, such as government, to take action to promote collective well-being, with this action being broadly accepted as legitimate (Howarth et al. 2020).

In addition, there are benefits from greater engagement and participation in terms of a more climate-aware and politically confident citizenry. Through participation beyond elections, people learn more about the climate crisis and develop the skills and confidence to participate more fully in climate action at individual and collective levels, in turn enriching debates in formal institutions like parliaments.

This is the promise of participation: the opportunity to strengthen democratic engagement and climate action together.

This is the promise of participation: the opportunity to strengthen democratic engagement and climate action together. The next section turns to the question of how this might be achieved.

1.3. DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS FOR CLIMATE

Popular accounts of democracy often centre around electoral competition: the formal processes by which political elites gain and maintain power. In this account, the primary role of citizens is to take part in elections, expressing their preferences through choosing periodically between the offerings of different political parties (Przeworski 2010; Schumpeter 1972). This is a ‘thin’ conception of democracy—one in which citizen participation is focused simply on voting.

In contrast, in the ‘thick’ conception of democracy put forward by deliberative democrats, citizens are empowered in various ways to participate in, and influence, outcomes (Curato 2019; Parkinson and Mansbridge 2012). Here, routes to democratic engagement may come through civil society, via media and educational organizations and through informal discussion and organizing—as well as through formal routes, including DMPs (described below) and elections.

Crucially, in deliberative theory and practice, there is a strong emphasis on the process through which views are formed (Gutmann and Thompson 2009; Manin 1987). Citizens’ preferences are not seen as pre-formed or innate; rather, they develop and evolve through debate, interaction and learning. The role of the citizen is not merely to vote but to participate, and to be enabled to participate, in a range of settings. Chapter 3 explores examples of these settings, including attending public hearings and village assemblies, and participatory budgeting.

What might these settings look like? The term ‘democratic innovations’ is used to refer to ‘institutions that have been specifically designed to increase and deepen citizen participation in the political decision-making process’ (Smith 2009: 209). A useful tool to map different forms of democratic participation is to characterize the different spaces where deliberation takes place, and to identify how these spaces were created, who sets the terms of engagement and what kinds of policy impact emerge (Cherry et al. 2021; Gaventa 2006). The section below distinguishes between closed spaces, invited spaces, and claimed or created spaces. This distinction is particularly important when considering deliberation in the Global South. In Global North settings, much democratic innovation has happened in invited spaces, as Chapter 2 demonstrates. In the Global South, however, innovation has tended to occur in claimed spaces, as explored in Chapter 3.

The role of the citizen is not merely to vote but to participate, and to be enabled to participate, in a range of settings.

In closed spaces, deliberating and decision making are done on behalf of, rather than directly with, the people.

1.3.1. Closed spaces

In closed spaces, deliberating and decision making are done on behalf of, rather than directly with, the people. Examples include parliaments, regulatory bodies, corporate boards, courts and international organizations. In a parliament, for example, politicians debate and deliberate on behalf of the people they represent. Innovations have happened in closed spaces. For example, parliaments have created roles or institutions specifically designed to represent the interests of future generations, in an attempt to facilitate more long-term thinking (Smith 2021). Parliaments and international organizations like the United Nations General Assembly have strong requirements for transparency, with citizens able to observe discussions, but not participate. However, many critics suggest that closed spaces are vulnerable to problems such as polarization or political deadlock, especially on climate policy. There have been calls for greater transparency around financial issues, including campaign donations and stricter regulations on lobbying, to avoid policy capture. Such measures aim to restore the integrity of deliberations in policymaking, such that decision makers are guided by evidence and the common good instead of political or corporate interest. Another approach focuses on transforming the structure of closed spaces itself and opening these spaces for deeper citizen engagement. In Brussels, the political party Agora ran and won a seat in the Brussels Parliament not based on an ideological position but on a platform that promotes deliberative assemblies at all levels of government. This sees the climate crisis as an outcome of the crisis of governance and so the focus is on transforming institutions of representative democracy to better reflect the will of the people.

Invited spaces are created by public and private organizations to give their constituencies access to deliberation and decision making.

1.3.2. Democratic innovations: Invited spaces

Invited spaces are created by public and private organizations to give their constituencies access to deliberation and decision making. Commissioning bodies may include governments, international organizations or industry. There are various examples of invited spaces designed to connect citizen input with policymaking and project implementation, often within the framework of decentralization agendas and environmental impact assessments. Chapter 3 discusses case studies on these invited spaces in the Global South.

Recent years have seen a flourishing of democratic innovations in invited spaces (Elstub and Escobar 2019; Smith 2009), including in the form of citizens' assemblies or juries on climate—or, put simply, climate assemblies—in the Global North. The first of these, in Ireland

in 2018, was quickly followed by national-level processes in France and the UK in 2019. As of December 2022, the Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies (KNOCA) has documented 13 processes at a national level, one at the global level and over 150 at local level, either on climate strategies in general, or on specific issues such as biodiversity loss or energy poverty (Smith 2023).

Processes like citizens' assemblies and citizens' juries are often termed 'deliberative mini-publics' (DMPs). They generally share four common features: they use democratic lottery (a form of random selection) to bring together a diverse group of citizens that resembles the wider population; they have a learning phase, enabling participants to understand and question the topic under discussion; they then involve deliberation, between the citizens themselves and through dialogue with others; and last, they draw conclusions or recommendations (for a more detailed description, see Willis, Curato and Smith 2022).

The next chapter discusses in detail the experience of climate assemblies and other DMPs. For now, it is worth noting that such processes routinely offer up more ambitious agendas and proposals for climate action than most strategies developed by governments (Lage et al. 2023; Willis, Curato and Smith 2022). For example, the UK climate assembly process backed policies to tax aviation, reduce meat consumption and ban cars from city centres, all initiatives that UK politicians have been reluctant to advocate (Climate Assembly UK 2020). In the French process, participants advocated for a general law of 'ecocide', making companies and countries liable for generalized harms to the environment. They also proposed a ban on domestic flights for routes where trains provided a viable alternative; this was implemented in a much watered-down form by the French parliament (Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat 2021). However, this points to a key difficulty with DMPs. They may be established by parliaments or governments, with the expectation that their proposals will be adopted. This is a 'convenient fiction' (Lewis et al. 2023) in that, in practice, recommendations from citizens' assemblies and similar processes are never adopted wholesale.

While climate assemblies have attracted a great deal of attention, there are other forms of democratic innovation in invited spaces. Other DMPs have tackled climate-related issues. For example, the US state of Texas used deliberative polling to consult on renewable energy options as far back as 1999, which radically shifted the energy mix (Wang, Fishkin and Luskin 2020). More recently, the UK

Recent years have seen a flourishing of democratic innovations in invited spaces, including in the form of climate assemblies.

Climate Change Committee developed a citizens' panel to consider options for decarbonizing the domestic sector (Ainscough and Willis 2022). Beyond DMPs, the online platform Polis, for example, aims to 'crowdsource consensus' by inviting people affected by a policy to contribute their opinions and respond to the views of others. The University of Melbourne in Australia used Polis to crowdsource staff and students' views on the university's air travel policy and map the levels of agreement and disagreement in arguments about reducing staff flying.

Many of these democratic innovations remain one-off exercises or are held 'on demand', although there are examples of institutionalizing these initiatives as part of the policymaking process.

Many of these democratic innovations remain one-off exercises or are held 'on demand', although there are increasing examples of institutionalizing these initiatives as part of the policymaking process. In Ireland, for example, the latest in a number of state-commissioned national citizens' assemblies, this time on biodiversity loss, was held in 2022 as part of the Programme for Government, which committed to holding four citizens' assemblies during its term. Meanwhile, in the Brussels–Capital Region and the city of Milan, the first permanent climate assemblies have been established (Abbas 2023).

1.3.3. Democratic innovations: Claimed or created spaces

Finally, claimed or created spaces emerge from civil society mobilization independent of authorities. They are claimed or created to hold power holders accountable or serve as alternative spaces for deliberations outside institutionalized spaces sanctioned by people in power. The world's first Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis (the Global Assembly) is an example of a climate assembly in a claimed space. One hundred randomly selected citizens from around the world gathered online over 68 hours between October and December 2021 to deliberate and develop a People's Declaration presented at the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) (Global Assembly Team 2022). The Global Assembly was organized by a global network of civil society organizations, with the aim of demonstrating a proof of concept that ordinary citizens—farmers, bus drivers, seamstresses and hairdressers—can deliberate on complex topics and co-create a climate agenda more ambitious than agreements generated in COPs. Other examples of democratic innovations led by civil society groups include the People's Plan for Nature, convened by three nature charities in the UK, and climate assemblies in Maldives initiated by the non-governmental organization (NGO) Ecocare Maldives. As Chapter 4 demonstrates,

most citizens' assemblies in the Global South are designed and implemented by civil society groups, universities and research labs.

1.4. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: OPTIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR DEMOCRATIC RESPONSES TO THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE, IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

This section first summarizes experience to date, looking at both the need for improved democratic processes for climate change and democratic innovations that try to address this. Then it looks forward to consider future options for democratic responses to climate change.

1.4.1. Summarizing experience to date

Experience to date shows that strategies for the climate crisis must be rooted in deeper democratic foundations and increased citizen participation. Current standard practices in representative democracy do not provide an adequate forum for a meaningful conversation between citizen and state about how to handle the challenges posed by climate change and the need to respond to them.

Successful climate strategies are likely to improve the functioning of democratic institutions and vice versa. Over the coming years, the combination of the political challenges of eliminating GHG emissions, and the shocks and instabilities directly caused by climate impacts, will create an unstable and uncertain scaffold for democratic institutions and processes. As a result, there is a clear need for approaches that engage and involve citizens in the formulation of climate strategies.

To date, there have been a range of approaches to deepening democratic engagement for climate. The most prominent are the national citizens' assemblies on climate change and many similar processes at local level; in addition, there have been innovations driven by civil society groups. Outcomes from such processes so far indicate that citizen-led processes advocate policies and approaches more far-reaching, and therefore more in line with the globally agreed Paris goal, than government-led processes. They also emphasize the need to prioritize fairness, greater public engagement and co-benefits. However, the route from such democratic innovations into better climate policy and governance is complex. Chapter 2 provides a more detailed evaluation of climate assemblies in particular.

Experience to date shows that strategies for the climate crisis must be rooted in deeper democratic foundations and increased citizen participation.

To date, there have been a range of approaches to deepening democratic engagement for climate.

It highlights three challenges thrown up by recent experience of democratic innovation.

First, climate strategy as a whole is very wide-ranging and difficult to cover comprehensively in a single process. As deliberative approaches to climate mature, there is a need for more contextually bounded debates (either as formal DMPs or through other routes), which look at particular questions, such as implications for certain industries, specific policy measures or particular groups.

Second, most deliberative processes to date have been in the Global North and so there is limited experience of their applicability in Global South locations with very different democratic and economic conditions. It would be a mistake to try to impose such processes, following the European model, on countries with different traditions and expectations of democracy and participation.

Third, democratic innovations or deliberative interventions are, in themselves, no panacea for wider ills in democratic institutions, such as the disproportionate influence of high-carbon economic interests and the limited power of the nation-state in a global economy dominated by corporations and financial interests flowing freely across borders. They may contribute to lessening the power of such actors, by injecting stronger citizen voices and democratic oversight, but other measures to promote democratic cultures and institutions will also be necessary.

1.4.2. Future options and approaches

What approaches, then, should policymakers and politicians consider, if they are aiming simultaneously to strengthen democratic institutions and to provide a robust response to the climate challenge? Some initial thoughts are listed below:

- Most democratic innovations to date have been at the national or local level. Given the importance of global governance when addressing climate change, consideration should be given to greater citizen involvement in global processes, such as the UN climate negotiations and international financial institutions, while linking these global processes to local projects related to climate action. The Global Assembly, led by civil society actors, showed that global-level deliberation is possible and has the potential to make an impact at local levels too (see Chapter 4).

- In terms of the future of deliberative processes, there is a need to further embed deliberation into policy and governance processes. This could be done in part through providing more permanent institutional footings for deliberative processes, following the examples of the Brussels and Milan permanent climate assemblies. Another possibility is to expand spaces for citizen deliberation in claimed spaces, enabling wide-scale deliberation about systemic changes to economic and social systems, which could then influence formal processes (Mellier and Capstick forthcoming 2024).
- There is a need to consider the context of each country, including any existing democratic and participatory traditions or institutions, rather than assuming that a model from one country can be straightforwardly exported to another. As discussed in Chapter 2, this is true of theoretical traditions as well: the theoretical roots of deliberation are not just found in classical European thinking.
- Wider reforms to democratic processes are needed, beyond specific attempts to increase participation. There is a need for greater transparency and control over political lobbying, to correct for the disproportionate influence of high-carbon economic interests. Measures to represent future generations are a useful corrective to short-termism in politics.
- There is an urgent need to consider and plan for responses to growing climate impacts, and associated economic and social instability. This has been a neglected area to date, both in the academic literature and in national and local governance.

There is a need to further embed deliberation into policy and governance processes.

REFERENCES: CHAPTER 1

- Abbas, N., 'Towards Permanent Citizens' Climate Assemblies: A FIDE/KNOCA Discussion Note', Federation for Innovation in Democracy – Europe (FIDE) and Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies (KNOCA), 19 October 2023, <https://knoca.eu/app/uploads/2023/11/Towards-permanent-climate-assemblies_Draft-for-comment.pdf>, accessed 11 April 2024
- Ainscough, J. and Willis, R., *Findings of a Citizens' Panel on Home Energy Decarbonisation* (London: Climate Change Committee, 2022)
- Anderson, K. and Peters, G., 'The trouble with negative emissions', *Science*, 354/6309 (2016), pp. 182–83, <<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aah4567>>
- Andre, P., Boneva, T., Chopra, F. and Falk, A., 'Globally representative evidence on the actual and perceived support for climate action', *Nature Climate Change*, 14 (2024), pp. 253–59, <<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-024-01925-3>>
- Bell, J., Poushter, J., Fagan, M. and Huang, C., *In Response to Climate Change, Citizens in Advanced Economies Are Willing to Alter How They Live and Work* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2021), <<https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/09/14/in-response-to-climate-change-citizens-in-advanced-economies-are-willing-to-alter-how-they-live-and-work>>, accessed 25 March 2024
- Brito, L. and Stafford-Smith, M., 'State of the Planet Declaration', Planet Under Pressure: New Knowledge Towards Solutions conference, 26–29 March 2012, <http://www.igbp.net/download/18.6b007aff13cb59eff6411bbc/1376383161076/SotP_declaration-A5-for_web.pdf>, accessed 25 March 2024
- Cherry, C., Capstick, S., Demski, C., Mellier, C., Stone, L. and Verfuert, C., *Citizens' Climate Assemblies: Understanding Public Deliberation for Climate Policy* (Cardiff: Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations, 2021), <<https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/145771>>, accessed 7 February 2024
- Climate Action Tracker, [n.d.], <<https://climateactiontracker.org>>, accessed 6 February 2024
- Climate Assembly UK, *The Path to Net Zero: Climate Assembly UK Final Report* (London: House of Commons, 2020), <<https://www.climateassembly.uk/report/>>, accessed 25 April 2024
- Climate Barometer, 'Tracker data: MP and public opinion on government climate action', 19 October 2023, <<https://climatebarometer.org/topic/political-leadership>>, accessed 7 February 2024
- Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat, 'Les Propositions de la Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat' [The Proposals of the Citizens' Convention for the Climate], (2021), <<https://propositions.conventioncitoyennepourleclimat.fr>>, accessed 4 May 2024
- Curato, N., *Democracy in a Time of Misery: From Spectacular Tragedies to Deliberative Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), <<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198842484.001.0001>>
- Dados, N. and Connell, R., 'The Global South', *Contexts*, 11/1 (2012), pp. 12–13, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1536504212436479>>
- Dryzek, J. S., 'Institutions for the anthropocene: Governance in a changing earth system', *British Journal of Political Science*, 46/4 (2016), pp. 937–56, <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123414000453>>

- S. Elstub and O. Escobar (eds), *Handbook of Democratic Innovation and Governance* (Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019), <<https://doi.org/10.4337/9781786433862>>
- Franta, B., 'Weaponizing economics: Big Oil, economic consultants, and climate policy delay', *Environmental Politics*, 31/4 (2022), pp. 555–75, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2021.1947636>>
- Gaventa, J., 'Finding the spaces for change: A power analysis', *IDS Bulletin*, 37 (2006), pp. 23–33, <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2006.tb00320.x>>
- Geels, F. W., 'Regime resistance against low-carbon transitions: Introducing politics and power into the multi-level perspective', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 31/5 (2014), pp. 21–40, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276414531627>>
- Global Assembly Team, *Report of the 2021 Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis* (Global Assembly, 2022), <<https://globalassembly.org/resources/downloads/GlobalAssembly2021-FullReport.pdf>>, accessed 10 April 2024
- Grubler, A., Wilson, C., Bento, N., Boza-Kiss, B., Krey, V., McCollum, D. L., Rao, N. D., Riahi, K., Rogelj, J., De Stercke, S., Cullen, J., Frank, S., Fricko, O., Guo, F., Gidden, M., Havlík, P., Huppmann, D., Kiesewetter, G., Rafaj, P., Schoepp, W. and Valin, H., 'A low energy demand scenario for meeting the 1.5°C target and sustainable development goals without negative emission technologies', *Nature Energy*, 3 (2018), pp. 515–27, <<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41560-018-0172-6>>
- Gutmann, A. and Thompson, D. F., *Why Deliberative Democracy?* (Princeton University Press, 2009), <<https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400826339>>
- Hajer, M., Nilsson, M., Raworth, K., Bakker, P., Berkhout, F., de Boer, Y., Rockström, J., Ludwig, K. and Kok, M., 'Beyond cockpit-ism: Four insights to enhance the transformative potential of the Sustainable Development Goals', *Sustainability*, 7/2 (2015), pp. 1651–60, <<https://doi.org/10.3390/su7021651>>
- Hobolt, S. B., Leeper, T. J. and Tilley, J., 'Divided by the vote: Affective polarization in the wake of the Brexit referendum', *British Journal of Political Science*, 51/4 (2021), pp. 1476–93, <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123420000125>>
- Howarth, C., Bryant, P., Corner, A., Fankhauser, S., Gouldson, A., Whitmarsh, L. and Willis, R., 'Building a social mandate for climate action: Lessons from Covid-19', *Environmental and Resource Economics*, 76 (2020), pp. 1107–15, <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10640-020-00446-9>>
- International IDEA, *The Global State of Democracy 2023: The New Checks and Balances* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2023), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2023.78>>
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report* (Geneva: IPCC, 2023), <<https://doi.org/10.59327/IPCC/AR6-9789291691647>>
- Kostelka, F. and Blais, A., 'The generational and institutional sources of the global decline in voter turnout', *World Politics*, 73/4 (2021), pp. 629–67, <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887121000149>>
- Krznicar, R., *The Good Ancestor: How to Think Long Term in a Short-Term World* (London: WH Allen, 2021)

- Lage, J., Thema, J., Zell-Ziegler, C., Best, B., Cordroch, L. and Wiese, F., 'Citizens call for sufficiency and regulation—A comparison of European citizen assemblies and National Energy and Climate Plans', *Energy Research & Social Science*, 104 (2023), 103254, <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2023.103254>>
- Lamb, W. F., Mattioli, G., Levi, S., Roberts, J. T., Capstick, S., Creutzig, F., Minx, J. C., Müller-Hansen, F., Culhane, T. and Steinberger, J. K., 'Discourses of climate delay', *Global Sustainability*, 3 (2020), e17, <<https://doi.org/10.1017/sus.2020.13>>
- Lewis, P., Ainscough, J., Coxcoo, R. and Willis, R., 'The messy politics of local climate assemblies', *Climatic Change*, 176/6 (2023), 76, <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-023-03555-8>>
- Lindvall, D., *Democracy and the Challenge of Climate Change*, International IDEA Discussion Paper 3/2021 (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2021), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2021.88>>
- Lindvall, D. and Karlsson, M., 'Exploring the democracy-climate nexus: A review of correlations between democracy and climate policy performance', *Climate Policy*, 24/1 (2024), pp. 87–103, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2023.2256697>>
- Manin, B., 'On legitimacy and political deliberation', *Political Theory*, 15/3 (1987), pp. 338–68, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591787015003005>>
- Meckling, J. and Nahm, J., 'Strategic state capacity: How states counter opposition to climate policy', *Comparative Political Studies*, 55/3 (2022), pp. 493–523, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/001041402111024308>>
- Mellier, C. and Capstick, S., *How Can Citizens' Assemblies Help Navigate the Systemic Transformations Required by the Polycrisis? Learnings and Recommendations for Practitioners, Policymakers, Researchers, and Civil Society* (Cardiff: Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations (CAST), forthcoming 2024)
- Mignolo, W. D., 'The Global South and world dis/order', *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 67/2 (2011), pp. 1–11, <<https://doi.org/10.3998/jar.0521004.0067.202>>
- Painter, J., Ettinger, J., Holmes, D., Loy, L., Pinto, J., Richardson, L., Thomas-Walters, L., Vowles, K. and Wetts, R., 'Climate delay discourses present in global mainstream television coverage of the IPCC's 2021 report', *Communications Earth & Environment*, 4/118 (2023), pp. 1–12, <<https://doi.org/10.1038/s43247-023-00760-2>>
- J. Parkinson and J. Mansbridge (eds), *Deliberative Systems: Deliberative Democracy at the Large Scale* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), <<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139178914>>
- Poushter, J., Fagan, M. and Gubbala S., *Climate Change Remains Top Global Threat Across 19-Country Survey* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2022), <<https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2022/08/31/climate-change-remains-top-global-threat-across-19-country-survey>>, accessed 6 February 2024
- Povitkina, M., 'The limits of democracy in tackling climate change', *Environmental Politics*, 27/3 (2018), pp. 411–32, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2018.1444723>>
- Przeworski, A., *Democracy and the Limits of Self-Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), <<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511778490>>
- Schumpeter, J. A., *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (Taylor and Francis, 1972)

- Shahar, D. C., 'Rejecting eco-authoritarianism, again', *Environmental Values*, 24/3 (2015), pp. 345–66, <<https://doi.org/10.3197/096327114X13947900181996>>
- Smith, G., *Democratic Innovations: Designing Institutions for Citizen Participation* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), <<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511609848>>
- , *Can Democracy Safeguard the Future?* (Cambridge UK and Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2021)
- , *Climate Assemblies: Emerging Trends, Challenges and Opportunities* (Brussels: KNOCA, 2023)
- Thompson, H., *Disorder: Hard Times in the 21st Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023)
- Tucker, J. A., Guess, A., Barbera, P., Vaccari, C., Siegel, A., Sanovich, S., Stukal, D. and Nyhan, B., 'Social Media, Political Polarization, and Political Disinformation: A Review of the Scientific Literature', Hewlett Foundation, 19 March 2018, (Menlo Park, CA: Hewlett Foundation, 2018), <<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3144139>>
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Paris Agreement (2015), <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf>, accessed 15 April 2024
- Urry, J., *Climate Change and Society* (Cambridge, Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2011)
- Vegetti, F., 'The political nature of ideological polarization: The case of Hungary', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 681/1 (2019), pp. 78–96, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716218813895>>
- Wang, R., Fishkin, J. S. and Luskin, R. C., 'Does deliberation increase public-spiritedness?', *Social Science Quarterly*, 101/6 (2020), pp. 2163–82, <<https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12863>>
- Westlake, S. and Willis, R., *Sustaining the Political Mandate for Climate Action* (London: Green Alliance, 2023), <<https://green-alliance.org.uk/publication/sustaining-the-political-mandate-for-climate-action>>, accessed 25 March 2024
- Wiedmann, T., Lenzen, M., Keyßer, L. T. and Steinberger, J. K., 'Scientists' warning on affluence', *Nature Communications*, 11 (2020), 3107, <<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-020-16941-y>>
- Willis, R., *Too Hot to Handle? The Democratic Challenge of Climate Change* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2020a), <<https://doi.org/10.56687/9781529206036>>
- , 'The role of national politicians in global climate governance', *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 3/3 (2020b), pp. 885–903, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/2514848619887464>>
- Willis, R., Ainscough, J., Bryant, P., Goold, L., Livermore, M. and Tosal, C., 'Citizen and specialist co-design of energy policy: The case of home energy decarbonization in the UK', *Environmental Science & Policy*, 155 (2024), 103706, <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2024.103706>>
- Willis, R., Curato, N. and Smith, G., 'Deliberative democracy and the climate crisis', *WIREs Climate Change*, 13/2 (2022), e759, <<https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.759>>
- Zhao, D., 'The mandate of heaven and performance legitimation in historical and contemporary China', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 53/3 (2009), pp. 416–33, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764209338800>>

Chapter 2

LEARNING FROM THE FIRST WAVE OF CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES

Graham Smith

A climate assembly brings together a group of citizens selected by democratic lottery to learn, deliberate and agree on recommendations on aspects of the climate and ecological crisis.

2.1. WHAT IS A CLIMATE ASSEMBLY?

A climate assembly brings together a diverse group of citizens selected by democratic lottery to learn, deliberate and agree on recommendations on aspects of the climate and ecological crisis.² A climate assembly is a type of citizens' assembly—a democratic form that has been used across a variety of different policy issues, most famously in contributing to the change in the constitutional status of abortion in Ireland (Farrell, Suiter and Harris 2019).

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) talks of a 'deliberative wave' of processes such as citizens' assemblies happening around the world (OECD 2020). Around 800 deliberative processes have been commissioned by governments at different levels at the last count (Mejia 2023). Over 170 have focused on climate-related issues in the last five years, with around a dozen at the national level. All the national climate assemblies, and the majority of the local and regional ones, have been commissioned in Europe (see Figure 2.1). The largest concentration of climate assemblies has been commissioned in the UK, with around 50 assemblies, followed by 28 in Germany and 18 in France (see Figure 2.1 on page 28).

² This chapter draws on the work carried out by the Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies (KNOCA; <<https://knoca.eu>>) and the book *We Need to Talk About Climate* (Smith forthcoming 2024), due for publication in autumn 2024.

Box 2.1. Climate assemblies—defining features

Climate assemblies combine two core characteristics (Willis, Curato and Smith 2022):

1. *Democratic lottery or sortition.* The use of random selection to ensure that members of the assembly share similar socio-demographic and attitudinal characteristics as the wider population.
2. *Deliberation.* A facilitated process through which members learn from a range of experts and advocates, exchange and interrogate ideas in a context of mutual respect and agree on collective recommendations.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD 2020) includes 'commissioned by public authority' as a defining feature, but this neglects those processes that are set up by civil society organizations or private enterprises. For other characteristics of climate assemblies, see section 2.4.

A climate assembly is a form of citizens' assembly. Other deliberative processes, such as citizens' juries, consensus conferences and planning cells, share the same two core characteristics. These terms are often used interchangeably, which can be very confusing. Citizens' assemblies tend to be slightly larger and give members more time to learn, deliberate and come to recommendations, but this is not always the case.

Academics often use the term 'deliberative mini-publics' (DMPs) as an overarching definition (Setälä and Smith 2018).

The extent to which climate assemblies have been organized at national level is a distinguishing feature of the current wave of deliberative processes (see Table 2.1). The Irish Citizens' Assembly 2016–2018 was the first national assembly to consider climate in 2017, spending two weekends on how the state could become a climate leader. Its work on climate was overshadowed by its more high-profile deliberations on abortion.

The French Citizens' Convention on Climate (Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat) was the catalyst for much of the recent wave of climate assemblies. It ran between October 2019 and June 2020, with an extra weekend to review the government response in February 2021 (Giraudet et al. 2022; Thibaut 2021). The Convention was part of President Macron's attempt to respond to the Yellow Vests and climate protests. The direct commissioning by the head of state in the face of public protests, its scale and the contested fate of its proposals meant high levels of public and political engagement with the Convention and its recommendations.

At the other end of the scale are subnational climate assemblies, often with far fewer resources and often focused on very specific localized aspects of the climate crisis, such as flooding or air pollution.

Figure 2.1. Map of climate assemblies across Europe



Note: Red dots = Regional or local assembly, green dots = national assembly

Source: Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies (KNOCA), 'What is a Climate Assembly?', [n.d.], <<https://www.knoca.eu/climate-assemblies>>, accessed 11 April 2024.

Table 2.1. National climate assemblies

Climate assemblies commissioned by public authorities

Ireland	September–November 2017	Citizens' Assembly 2016–2018
France	October 2019–June 2020 Review weekend February 2021	Citizens' Convention on Climate (Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat)
UK	January–May 2020	Climate Assembly UK
Scotland	November 2020–March 2021 Review weekend February 2022	Scotland's Climate Assembly
Denmark	October 2020–March 2021 (phase 1) October–December 2021 (phase 2)	Citizens' Assembly on Climate (Borgerting på Klimaområdet)
Jersey	March–May 2021	Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change
Finland	April 2021	Citizens' Jury on Climate Action (Ilmastotoimia Arvioiva Kansalaisraati)
Spain	November 2021–May 2022	Citizens' Assembly for Climate (Asamblea Ciudadana para el Clima)
Austria	January–June 2022	The Climate Council (Der Klimarat)
Luxembourg	January–August 2022	Climate Citizens' Council (Klima- Biergerrot)
Ireland	June–November 2022 September–October 2022	Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss

Climate assemblies commissioned by civil society organizations

Germany	April–June 2021	Citizens' Assembly on Climate (Bürgerrat Klima)
Poland	October–November 2022	Citizens' Assembly on Energy Costs (Narada Obywatelska o Kosztach Energii)
UK	November 2022–February 2023	People's Assembly for Nature
Sweden	March–May 2024	Citizens' Assembly on Climate (Medborgarråd om Klimatet)

Source: Author's compilation. For summaries of these national climate assemblies and links to relevant websites, see <<https://www.knoca.eu/climate-assemblies#Summaries-of-national-climate-assemblies>>. accessed 24 April 2024.

2.2. WHY CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES?

The two core characteristics of climate assemblies—democratic lottery and deliberation—have the potential to cut through limitations in contemporary climate governance (Smith 2021; forthcoming 2024; Willis, Curato and Smith 2022).

Box 2.2. The promise of climate assemblies (if organized well)

- Climate assemblies can bring the insights of everyday people into decision making in a way that increases the robustness of climate policy.
- Climate assemblies can challenge social and climate injustices and the power of high-carbon economic interests.
- Climate assemblies can break political deadlocks on climate action, giving political leaders the confidence and willingness to take action.
- Climate assemblies can reduce polarization around climate action.
- Climate assemblies can increase the legitimacy and public acceptance of social action on climate.
- Climate assemblies can create a more climate-aware and politically confident citizenry, able to participate more fully in climate action at the individual and collective level.

Democratic lottery ensures that assemblies are made up of a diverse body of everyday people.

2.2.1. Democratic lottery

Democratic lottery, also known as sortition or random selection, ensures that assemblies are made up of a diverse body of everyday people, not the advocates or interest groups that tend to dominate other forms of public participation. Assemblies typically use a two-stage lottery process. In the first stage, a large number of letters are sent out to random households in the political jurisdiction, with an invitation to put themselves forward to be members of the climate assembly. The second stage applies quota sampling to the pool of volunteers to ensure that the final group of assembly members shares the characteristics of the broader population. Criteria such as gender, age, ethnicity, education and geography are applied. Some assemblies ensure that the attitude of members towards the climate crisis mirrors the attitudes of broader society. This protects against the charge that assemblies are full of climate activists and sympathizers. Policy-specific criteria have been used at times. For example, for assemblies on transport, selection criteria may include the mode most relied on (e.g. private car, bus, cycling, walking) to ensure a diversity of experience among the assembly members.

Democratic lottery has two broad effects. The first is that it generates a diverse group, with different experiences and perspectives on climate. The social and cognitive diversity sits in contrast to the relative homogeneity of climate governance actors. A second effect is that selection through democratic lottery means that representatives of vested interests do not dominate, and those selected are not subject to the constraints of electoral cycles, both of which are often barriers to robust climate action.

2.2.2. Deliberation

Sortition alone is not enough. Generating a diverse pool of members means that some are more confident and likely to dominate proceedings. The second significant characteristic of assemblies is deliberation. The diverse body of members is facilitated through a process of collaborative learning, reflection and collective decision making in a context of mutual respect. It is a more productive, inclusive and creative form of political interaction compared with the contestation seen in parliaments and on social media. In coming to decisions, assembly members weigh evidence, consider those with different perspectives and backgrounds and take a long-term view. In other words, deliberation promises a process and outcomes that are fact-regarding, other-regarding and future-regarding (MacKenzie 2021).

Climate transitions are increasingly having an impact on people's everyday lives. The potential for backlash is significant—and is already happening in communities where heavy industry is closing down or among farmers who fear for their future. Climate assemblies are one way in which the voices of everyday people can be heard within climate governance such that climate policy better reflects their needs and interests and is seen as more legitimate. The evidence suggests that the public identify with assemblies because they see people like themselves in the process. The promise is that assemblies can help break political deadlocks and give political leaders more confidence to act.

2.2.3. The attraction of the new

A more prosaic reason why climate assemblies are gaining in popularity is that they are the latest trend in policymaking. Climate assemblies are having a moment in the sun. Political leaders such as Macron through to social movements such as Extinction Rebellion and Fridays for Future have raised the profile of assemblies. Political actors looking to be at the cutting edge of climate policy have been attracted to the idea, and diffusion has followed. This has been seen

The diverse body of members is facilitated through a process of collaborative learning, reflection and collective decision making in a context of mutual respect.

It is an open question as to whether the ambition of climate assemblies will increase or be watered down over time.

before. Participatory budgeting spread like wildfire in the late 1990s and early 2000s. But participatory budgeting tells an apocryphal story. The first participatory budgeting programmes in Brazilian municipalities rested on significant restructuring of public budgets and administrations that led to social justice outcomes. As they were adopted more widely across Europe, the USA and beyond, they tended to become aligned with concerns about good governance rather than challenging entrenched power dynamics (Ganuza and Baiocchi 2012). It is an open question as to whether the ambition of climate assemblies will increase or be watered down over time.

2.3. CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES AND THE POLICY PROCESS

The majority of climate assemblies have been organized in Western Europe, a context within which political administrations are generally committed to achieving net zero as part of their responsibilities under the Paris Agreement and recognize the need to develop strategies for adaptation to a warming planet. These are not polities where the very idea of climate action is contested. This context has an impact on the way that climate assemblies are implemented and how they relate to the climate policy process.

Box 2.3. Relationship with the policy process

- Climate assemblies can help open up an issue that is characterized by political deadlock or resistance to act.
- Climate assemblies can feed ideas into policy development at an early stage of agenda-setting.
- Climate assemblies can generate policy proposals for climate plans or strategies.
- Climate assemblies can help make decisions where a number of policy options remain on the table.
- Climate assemblies can review or scrutinize policy action.

While some assemblies, such as national assemblies in Austria, France and the UK, have been specifically tasked with developing recommendations on mitigation (aimed at reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions), others, such as in Scotland and Spain, have

had remits that also include adaptation (aimed at responding to the effects of climate change).

It is surprising how few assemblies have been tied explicitly to specific climate policy processes. The remits of the Danish, Finnish and Luxembourg national assemblies are unusual in mentioning the particular climate policy planning process that they were organized to influence. In Luxembourg, the assembly was tied in large part to the revision of the National Energy and Climate Plan that is required under European law. In Finland, the national citizens' jury was tasked with reviewing 14 potential measures that were being considered by government for inclusion in the medium-term Climate Change Policy Plan.

Assemblies have been used as a way to open up climate policy—to extend policy ambition. For example, the Irish Citizens' Assembly 2016–2018 was asked to consider how the state can make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change. The Amsterdam assembly was tasked with coming up with proposals in a context where the city administration realized that it was going to fall short of its commitment to reduce its emissions of carbon dioxide by 55 per cent by 2030.

Other assemblies, particularly at subnational level, have been more policy specific—for example, the Gdansk (Poland) assembly on flood defences or the Kingston (UK) and Skopje (North Macedonia) assemblies on air pollution. The Gdansk assembly is unusual because it is one of the few assemblies that has been given decision-making power. The mayor committed to implementing proposals where they achieved near consensus support (over 80 per cent) among assembly members.

The evidence suggests that climate assemblies can relate to the policy process in different ways. More worryingly, they can be used by governments to legitimate decisions already made—a form of 'citizen-washing' to give the impression of commitment to listening to the voices of everyday people. This is not a concern specific to climate assemblies, but rather an ongoing challenge for most forms of institutionalized citizen participation.

The potential is for assemblies to bring the considered judgement of everyday people into the policy process. Whether policy processes are ready for such input is another question.

It is surprising how few assemblies have been tied explicitly to specific climate policy processes.

2.4. KEY FEATURES OF CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES

Beyond the broad family resemblances of democratic lottery and facilitated deliberation that leads to collective recommendations, practice varies widely. There are differences in commissioners, budgets, remit, recruitment, governance, structure, facilitation, reports, the response by commissioners and other elements of practice (Boswell, Dean and Smith 2023; Smith 2022; forthcoming 2024). (For more detail on key aspects of citizens' assemblies, see the websites of organizations such as KNOCA, DemNext and FIDE.)

The common expectation is that assemblies are commissioned by public authorities.

2.4.1. Commissioning authority

The common expectation is that assemblies are commissioned by public authorities. This could be at local, national or even transnational level. The commissioning body is usually assumed to be the executive branch of national, regional or local government. One of the national assemblies—Climate Assembly UK (CAUK)—was commissioned by six parliamentary committees to help them scrutinize government action, and other assemblies have been initiated by legislatures at national or local level, which then place a requirement on the executive to commission the process. A number of civil society organizations have commissioned assemblies (see Table 2.1), a trend discussed later in this chapter.

Budgets differ in ways that have profound effects on the size of assemblies and the time members have together to develop recommendations.

2.4.2. Budget

Budgets differ in ways that have profound effects on the size of assemblies and the time members have together to develop recommendations. At national level, the differences are marked. The French Convention had a budget of around EUR 6.5 million. Compare this with the Danes, who spent less than EUR 100,000 on two consecutive assemblies. The French and Scottish assemblies had seven weekend sessions and a later eighth session to review the government response to their work. The French was mostly in person, whereas Scotland's Climate Assembly was completely online because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Subnational assemblies vary markedly in their resourcing and therefore in the time available for deliberation. Most assemblies are funded by the commissioning public authorities, although a few have received funds from philanthropic bodies such as the European Climate Foundation.

2.4.3. Remit

This Report has already covered the diversity of issues that assemblies have been tasked with considering, from mitigation to adaptation, with broad agendas or specific policy dilemmas. Most

remits are established by the commissioning body, although a few examples exist where stakeholders have played a role in defining the remit (Scotland) or where the assembly itself is able to prioritize the areas it will focus on (Denmark).

2.4.4. Recruitment

The Spanish national assembly had 160 members, the French 150. Most other national processes have around 100, although Finland's climate jury involved just over 30. Subnational processes tend to be around 50, although some regional processes are larger and some juries smaller.

Most assemblies use a robust two-stage sortition process for recruitment, although some have been less rigorous. For example, in both Luxembourg and Spain, part or all of the sample was drawn from a survey company's panel, restricting who could be selected and thus the inclusiveness of the process.

2.4.5. Governance

The structure of governance varies between assemblies (Carrick 2022). Getting governance right is important to ensure that there is a degree of independence from the commissioners and that different interests within society see the process as legitimate—in particular that evidence is balanced. Most national assemblies establish a stakeholder body that includes representation from different social, economic and environmental interests and, in some cases, political parties. An evidence group will generally contain recognized experts in the field. The evidence group will suggest content and potential speakers, overseen by the stakeholder group. In this way, a rigorous and balanced process can be achieved.

Assemblies are typically designed and delivered by an independent practitioner organization that specializes in participatory and deliberative processes. In Ireland and Scotland, the process was led by a team of seconded civil servants who coordinated the work of the practitioner organization and the stakeholder and evidence groups. This may be seen as compromising the independence of assemblies (OECD 2020), but has value in bringing in an understanding of the needs of the commissioning body and being able to connect with colleagues in the administration once the report has been produced. Ireland and Scotland also appointed a chair (or chairs) of the assembly to act as a public figurehead.

Getting governance right is important to ensure that there is a degree of independence from the commissioners and that different interests within society see the process as legitimate.

The French Convention stands out in the way that it was organized by a single Governance Committee made up of representatives of the economic, social and environmental sectors, as well as climate and participatory democracy experts. Three independent Guarantors, with prominent public profiles, had an oversight role, to ensure the independence and deliberative quality of the process. Decision making by committee was not always easy, with very different experience and expectations about the capacities of citizens.

Some assemblies bring members into the governance process—this was the case in France and Denmark, for example. This is useful to ensure that decisions about design and organization reflect the experience of assembly members and, at least in the French case, to help break deadlocks between members of the Governance Committee.

Governance arrangements in subnational assemblies typically follow the same logic of involving stakeholders and subject specialists. A single governance group will often be formed, which combines the different roles and functions, typically with the independent practitioner organization having the lead role in coordination, design and delivery.

2.4.6. Structure

Where the assembly has been given a broad remit, it will often break into workstreams to focus on different aspects of climate policy. Having worked as a whole assembly learning about the climate challenge, the French Convention broke into five streams: housing; labour and production; transport; food; and consumption. CAUK divided into three workstreams: how we travel; in the home; what we buy, land use, food and farming. Workstreams hear from witnesses specific to their policy area and then break into smaller groups for collaborative work and development of proposals. In Ireland, Finland, Luxembourg and Poland, the assemblies worked as a single body across all the issues. In Luxembourg, the organizers misjudged how much time was needed and had to organize a second phase where members developed and agreed recommendations.

A number of assemblies have provided an opportunity for external actors with experience in climate policy or public administration to review draft proposals. The French Convention took this one stage further, with legal experts on hand to offer guidance to members on how their proposals could be framed legally so that they could be directly implemented. In all cases, it is up to the citizens whether to take the advice.

A number of assemblies have provided an opportunity for external actors with experience in climate policy or public administration to review draft proposals.

2.4.7. Facilitation

Approaches to facilitation can differ. Most common is directive table facilitation. Advocates of this approach argue that this enables a more equitable interaction between members, ensuring that those who are most confident do not dominate proceedings. Particular attention is given to ensuring relatively equal talking time among members. The Danes and French are more laissez-faire, prioritizing self-organization and agency. Facilitators will ensure that members keep to task and time, but step back unless significant group dysfunctions emerge.

The French Convention is unusual in the access given to stakeholders and advocates during the assembly, to the extent that the process of recommendation writing has been termed 'co-construction' (Giraudet et al. 2022). Usually, a stricter boundary is drawn, with stakeholders invited to participate in governance arrangements, give evidence and answer questions.

The impact of facilitation techniques can have significant effects. For example, Austria is the only assembly to date that has employed 'sociocracy' in its small groups developing recommendations. For a proposal to go forward for consideration by the whole assembly, it had to face no objections from members of the authoring group. This meant that more radical proposals were not taken forward to the whole assembly where one member objected.

2.4.8. Recommendations

Reports generally combine a vision statement agreed by the assembly, alongside the recommendations. Reports vary in length and number of recommendations. The smallest number of proposals came from the Irish Citizens' Assembly 2016–2018, with only 13 recommendations. The Spanish Citizens' Assembly for Climate produced a staggering 172 recommendations.

2.4.9. Response

Surprising as it may seem, remits do not generally require government response within a specified time, if at all. Scotland is relatively rare. The law establishing the assembly required government to respond within six months. In Ireland, the parliamentary resolution establishing the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss set out the process of response. The report was to be considered first by a joint committee of both houses of parliament before the government responded. No specific timetable was set.

Surprising as it may seem, remits do not generally require government response within a specified time, if at all.

In some instances, governments do not respond. The Austrian assembly only received a response from the civil service, not from the government, following disputes between coalition partners. In Spain, the government committed to respond within a year, but that coincided with the run-up to elections and was not forthcoming.

2.4.10. **Scrutiny**

Assemblies differ in the extent to which their members are involved after the assembly has finished its work. Members will often be invited to engage with politicians and officials to promote and discuss their recommendations. In France and Scotland, the national assemblies were reconvened several months later to consider the response of government. In Austria, France and Spain, associations of members were created, with 'Les 150' particularly active in public debates about the French Government's actions. The Irish philosophy stands out in not promoting member engagement after the process has ended. It is the appointed chair who takes on the role of the public face of the assembly, engaging with government officials, stakeholders and the media.

Citizens are more willing than politicians to confront hard policy choices.

2.5. **WHAT DO ASSEMBLIES RECOMMEND?**

The majority of assemblies that produce their own recommendations (rather than reviewing policy options) propose actions that move well beyond and expose contradictions in existing government policy. Citizens are more willing than politicians to confront hard policy choices.

One recent study comparing recommendations from national climate assemblies with the policies in the National Energy and Climate Plans that EU member states are required to adopt by the European Commission provides a sense of the ambition of assemblies (Lage et al. 2023). The authors find two patterns. First, assemblies are braver than governments in their willingness to recommend policies that aim to reduce consumption and production of products and services. These are referred to as 'sufficiency' policies. This includes proposals across a number of assemblies to increase the cost for frequent flyers and for high-carbon diets and products, and to reduce or even ban advertising for highly damaging goods and services.

Second, citizens are more willing than governments to propose regulation of individuals and businesses rather than relying on market incentives or voluntary action.

These differences between assemblies and governments are not trivial. Assemblies are three to six times more likely to propose limits on consumption and production compared with their governments. Similarly, assemblies propose regulatory policies three times more often.

Recommendations tend to be skewed towards some areas of policy over others. The largest sectoral emitter of GHGs in Europe is energy production and supply, and yet only 15 per cent of recommendations from the first eight national assemblies are in this area of policy. This is not because citizens are unable or unwilling to make proposals in these areas, rather it is because of the structure of the assemblies. Relatively few have had a workstream focused on energy, with even less attention to questions of energy production and supply. The same is true of finance.

2.6. IMPACT OF CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES

2.6.1. Policy impact

The main impact that most observers of climate assemblies are looking for is on government policy. If a public authority is putting resources into an assembly, a reasonable expectation is that it will have some impact on its decision making. The record in this regard is mixed.

It is necessary to be clear about what policy impact means. Is it enough to have evidence that the recommendations of assemblies are given consideration within policy processes? Or is there an expectation of a change in policy in line with the recommendations, or even structural transformation of the policymaking process? These are very different expectations (Jacquet and Van der Does 2021).

It is important to be circumspect. Climate assemblies are novel institutions. A lot of expectations are being placed on them, when they are usually a one-off intervention into climate governance, generally organized to provide recommendations, not make final decisions.

The main impact that most observers of climate assemblies are looking for is on government policy.

Impact can take time. Most assemblies have reported in the last three to four years. Policy change can be a slow process. It has already been noted that some assemblies do not receive an official response from the commissioning authority. So, one impact could be that formal processes were in place for such consideration—a theme discussed in section 2.8.

Identifying impact on policy itself is challenging.

Identifying impact on policy itself is challenging. Policymaking is complex and it is hard to isolate the specific impact of climate assemblies. Policy processes are messy and far from linear, with lots of different actors affecting the process (Lewis et al. 2023). Cause and effect in policymaking is difficult—if not impossible—to identify accurately. Congruence between the recommendations of an assembly and changes in policy does not in itself mean that the assembly was the determining factor in the changes (Jacquet and Van der Does 2021).

With those caveats, policy impacts can be identified with some degree of certainty where there is some evidence that policymakers were giving serious consideration to the recommendations of assemblies. The Irish Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act in 2021 incorporated the majority of the recommendations from the Citizens' Assembly 2016–2018. The assembly is widely recognized as having played a critical role in Ireland's step change in climate policy. The assembly's recommendation to tax GHG emissions from agriculture was, however, seen as one step too far given the power and influence wielded by farming interests.

The policy impact of the French Convention has been a hot topic, with wildly different assessments, depending on whether the source is critical media or the government's tracking website. A recent study suggests that around 20 per cent of recommendations have been fully incorporated into policy or law, with the government going further than the Convention recommended on a few occasions (Averchenkova, Koehl and Smith forthcoming 2024). For example, extending the proposal for eco-driving in driving tests to other types of vehicles. Around half the Convention's recommendations have been partially implemented, or an alternative measure that partly implements the proposal has been introduced. For example, the government accepted the proposal to end domestic flights where a low-carbon alternative exists but restricted the ban to journeys of less than two hours. The Convention had recommended four hours. While some policies are likely to have been implemented

without the Convention, the extent to which the Convention and its recommendations were an object of public and political discourse meant that they became part of the policy debate.

A third example is the fate of the recommendations of the Luxembourg Climate Citizens' Council. This assembly was established primarily to feed citizens' ideas into the redrafting of the National Energy and Climate Plan required by the European Commission. An assessment of the plan suggests that 57 of its 197 measures align with recommendations from the Council. It is not possible to know without further research how many of these measures would have been there without the Council's input, but there are five measures that are new initiatives and as such easier to link to the assembly's report (Paulis, Kies and Verhasselt 2024).

In other assemblies, it is much harder to show that recommendations have had an impact on policy action—or even that they were systematically considered by commissioners. Further discussion on why some assemblies appear to have had more policy impact than others can be found in section 2.7.

Restricting consideration of impact to policy change limits our understanding of the potential effects of climate assemblies across the political system. It is important to be alive to the potential for assemblies to have impact in other ways, such as on the attitudes and behaviours of policy actors and institutions, on broader publics and on the members of assemblies (Demski and Capstick 2022).

2.6.2. Impact on policy actors and institutions

Assemblies can have transformative impacts on policy actors and institutions. For example, Chris Stark, Chief Executive of the UK Climate Change Committee—an independent, statutory body—talks of having a 'totally game changing experience' as one of the Expert Leads for CAUK (Ainscough 2022). He readily admits his trepidation in taking on this role and his own arrogance in wondering what citizens could add to climate governance. The Committee used CAUK's recommendations to frame its Sixth Carbon Budget, reviewing government policy in relation to the proposals of citizens and commissioned its own citizens' panel on home decarbonization (Rayner 2022).

In Ireland, the Citizens' Assembly 2016–2018 led to the creation of a new piece of climate governance architecture. Having reviewed the assembly's recommendations through an ad hoc joint committee

Assemblies can have transformative impacts on policy actors and institutions.

on climate action, both houses of parliament decided to make the committee a permanent body (the Committee on Environment and Climate Action), increasing the capacity of the legislature to consider climate policy.

Few assemblies have gained the kind of media attention that is needed for public recognition.

2.6.3. Impact on public discourse

Few assemblies have gained the kind of media attention that is needed for public recognition. Austria and France are rare in this regard. By the end of the Austrian assembly, over 50 per cent of the population had heard of the Klimarat. A large majority of citizens were in favour of the assembly and wanted political actors to use the recommendations of the Klimarat as a yardstick for climate policy (Buzogány et al. 2022). The French Convention stimulated extensive public debate on both the climate transition and the use of assemblies. Debates about the Convention and the fate of its proposals forced often reluctant politicians into talking publicly about climate policy.

2.6.4. Impact on assembly members

A final category of impact is on the assembly members themselves. It is common across almost all assemblies to find members' concern about climate change, sense of political efficacy and desire to engage in both personal and collective climate action increase substantially by the end of the process. The only insight into the longer-term impact on members suggests that these effects are not transient (Elstub, Carrick and Allen 2023). A survey two years after CAUK ended found that members' concern about climate change continued to rise after the assembly finished its work and that members had adopted a range of pro-climate behaviours, such as reducing the amount of meat and dairy in their diets and electricity use in their homes.

One of the hopes of advocates of assemblies is that they will help build systemic trust in climate governance.

One of the hopes of advocates of assemblies is that they will help build systemic trust in climate governance. The evidence from survey experiments points in this direction, but only when assembly recommendations are honoured by the commissioning body (Van Dijk and Lefevre 2023; Germann, Marien and Muradova 2022). The CAUK surveys reinforce this finding. While assembly members' commitment to the use of citizens' assemblies remained high, their confidence and trust in the political system had dropped markedly. The lack of direct and obvious effects of CAUK's recommendations on policy were no doubt the driving force. In other words, unless assemblies are seen to have political effects, then they cannot be expected to counter political disillusionment.

2.7. SUCCESS FACTORS

Where policy impact is the main driving motivation, the critical success factor for government-commissioned assemblies is the combination of well-considered remit and political support for the follow-up. In other words, what happens before and after the assembly takes place. For those assemblies that aim to achieve resonance among the broader public and stakeholders, a robust public communication and engagement strategy is critical. And in all cases, the availability of adequate funding is fundamental.

Box 2.4. Success factors for climate assemblies

- The provision of adequate resources has an impact on assembly size and the time available for deliberation.
- Getting the remit right is crucial for the climate assembly to live up to expectations.
- Securing sustained political support for follow-up is central for the assembly recommendations to have a policy impact.
- Delivering a targeted media and communications strategy can build public and stakeholder support for the assembly and its recommendations.

2.7.1. Adequate resources

The difference in budgets that have been made available for climate assemblies has already been discussed. But budget figures associated with assemblies can be misleading as the time of public officials working on the project will vary considerably, depending on governance structures and responsibility for communications and other aspects of delivery. Such resource is rarely included in assembly accounts. What is clear, however, is that available resources affect both the size of the assembly and the time members can have together to learn, deliberate and agree on recommendations. Costs can be mitigated (in particular for national assemblies) by, for example, blending in-person meetings with online sessions. The People's Assembly for Nature in the UK, met in person for its first and last weekends and online for the middle two weekends. This significantly reduced costs of travel, accommodation and subsistence, although it required a different set of resources to support digital engagement for the less experienced members.

2.8. REMIT

As has been discussed, remits vary: broad or tight, decided by government or open to stakeholder or member influence. The remit needs to fit the context. For governments, this means that the remit must reflect the state of the climate policy cycle. Are they looking for citizens' insights on a particular policy dilemma; are they open to citizens' own agendas; or some other type of input? A different set of questions about the relevance of the remit faces commissioners that may be attempting to shift public discourse.

Whatever the remit, being willing and ready to respond is critical.

2.8.1. Political support for follow-up

Whatever the remit, being willing and ready to respond is critical. This requires having a defined and resourced follow-up process in place that has meaningful and sustained political support. Not just political support for the idea of an assembly, but political support that gives licence to civil servants to follow up on the recommendations. Too often the follow-up process and the requisite political support is missing, which reduces the possibility for assemblies to impact policies.

The Irish and Luxembourg assemblies, where the impact of assembly recommendations on policy is most clearcut, provide insights into what needs to be in place. Ireland's follow-up to its assemblies is a two-stage process. In the first stage, the assembly report is considered by a joint committee of both houses of parliament. The committee's report, along with that of the assembly, is then passed to government. Parliamentary engagement is seen as important to ensure cross-party buy-in. The second stage, government response, is driven by the cabinet secretary. In the cases of climate and biodiversity (and other Irish assemblies), it is not the specific department responsible for that policy area that takes the lead. The response is directed by the core executive.

The importance of ownership by the core executive is confirmed by the Luxembourg case. By all accounts, the assembly itself was not the best organized (Paulis, Kies and Verhasselt 2024). It lacked transparency: the website has almost no information of what happened. Governance bodies were weak and were not in place before the assembly started its work. The assembly was asked to do too much and had to be extended in a rather haphazard manner. The recommendations are of radically different quality in terms of depth of analysis and explanation. But even with these limitations, the assembly had an impact on policy, in large part because it was

the responsibility of the prime minister's chief of staff to lead the response. As in Ireland, the core executive took responsibility to ensure action across the administration.

This compares with many other assemblies (national and local) that are commissioned by ministers or politicians with responsibility for particular policy areas and departments, such as climate and energy. Even where they are committed to act, they do not necessarily have the political capital or influence to affect policy change in other areas of government and may not be able to secure commitment to fund action. The government as a whole does not own the process. In Austria, the governing Liberal Party took an oppositional stance to the assembly, arguing that it was a project of its coalition partner, the Greens. In Scotland, a lot of effort and resources were put into follow-up, including keeping governance bodies in place to promote the report and organizing an extra weekend for the members to review the official government response. While that response was quite extensive, no structures, processes, responsibilities or budget were available to further implementation. It was not seen as a priority by key powerholders within government and the administration.

The significance of follow-up is not just for government-commissioned processes. Civil society-led processes need well-defined plans for how to work with the recommendations from assemblies. Again, this requires resources and high-level support from within commissioning organizations.

2.8.2. Media and communications strategy

If the target of the assembly is raising public and stakeholder awareness and support for the assembly and its recommendations, a robust media and communications strategy is a must. It may be less significant if the main motivation is policy impact, although public pressure on an administration to act is generally helpful for shifting recalcitrant politicians.

Resourcing is critical for communications and broader public engagement. The organizers of both the French and Austrian national assemblies dedicated sizeable portions of their budget to communications—around EUR 1 million. For Austria, that amounted to about half the total budget. Both assemblies were active in raising the capacity of journalists to understand the different stages of the process, from recruitment through to government response. Both gave the media access to willing members and engaged with social media influencers to extend reach. The opportunity to personalize

Resourcing is critical for communications and broader public engagement.

assemblies through stories of members proved particularly attractive, especially for regional and local media outlets.

Austria employed two civil society engagement officers who were able to lead more in-depth communication with interested parties, such as regional government climate and energy managers, climate non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and activists. They distributed a newsletter after every session of the assembly and continued their work raising the profile of the assembly after it had reported.

Organizers and advocates of climate assemblies are still learning how best to communicate their work and recommendations. They are relatively novel to journalists and the public alike and their dynamics run counter to what is typically seen as newsworthy. These are not the spaces of conflict that tend to dominate political news.

Most assemblies to date have been one-off processes, commissioned by governments.

2.9. FUTURE TRENDS

Most assemblies to date have been one-off processes, commissioned by governments. In the short term, this is likely to remain the most common approach. Two developments suggest alternative directions of travel—permanent assemblies (Abbas 2023) and assemblies commissioned within civil society (Wilson and Mellier 2023). These two developments sit within a broader set of concerns about how assemblies are integrated within the democratic system.

2.9.1. Permanent climate assemblies

Since 2023, on an annual cycle, residents of Brussels–Capital Region have been selected by democratic lottery to participate in the permanent climate assembly to consider aspects of municipal climate action. The agenda for each cycle is set by members of the previous assembly having consulted with the government, political parties and other stakeholders. A group of members from each cycle is empowered to oversee the response of government to their proposals. So far, the permanent climate assembly has provided recommendations on housing, renovation, greening the city, and food and nutrition.

The Milan permanent assembly also works on an annual cycle. Its remit is limited to the implementation of the municipal Air and

Climate Plan that is in place until at least 2030. The plan aims to reduce GHG emissions, improve air quality and combat the effects of climate change. The assembly considers how existing policies within the plan are best delivered and can assess the actions of the municipality in its implementation.

Whereas the Brussels assembly is empowered to set the agenda and generate new policy proposals, in Milan members are limited to considering the design, implementation and evaluation of policies already adopted by the city. No doubt other models will emerge as further permanent assemblies are established.

The move to permanent climate assemblies recognizes that the climate and ecological crisis is in constant flux and no assembly can hope to 'solve' this multidimensional crisis in one shot. Mitigation and adaptation strategies require constant policy adjustments, and new and increasingly complex challenges constantly emerge. A permanent structure can be responsive to shifting environmental, social and political contexts. Permanency also means that an assembly is more likely to contribute to cultural change within public administrations, transforming government attitudes and practices towards public participation, as well as improving oversight and monitoring of action on recommendations. It has the potential to increase public knowledge, understanding and support for assemblies too, as more people receive invitations and are directly involved or know someone who has participated.

The move to permanent climate assemblies recognizes that the climate and ecological crisis is in constant flux and no assembly can hope to 'solve' this multidimensional crisis in one shot.

2.9.2. Civil society–commissioned assemblies

A second development that suggests a different direction of travel is climate assemblies commissioned by civil society actors rather than governments. Different strategies are at play here. Some assemblies are organized independently as demonstration projects, as part of a strategy to persuade government to commission assemblies. More ground-breaking are those that aim to reshape the political landscape. Civil society–commissioned assemblies have the potential to put systems change on the table in ways that would probably be unacceptable for most government-commissioned processes (Wilson and Mellier 2023).

The German Citizens' Assembly on Climate was organized by Bürger Begehren Klimaschutz (Citizens' Climate Protection Initiative) and Scientists for Future. The primary aim was to influence the general election and the coalition negotiations and policy development that followed.

The Polish Citizens' Assembly on Energy Costs organized by the Shipyard Foundation, and the Climate Assembly in Skopje on endemic air pollution commissioned by the ZIP Institute, were both organized to demonstrate robust democratic practice in explicit contrast to widely distrusted public authorities. The end goal is for assemblies to be part of the rebuilding of democratic climate governance.

The Swedish Citizens' Assembly on Climate was organized by a consortium of researchers led by the Stockholm Resilience Centre, with the explicit aim of contributing to public and political discourse on Sweden's commitment to and action on the Paris Agreement in a context of perceived government backsliding.

The People's Assembly for Nature was commissioned by three mainstream conservation organizations in the UK—the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and National Trust. The Assembly created the People's Plan for Nature, which set out 26 calls for action targeted at national and local governments, businesses, charities and NGOs, individuals and communities. This was an explicit intervention to reframe the way society understands and responds to the nature crisis and a recognition that current civil society advocacy and campaigning has limited impact and reach.

At transnational level, the Global Assembly can be understood in similar ways. Part of the Assembly's mission was to influence the COP process, but also to be a practical example of how everyday citizens could become part of global climate and ecological governance and how this could be linked to localized action.

Some radical social movements are considering going even further—establishing citizens' assemblies as an explicit alternative to government and corporate power. See, for example, the Humanity Project in the UK.

These different assemblies organized by civil society are explicit attempts to exercise countervailing power against inaction on the climate and ecological crisis.

These different assemblies organized by civil society are explicit attempts to exercise countervailing power against inaction on the climate and ecological crisis. Some primarily target government and political parties. Others aim to open up spaces for broader social and political action.

2.9.3. Integration into political system

A third area of development is the integration of assemblies into the broader political system. The tendency is too often to see assemblies

and their relationship with commissioning bodies in isolation, ignoring the potential to integrate them more extensively with broader democratic architecture.

Climate assemblies have experimented with different approaches to stakeholder engagement, both to draw on their knowledge and insights and to tie them into the process, given that recommendations are likely to have an impact on their activities. In Austria, a separate stakeholders' forum ran alongside the national assembly. Stakeholders were invited to write position papers that were shared with assembly members and, mid-way through the assembly schedule, an opportunity for dialogue between members and stakeholders took place.

In Bourgogne-Franche-Comté in France, stakeholders were invited to work with assembly members on their proposals on the first day of the last two weekends. On the second day of each weekend, the assembly members were free to reflect on their collaborative efforts—and the final decision of what went in the recommendations was theirs alone.

The German city of Erlangen designed a sophisticated approach where a local research institute defined a range of options for reaching net zero. These ideas were then considered by a stakeholder forum, which passed its proposals to the assembly. This cycle was repeated twice more, at the end of which, the assembly produced a report with its recommendations. Stakeholders in the city were invited to sign a declaration of support for the report.

More radical is the model developed and applied by G1000 in the Netherlands.³ The majority of participants are citizens selected by democratic lottery. They work collaboratively with randomly selected civil servants, civil society and private sector actors to both set the agenda and generate a set of proposals for action. The aim is to bring 'the system in one room' to increase buy-in to the process and outcomes from key actors responsible for delivery. The breaking of the wall between citizens and stakeholders means that it is a qualitatively different approach to the more common structure and practices of citizens' assemblies.

One significant set of stakeholders that are often neglected are children and young people. The application of democratic lottery and

³ Not to be confused with the original G1000 in Belgium, which has a different agenda.

deliberation for assemblies dedicated to this age group is starting to be seen, often in parallel and interacting with adult assemblies. In the small town of Bude in the UK, for example, a jury process was organized with school children aged 12 to 16 that fed into the adult citizens' jury that was considering the impact of sea level rise. On a larger scale, a two-weekend Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss held in Ireland in October 2022 influenced the recommendations of the adult assembly running at the same time (Reid forthcoming 2024).

Assemblies have taken different approaches to connect with the broader public beyond traditional communications. The People's Assembly for Nature in the UK ran an impressive pre-assembly National Conversation, which received 30,000 submissions on people's relationship with nature and how it could be protected. These were shared in creative formats with members of the People's Assembly to help inform their deliberations (People's Plan for Nature 2022). In Devon—a mainly rural county in the southwest of England—the climate assembly was preceded by expert hearings and a public call for evidence, which narrowed the assembly's remit down to three policy challenges that had consistently emerged from the engagement exercises: renewable energy; car use; and retrofit of buildings (Sandover, Moseley and Devine-Wright 2021).

Assemblies often provide the opportunity for the public to make submissions during the assembly's work. A sophisticated approach was adopted in Austria where the Polis argument-mapping platform was used for the public to respond to draft proposals and to suggest their own ideas. Over 5,000 people participated by voting or submitting their own statements, with around 833,000 votes registered on the statements.

The challenges all assemblies have found is how to present this kind of extensive public and stakeholder input to assembly members and how much weight to give this input, given that it is not as carefully balanced and curated as other evidence provided during the assembly. These are challenges that will no doubt generate creative solutions in the future.

2.10. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Climate assemblies are a relatively recent phenomenon. As such, their impact can be difficult to judge. Most of the activity has happened in the last five years. Most public administrations have not commissioned assemblies. They remain fairly niche initiatives, with growing interest and support from public officials through to radical social movements.

Those assemblies that have been organized vary in their resourcing, political support and overall quality. When the conditions are in place, climate assemblies can have a significant impact on climate governance. Those conditions are not just getting the assembly organization right, but include the broader conditions required to ensure that the assembly is integrated within the political system so that citizens' collective wisdom lands. That integration can happen in different ways and is the key to future impact.

Climate assemblies are a relatively recent phenomenon. As such, their impact can be difficult to judge.

REFERENCES: CHAPTER 2

- Abbas, N., 'Towards Permanent Citizens' Climate Assemblies: A FIDE/KNOCA Discussion Note', Federation for Innovation in Democracy – Europe (FIDE) and Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies (KNOCA), 19 October 2023, <https://knoca.eu/app/uploads/2023/11/Towards-permanent-climate-assemblies_Draft-for-comment.pdf>, accessed 11 April 2024
- Ainscough, J., 'Why understanding what people think is crucial to the next phase of climate policy—Interview with Chris Stark', in *Deliberative democracy and the just transition: From one-off activities to embedded participation*, Foundation for Democracy and Sustainable Development Winter Newsletter (2022), <<https://www.fdsd.org/winter-2022-editorial>>, accessed 11 April 2024
- Averchenkova, A., Koehl, A. and Smith G., *The Policy Impact of the French Convention for the Climate: Untangling the Fate of the Citizens' Recommendations*, KNOCA Briefing (Brussels: KNOCA, forthcoming 2024)
- Boswell, J., Dean, R. and Smith, G., 'Integrating citizen deliberation into climate governance: Lessons on robust design from six climate assemblies', *Public Administration*, 101/1 (2023), pp. 182–200, <<https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12883>>
- Buzogány, A., Ehs, T., Plöchl, J. and Scherhauser, P., *Evaluation Report of the Austrian Climate Citizens' Assembly: Assessment of Input, Process, and Output*, InFER Discussion Paper 1-2022 (Vienna: Institute of Forest, Environmental, and Natural Resource Policy, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, 2022), <https://boku.ac.at/fileadmin/data/H03000/H73000/H73200/InFER_Discussion_Papers/Final_Report_Austrian_Climate-Citizens-Assembly__BOKU-part.pdf>, accessed 11 April 2024
- Carrick, J., *Governance Practices and Structures of Climate Assemblies*, KNOCA Briefing No. 6 (Brussels: KNOCA, 2022), <<https://www.knoca.eu/briefings/governance-structures-and-practices-of-climate-assemblies->>, accessed 11 April 2024
- Demski, C. and Capstick, S., 'Impact Evaluation Framework for Climate Assemblies', version 1.0, KNOCA, 30 June 2022, <<https://www.knoca.eu/guidances-documents/impact-evaluation-framework>>, accessed 25 April 2024
- Elstub, S., Carrick, J. and Allen, S., 'After Climate Assembly UK: Did the views and behaviours of assembly members change?', Involve and Newcastle University, 2023, <<https://involve.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/docuemnt/CAUK%20Eval%20AM%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>>, accessed 11 April 2024
- Farrell, D. M., Suiter, J. and Harris, C., "'Systematizing" constitutional deliberation: The 2016–18 citizens' assembly in Ireland', *Irish Political Studies*, 34/1 (2019), pp. 113–23, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/07907184.2018.1534832>>
- Ganua, E. and Baiocchi, G., 'The power of ambiguity: How participatory budgeting travels the globe', *Journal of Deliberative Democracy*, 8/2 (2012), <<https://doi.org/10.16997/jdd.142>>
- Germann, M., Marien, S. and Muradova, L., 'Scaling up? Unpacking the effect of deliberative mini-publics on legitimacy perceptions', *Political Studies* (2022), <<https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217221137444>>

- Giraudet, L. G., Apouey, B., Arab, H., Baeckelandt, S., Begout, P., Berghmans, N., Blanc, N., Boulin, J. Y., Buge, E., Courant, D. and Dahan, A. et al., ‘“Co-construction” in deliberative democracy: Lessons from the French Citizens’ Convention for Climate’, *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 9/1 (2022), pp. 1–16, <<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-022-01212-6>>
- Jacquet, V. and Van der Does, R., ‘Deliberation and policy-making: Three ways to think about minipublics’ consequences’, *Administration & Society*, 53/3 (2021), pp. 468–87, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399720964511>>
- Lage, J., Thema, J., Zell-Ziegler, C., Best, B., Cordroch, L. and Wiese, F., ‘Citizens call for sufficiency and regulation—A comparison of European citizen assemblies and National Energy and Climate Plans’, *Energy Research & Social Science*, 104 (2023), 103254, <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2023.103254>>
- Lewis, P., Ainscough, J., Coxoon, R. and Willis, R., ‘The messy politics of local climate assemblies’, *Climatic Change*, 176/6 (2023), 76, <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-023-03555-8>>
- MacKenzie, M. K., *Future Publics: Democracy, Deliberation, and Future-Regarding Collective Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), <<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197557150.001.0001>>
- Mejia, M., ‘2023 Trends in Deliberative Democracy: OECD Database Update’, *Participo*, 7 December 2023, <<https://medium.com/participo/2023-trends-in-deliberative-democracy-oecd-database-update-c8802935f116>>, accessed 11 April 2024
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2020), <<https://www.oecd.org/gov/innovative-citizen-participation-and-new-democratic-institutions-339306da-en.htm>>, accessed 25 March 2024
- Paulis, E., Kies, R. and Verhasselt, L., *Evaluation Report: 2022 Luxembourg Climate Citizens’ Assembly—Klima Biergerrot (KBR)* (Luxembourg: University of Luxembourg/PLDP, 2024), <<https://pldp.lu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/rapport-kbr-1.2.2.single-pages.pdf>>, accessed 11 April 2024
- People’s Plan for Nature, ‘The National Conversation’, 2022, <<https://peoplesplanfornature.org/national-conversation>>, accessed 11 April 2024
- Rayner, S., ‘Using deliberative policy design methods to support better climate policymaking’, Climate Change Committee, 21 September 2022, <<https://www.theccc.org.uk/2022/09/21/using-deliberative-policy-design-methods-to-support-better-climate-policymaking/>>, accessed 11 April 2024
- Reid, K., *Children and Young People’s Participation in Climate Assemblies*, KNOCA Guidance (Brussels: KNOCA, forthcoming 2024)
- Sandover, R., Moseley, A. and Devine-Wright, P., ‘Contrasting views of citizens’ assemblies: Stakeholder perceptions of public deliberation on climate change’, *Politics and Governance*, 9/2 (2021), pp. 76–86, <<https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v9i2.4019>>
- Setälä, M. and Smith, G., ‘Mini-publics and deliberative democracy’, in A. Bächtiger, J. S. Dryzek, J. Mansbridge and M. E. Warren (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 300–14

- Smith, G., *Can Democracy Safeguard the Future?* (Cambridge UK and Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2021)
- , ‘La Convention citoyenne pour le climat: un dispositif hors norme parmi les assemblées citoyennes sur le climat?’ [Placing the Convention: An outlier among climate assemblies?], *Participations*, 34/3 (2022), pp. 261–81, <<https://doi.org/10.3917/parti.034.0261>>
- , *We Need to Talk about Climate: How Citizens’ Assemblies Can Help Us Solve the Climate Crisis* (London: University of Westminster Press, forthcoming 2024)
- Thibaut, N., ‘Attempting constitutional amendment in France: Greening the Constitution or surfing the green wave?’, in A. Abebe, A. Dziedzic, A. Welikala, E. C. Houlihan, J. Grogan, K. Zulueta-Fülscher, T. Noël and Z. Al-Ali, *Annual Review of Constitution-Building: 2020* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2021), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2021.102>>
- Van Dijk, L. and Lefevere, J., ‘Can the use of minipublics backfire? Examining how policy adoption shapes the effect of minipublics on political support among the general public’, *European Journal of Political Research*, 62/1 (2023), pp. 135–55, <<https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12523>>
- Willis, R., Curato, N. and Smith, G., ‘Deliberative democracy and the climate crisis’, *WIREs Climate Change*, 13/2 (2022), e759, <<https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.759>>
- Wilson, R. and Mellier, C., ‘Getting real about citizens’ assemblies: A new theory of change for citizens’ assemblies’, European Democracy Hub blog, 10 October 2023, <<https://europeandemocracyhub.epd.eu/getting-real-about-citizens-assemblies-a-new-theory-of-change-for-citizens-assemblies>>, accessed 11 April 2024

Chapter 3

DELIBERATIVE PRACTICES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Nicole Curato

3.1. INTRODUCTION

‘Canary in the coal mine’ was how Prime Minister Enele Sopoaga described the Pacific Island nation of Tuvalu, as his country faces the risk of being underwater by the end of the century. Indeed, climate change is the single existential threat for many countries in the Global South, as record-breaking heatwaves, cyclones, sea level rise and droughts pose significant danger to current and future generations. Tuvalu signals an apocalyptic future that many vulnerable countries will experience if the international community fails to take stronger measures to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

The Global South’s experience of climate change, however, goes beyond the narrative of danger (see Box 1.1 for the definition of Global South). Far from being powerless victims of climate change, actors from the Global South are at the forefront of innovating and institutionalizing mechanisms for citizen deliberation that seek to empower people and their governments to take climate action. In West and Central Africa, women’s non-governmental organizations (NGOs) arranged a regional assembly in the lead-up to COP27, to exchange experiences and strategies to alleviate the disproportionate burden women carry when responding to climate impacts. In India, a pilot citizens’ assembly was conducted in Tamil Nadu, in the township of Auroville, to develop a Water Vision alongside practical recommendations on how this vision can be implemented. In Ecuador, people’s assemblies run by Indigenous movements have

Far from being powerless victims of climate change, actors from the Global South are at the forefront of innovating and institutionalizing mechanisms for citizen deliberation.

played a critical role in transforming the Constitution to acknowledge the inalienable right of nature to exist and flourish.

Citizens' assemblies may be the latest innovation in citizen deliberation, but there are others.

This chapter provides an overview of deliberative practices in the Global South and how these practices relate to climate action. Citizens' assemblies may be the latest innovation in citizen deliberation, but there are others. This chapter demonstrates long-institutionalized practices of citizen deliberation in some of the world's biggest and most vibrant democracies, as well as extra-institutional mechanisms that citizens, activists and grassroots movements utilize to broaden the space for democratic discourse and demand more inclusive, informed and climate-sensitive decision making. Overall, this chapter aims to characterize the participatory ecology in the Global South and identify situations where climate assemblies can make a meaningful contribution.

There are four parts to this chapter. After this introduction, section 3.2 provides an account of deliberative democracy from the perspectives of the Global South. It challenges the view that deliberative democracy and its attendant practices are rooted in the tradition of 'advanced Western liberal democracies' that must be 'exported' to the Global South. Instead, it argues that deliberation is a practice rooted in many societies around the world and has served various purposes historically and in contemporary times. The next two sections focus on contemporary manifestations of citizen deliberation. In section 3.3 the focus is on citizen deliberation in 'invited spaces' or institutionalized deliberative forums created by the state to generate citizen input in decision making. Public hearings, village assemblies and participatory budgeting are some examples. In section 3.4 the focus is on 'claimed spaces' or forums for citizen deliberation created by activists and grassroots movements to broaden the scope of public discourse and influence decision making. Both invited and claimed spaces, as this chapter demonstrates, have been utilized to advance agendas for climate action, albeit to a limited extent. Finally, section 3.5 takes stock of the lessons from institutionalized and extra-institutional forums for citizen deliberation, with a view to prompting conversations on how climate assemblies can complement or disrupt existing participatory practices and overcome risks of co-optation, elite control and uneven impacts, which have defined some of the practices of citizen deliberation in the Global South today.

3.2. DELIBERATION IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Key takeaways

- The culture and practice of deliberation have historically existed in societies outside the West, including countries governed by authoritarian regimes today.
- Understanding citizen deliberation from the perspective of the Global South is necessary in assessing the potential and risks of implementing climate assemblies.

There is a tendency for the literature on comparative politics to focus on the deficits of so-called ‘third wave democracies’. Weak institutions, high levels of inequality, politicized military, culture of patronage, corruption and sectarian violence are among the common focus areas of research. Increasingly, however, attention is being devoted to extra-electoral forms of political participation that allow people to break free from elite dominance in electoral and representative democracy (Heller 2022; see Pogrebinschi 2023). Institutionalizing or claiming spaces for citizen deliberation is one example.

The genealogy of citizen deliberation is often ascribed to Athenian democracy. Popular pieces and scholarly work that make a case for the institutionalization of citizens’ assemblies often cite the Athenian system of direct democracy, where (male) citizens directly took part in deliberation and decision making in the assembly without the mediation of elected representatives. One consequence of framing the history of ‘assembly democracy’ in this manner is the entrenchment of the view that deliberation is a ‘Western construct’, one that emerged from Athens, later manifested in the European Enlightenment and is today witnessed in the explosion of citizens’ assemblies in Europe. Implicitly, this view could see the Global South as contexts that need to ‘modernize’ their approach to politics by importing practices of citizen deliberation from ‘advanced liberal democracies’ to promote a civic culture of equality, open-mindedness and critical thinking and build deliberative institutions necessary for democratic decision making.

Such a view, however, needs to be challenged. Some scholars have challenged the narrative that ‘assembly democracy’ originated in

Europe and have instead emphasized archaeological evidence that shows assemblies originated in what is modern-day Iran, Iraq and Syria. 'Assemblies'—*ukkin* in Sumerian and *pūhrum* in Akkadian—were used to limit the power of kings 2,000 years before Athenian democracy (Keane 2022). As political anthropologist John Keane puts it:

Today's democracies are indebted to the first experiments in self-government by peoples who have been, for much of history, written off as incapable of democracy in any sense. *Ex oriente lux*: the lamp of assembly-based democracy was first lit in the East, not the West.
(Keane 2022: 23)

Keane's intervention serves as a reminder that the principles underpinning citizens' assemblies today are not unique to the European tradition of deliberation or one that should be 'exported' to the Global South. Deliberative decision making is a tradition deeply rooted in various cultures and histories around the world and finds resonance in contemporary practices. Indeed, the largest exercises of village-based deliberative assemblies are taking place in India today, rooted in the Gandhian tradition that advocated for citizen deliberation based on equality and deliberation (Gandhi 1962). In Indonesia, deliberation was rooted in the practice of *musyawarah* and *mufakat*—deliberation and consensus—which was formally articulated in the state's official nationalist ideology of Pancasila (Sani and Hara 2007).

Deliberative practices are also observable in authoritarian states. Confucian culture is one of the most prominent examples of consensus-based decision making, with some scholars arguing that China is already exercising a 'higher form of democracy' than Western-style electoral democracy (Ma and Hsu 2018: 7). In the scholarship of deliberative democracy, however, it is common to exercise caution in characterizing the democratic quality of deliberation in authoritarian states. Political scientists like Baogang He, for example, use the term 'authoritarian deliberation' to describe the 'unstable marriage' between participation, where the state grants citizens some degree of freedom for democratic expression, and authoritarianism, where heavy-handed top-down rule continues to limit the protection of dissident groups and human rights (He and Warren 2011; He and Wagenaar 2018). Deliberation in authoritarian regimes such as China can be viewed in instrumental terms, where deliberation is used by the party in power to manage social conflict

and promote regime stability, while also recognizing the intrinsic value citizens associate with its practice as it realizes the virtues of fairness and orientation to the common good (Niu and Wagenaar 2018).

The jury is still out on the future of deliberative democracy in China and other authoritarian states. The purpose of providing these examples is not to romanticize or uncritically celebrate deliberative practices in societies that have a record of curtailing free speech and association. Instead, putting a spotlight on these examples aims to demonstrate that deliberation is not a practice unique to the West or a derivative of Athenian democracy and Europe's Enlightenment ideals but one that has deep roots all over the world. The next sections map existing practices of citizen deliberation in invited and claimed spaces, which can serve as foundations or complementary practices for the application of climate assemblies.

3.3. DELIBERATION IN INVITED SPACES

Key takeaways

- There are various practices of deliberation institutionalized by the state in the Global South. Public hearings, village assemblies and participatory budgeting are some of these practices. Deliberation takes place at various levels of governance, from the hyper-local to the national.
- The legacies of these deliberative spaces are uneven. Some have built a track record of delivering better governance and public services, while others have been described as mere rituals of participation that further consolidate the power of local elites.

Practices of citizen deliberation have taken different forms and are institutionalized in various levels of governance, from the hyper-local to the national. Some of these spaces invite a self-selected group of citizens, while others involve elected representatives of the community. Some take an advisory or oversight role to hold state actors and the private sector to account. Others make binding decisions, although the track record of the state implementing citizen-led decisions is uneven. Public hearings, village assemblies

and participatory budgeting are examples of citizen deliberation in invited spaces or spaces created by the state (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1. Village democracies in the Global South

Legally enabling environment for people's participation

Bolivia	Popular Participation Law (1994)
Honduras	Municipal Reform Law (1990)
India	73rd and 74th constitutional amendments (1993–1994)
Namibia	Local Authorities Act (1992)
Philippines	Local Government Code (1991)
Tanzania	Local Authorities (Urban Authorities) Act (1992)
Uganda	Local Government Act (1997)

Selected examples of institutional channels for people's participation

Bolivia	Village committees
China	Villagers' committees
Colombia	Overseeing committees
India	<i>Gram sabhas</i> in villages and ward committees in urban areas
Nepal	Village development committee
Tanzania	Ward development committee
Uganda	Resistance councils and committees
Zimbabwe	Village development committee

Source: Datta, P. K., 'Exploring the dynamics of deliberative democracy in rural India: Lessons from the working of *gram sabhas* in India and *gram sansads* in West Bengal', *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, 65/1 (2019), pp. 117–35, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0019556118814937>>.

3.3.1. Public hearings

A public hearing is designed to generate comments from citizens about a particular policy or project. It is an open, non-binding participatory event, in that anyone can take part in deliberations, but there are no assurances that the government will heed citizens' input (Williamson and Fung 2004). This form of citizen engagement is often part of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and environmental licensing processes. In many countries, there are legal provisions for involving citizens in decision making on projects that can cause social disruption and environmental degradation. In Brazil, for example, public hearings are the only legally prescribed form of citizen participation in EIAs (Neto and Mallett 2023).

The typical process of public hearings is as follows. The state provides information to the public about the project under consideration. Companies involved in the project are expected to do the same. Ideally, the information is provided in a clear, accessible and timely manner. Once the affected public receives the information, the people are given the opportunity to express their views on the project and be heard by decision makers. Decision makers are expected to explain the rationale of their policy decisions to the public and how their views were considered.

Public hearings may be the most popular form of deliberative citizen engagement, but they are also among the most widely criticized. Arguably, these forums are not specifically designed to reduce the power differentials between the state, big companies and affected communities. Some describe public hearings as an 'empty ritual where one speaks, and no one hears' or a 'scene play to legitimise corporate interests' rather than a space for democratic discussion to take place (Neto and Mallett 2023: 8). Public hearings may be formally inclusive, but their implementation could be exclusionary. In Ghana, for example, public hearings on the country's first offshore oil fields were described as 'cosmetic' and only implemented to meet legal requirements (Bawole 2013: 385). Leaflets containing information about the project were written in a technical manner and not published in the local language. Only a few people received and read the draft of the EIA. The number of people taking part in the hearing also signals exclusion. In Gujarat in India, for example, the public hearing on an industrial development that affects the livelihoods of thousands of farmers only attracted 50 members of the village and recorded only 13 comments from farmers—all of them men—on the risks of the project. Some public hearings are hardly deliberative. In Gujarat, farmers reported being silenced or

A public hearing is designed to generate comments from citizens about a particular policy or project.

discouraged from speaking in these hearings (Dilay, Diduck and Patel 2020). Finally, follow-through is an issue for public hearings. Once EIAs or licences are issued, the implementation of environmental management is rarely monitored or opened to citizen scrutiny (Bawole 2013).

A lesson that can be learned from successful public hearings is the importance of utilizing such forums as part of a broader campaign against extractives industries.

A lesson that can be learned from successful public hearings is the importance of utilizing such forums as part of a broader campaign against extractives industries. South Cotabato in the Philippines is an example. Laurence Delina's study (2021) demonstrated how a network of social movements advocating for Indigenous peoples' rights and environmental protection, together with church and labour leaders, organized a successful campaign against a proposed opencast coal mining pit. Like the examples provided earlier, the Philippines has a legal framework for public consultation as part of EIA, but its implementation can be skewed in favour of industry. The municipality's mayor sought to placate dissenting voices by emphasizing mining companies' contributions to the community as part of their corporate social responsibility. The military tagged anti-mining activists as communist rebels and, therefore, legitimate targets of violence. Social movements filed their dissenting positions in public hearings, putting forward arguments that refute mining companies' claims about job generation and revenue generation. After three years of public hearings, the Provincial Board ruled in favour of social movements. The key to the success, as one of the respondents in Delina's research put it, was not limiting actions to putting forward arguments in the public hearings but also using 'public pressure through mass action, rally, media exposure to arouse public opinion' (Delina 2021: 8). These forms of mass mobilization also extended to electoral competition, as public officials known to be coal supporters lost the election following the public hearing. The case of the Philippines demonstrates that public hearings can be effectively utilized in combination with various approaches to social mobilization. This requires a robust network of civil society and activist movements, as well as legal experts that can transform public demands into persuasive submissions in public hearings.

Village assemblies aim to shift decision-making power from the government to villages.

3.3.2. Village assemblies

Village assemblies are the 'largest deliberative institution in human history' (Sanyal and Rao 2018: 1). By design, village assemblies aim to shift decision-making power from the government to villages. In so doing, citizens build their capacity to challenge elite power and identify programmes that directly benefit their communities. These assemblies are prominent in some of the world's largest

democracies—India and Indonesia. Table 3.1 provides an inventory of village assemblies in the Global South and the laws that enabled their formation.

In India, village assemblies are called *gram sabhas*. They are a forum for local villagers to deliberate and decide on the proposals put forward by the *gram panchayat* or the village council. While members deliberating in the village council are composed of elected representatives, village assemblies are deliberative spaces open to all citizens. The 73rd Amendment of the Indian Constitution in 1993 institutionalized village assemblies where ‘every adult citizen living in the given geographical area ... can participate in the deliberation and take decisions on certain matters which affect their life, as per the relevant legislative provisions and rules’ (Datta 2019: 121). To address inequalities in caste and gender, at least 33 per cent of seats were reserved for women and disadvantaged castes proportional to their village’s population. The topics covered in village assemblies include beneficiary selection in government programmes, monitoring of village budgets and selection of development projects. Some studies have demonstrated that governance and service delivery ‘sharply improve’ in villages where *gram sabhas* take place (Rao and Walton 2004).

Gram sabhas provide the participatory infrastructure for climate change-related policies to be rolled out. For example, the National Mission for Green India, which aims to increase the quantity and quality of forest cover in the country, utilizes village assemblies as the primary institution for implementing the programme at the village level (Rattani 2018). Villagers have also used *gram sabhas* as spaces to expose the inconsistency between the government’s priorities and the people’s needs. In one assembly, for example, villagers questioned the state’s priority of greening villages and prohibiting the cutting of trees. Villagers questioned this priority as the public land available for them to build homes on had become inaccessible because it was populated by trees that could not be cut. Villagers pushed back when the secretary of the *gram sabha* reminded the community of the need to plant trees in front of their homes as part of the government’s campaign for environmental cleanliness. ‘Only if we grow plants the air will be pure, and the chances of getting more rain will be more likely,’ the secretary said. ‘So, everyone should plant at least one sapling. Please do it here after,’ he added. To this, a villager responded, ‘There is no place to build a house, where to plant trees!’ Her fellow villagers laughed in response (Sanyal and Rao 2018: 156). This encounter may seem mundane, but it demonstrates the

value of invited spaces like *gram sabhas* for villages to expose the government's ill-informed climate-related policies based on their lived experiences.

Village assemblies are useful in holding local officials accountable compared with top-down, state-centred approaches to decision making.

Village assemblies are an example of deliberative democracy in action, albeit an imperfect one. The literature on village assemblies has, for the most part, been sceptical about the power of these forums in enforcing democratic norms of equality in highly unequal societies and therefore radically transforming political structures. Studies have shown that women tend to speak less in these forums and are less likely to receive a response from public officials (Parthasarathy, Rao and Palaniswamy 2019), while others exposed the vulnerability of these forums to elite capture (Sareen and Nathan 2018). Studies on village assemblies in Indonesia find similar patterns. Katiman (2021) found that village assemblies replicate existing patterns of exclusion. The Government of Indonesia considers deliberative forums or *musyawarah* a central part of its policy narrative of local development but, in practice, it is well-networked and high-status village elites that participate in these forums. 'Ritual deliberation', Katiman finds, is the predominant pattern in Indonesian village assemblies, where the forums are used to rubber-stamp decisions already made behind the scenes.

Despite these limitations of village assemblies, there are various lessons that can be learned from practice. Paromita Sanyal and Vijayendra Rao's research found that village assemblies do not merely serve as inconsequential talk shops but have served as spaces for citizens to air their grievances and be heard by elected officials and bureaucrats. Their in-depth text-based analysis found that these forums are not dominated by the voices of state officials but driven by the voices of everyday citizens (Parthasarathy, Rao and Palaniswamy 2019). In effect, village assemblies serve as a 'countervailing force to administrative power' for these forums make government officials' actions open to public scrutiny and make these officials directly accountable to the rural electorate, as in the case of dispute between villagers and the government's greening policy (Sanyal and Rao 2018). In some instances, *gram sabhas* also serve as spaces for villages to demand that local officials speak in terms that people with no formal education can understand, therefore improving people's access to critical information (Sanyal and Rao 2018). Like Sanyal and Rao, Katiman (2021) finds that, despite the limits of these village assemblies, they are useful in holding local officials accountable compared with top-down, state-centred approaches to decision making. Meanwhile, other studies find factors that reduce

inequalities in voice. In India, there is evidence that women tend to speak up and get a response when the village assembly's president is a woman, which can signal openings for reform when designing the leadership structure of these forums (Parthasarathy, Rao and Palaniswamy 2019). These achievements may seem mundane and far from initiating transformative governance practices, but they nevertheless cultivate patterns of behaviour that build citizens' confidence in taking part in formal political discourse and decision making.

3.3.3. Participatory budgeting

Participatory budgeting empowers citizens to decide how to spend a part of the government's budget. It is one of the most globally recognizable examples of citizen engagement, with over 1,700 local governments in at least 40 countries implementing this democratic innovation (Cabannes 2015).

Given its wide application, the design features of participatory budgeting vary across the world (Wampler, McNulty and Touchton 2021). In its original formulation in Porto Alegre in Brazil, decision-making power is shared with citizens elected as 'participatory budgeting delegates', empowered to approve the final budget before sending it to the mayor and legislative chamber for approval. In other places, participatory budgeting is used for project implementation (instead of budget allocation) by giving deprived communities small grants to fund programmes or services. Some participatory budgeting processes involve citizens only, while others open the process to civil society groups and the private sector. Participatory budgeting has different champions across the world. In Latin America and Europe, left-leaning governments and social movements have been credited as initiators of the process, while in Africa, international organizations and development aid agencies, particularly the World Bank, have been championing such governance innovation (Sintomer et al. 2013). Despite these differences in design, participatory budgeting processes are underpinned by the principles of *voice* (through deliberation among citizens and between citizens and government officials), *vote* (as a mechanism for collective decision making), *social inclusion* (engaging people from diverse backgrounds), *social justice* (prioritization of vulnerable communities) and *oversight* (increasing transparency in the provision of public services) (Wampler, McNulty and Touchton 2021).

In recent years, there has been a growing application of climate-sensitive participatory budgeting to address the impact of climate

Village assemblies have served as spaces for citizens to air their grievances and be heard by elected officials and bureaucrats.

In recent years, there has been a growing application of climate-sensitive participatory budgeting to address the impact of climate change.

change (Restrepo-Mieth et al. 2023). Most cases of ‘green participatory budgeting’ take place on the municipal level, although experiments at the regional and national level have been explored (Cabannes 2021). Yves Cabannes (2021) examined 4,400 cases and found that citizens prioritized six types of projects. Some are focused on building ‘physical’ structures, including projects related to (a) climate adaptation, such as rainwater drainage; (b) climate mitigation, such as reforestation; and (c) both mitigation and adaptation, such as city-wide greening projects. Other projects, meanwhile, focus on ‘soft’ skills or capacity-building—for example, (d) generating awareness and training, such as educational visits to farms; (e) early-warning projects, including emergency warning systems for wildfires; and (f) climate change studies and information systems, including a study on the public’s electricity consumption as a precursor to co-developing solutions on renewable energy. Of the municipalities Cabannes studied, the municipality of Cuenca in Ecuador was found to be the most prolific in climate-sensitive participatory budgeting, with a total of 514 projects, followed by San Pedro Garza García in Mexico with 185 projects.

To assess the climate impacts of participatory budgeting, it is productive to take a long view. Porto Alegre’s story, as documented in Martin Calisto Friant’s study (2019), is instructive. When participatory budgeting was introduced, people’s demands focused on immediate needs, including paving the streets and improving housing, water and sanitation facilities. Such priorities were implemented such that, by 2002, Porto Alegre had near universal coverage of treated water, resulting in the revival of beaches that have become safe for bathing. The sewer network doubled its coverage, while the city’s solid waste management—developed through the collaboration of citizens and the scavengers’ association—has become one of the best in the world (Bortoleto and Hanaki 2007). Such citizen-driven investments in basic services have radically transformed the well-being of Porto Alegre’s residents, with marked improvements in child mortality and life expectancy. Improvements have also extended to Porto Alegre’s environmental conditions. The city prides itself on being one of Brazil’s greenest cities, with ‘14 square meters of green space per person and a million trees along its streets’ (Menegat 2002: 181). Thirty per cent of the city is allocated to green space, with a third of this space declared as protected areas to sustain high levels of biodiversity. Indeed, Porto Alegre’s story demonstrates the impact of long-term citizen involvement that is deeply embedded in government processes of decision making and implementation.

There are many lessons from the success stories of participatory budgeting, but it is important to have measured expectations of what such democratic innovation can achieve. Some find participatory budgeting an institution that is vulnerable to politicization to advance partisan goals instead of promoting good governance (Goldfrank and Schneider 2006). Others question the extent to which participatory budgeting benefits the poorest communities or people most deeply affected by climate change. A study in Solo, Indonesia, for example, found that villages with more households below the poverty line tend to receive fewer infrastructure projects per capita via participatory budgeting. The issue, the study finds, is not the politicization of participatory budgeting but the exclusion of the poorest communities in the proposal phase (Grillos 2017). Low-income members of the community are less likely to put forward a proposal because the opportunity cost of participating in such an intensive form of participation—compared with voting—is too high (Grillos 2017). And then there is the question of impact. The number of approved projects related to climate change varies across contexts. In Cuenca, Ecuador, 77 per cent of prioritized projects were implemented, while only 27 per cent were implemented in Luhwindja in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Cabannes 2021). Various factors account for the uneven implementation of prioritized projects, including the complexity of the project ('soft' projects are easier to implement, for example), as well as the capacity of participatory budgeting staff and the political commitment of politicians in office. Overall, the literature on participatory budgeting suggests that this democratic innovation can do more to transform power structures and relationships between local government and citizens, but it has an established record of improving the provision and maintenance of basic services because of oversight and control by local communities (Cabannes 2015).

3.4. DELIBERATION IN CLAIMED SPACES

Key takeaways

- Activists, grassroots movements and civil society groups have crafted alternative spaces for deliberation and decision making outside institutionalized spaces of the state, to generate alternative visions for the future and prefigure deliberative practices that lead to climate action.
- As with invited spaces, claimed spaces fall short of realizing full inclusion due to entrenched inequalities.

Claimed spaces refer to extra-institutional forums for deliberation created by grassroots movements, activists and civil society actors. One motivation for claiming spaces for deliberation is the view that political elites have co-opted deliberations in invited spaces or forums constructed by the state and have not been successful in distributing decision-making powers to citizens. Some consider claimed spaces to be forums for discussion that ‘prefigure’ deliberative democracy where shared visions for alternative futures and strategies for action are decided based on equal, rigorous and sustained discussions (Curato 2021). Community assemblies and people-driven approaches are some examples of claimed spaces.

‘Community assemblies’ refer to participatory mechanisms associated with Indigenous tradition.

3.4.1. Community assemblies

This section uses the term ‘community assemblies’ to refer to participatory mechanisms associated with the Indigenous tradition, where members fully participate in deliberations and decision making on matters that affect their community. The precise mechanisms in which these assemblies operate depend on the context and legal arrangements that vary across countries. For illustrative purposes, this section focuses on community assemblies practised in Oaxaca, Mexico, where the Indigenous community of Capulálpam de Méndez is located.

As discussed in section 3.3, state-led participatory mechanisms, especially on the topic of natural resource governance, are criticized for being at best tokenistic, if not in fact actually working against the interests of marginalized communities. The same critique is made against the Mexican Government, where invited spaces for political participation are accused of having a ‘pro-extractivist bias’ when

seeking to incorporate Indigenous voices in national development agendas (Torres-Wong and Jimenez-Sandoval 2022: 2).

Customary institutions like community assemblies play a role in resisting extractive industries. Marcela Torres-Wong and Adrian Jimenez-Sandoval conducted fieldwork in Oaxaca and found community assemblies to be the 'deliberative institution par excellence in the rural world' (Torres-Wong and Jimenez-Sandoval 2022: 6). These assemblies serve as a deliberative enclave in Indigenous resource governance where only community members are allowed to deliberate and reach a consensus on whether to accept or reject extractive projects. External actors, such as companies, national stakeholders and politicians, are not allowed in this space.

These assemblies are effective at generating a strong community position on natural resource extraction. Industries such as mining companies have a record of fragmenting Indigenous communities by stirring disputes and forging deals with members who want to benefit from extractive projects. The community assembly serves as a mechanism for discussing the different interests of community members, such as those who see mega-projects as a threat to their land and resources, and those who want to benefit from the jobs and infrastructure that come with the entry of extractive industries. The assembly in Oaxaca reached a consensus to take an anti-mining stance, which, in turn, resulted in the community building alliances with state agencies and neighbouring communities to develop sustainable economic opportunities. As part of a wider study by Zaremberg et al. (2018), Torres-Wong and Jimenez-Sandoval found that community assemblies have a 'positive correlation with the deterrence of extractive projects' (Torres-Wong and Jimenez-Sandoval 2022: 2).

Community assemblies may be effective spaces for deliberation, but these spaces are far from faultless. Torres-Wong and Jimenez-Sandoval documented testimonies of women shamed in community assemblies for demanding community participation and being accused of disrupting the community's hierarchy. Others protested the silencing of pro-mining voices from nearby communities who benefited from working for a Canadian mining company. These examples, among others, demonstrate that community assemblies also enforce their own hierarchies, which warrants critique and reflection.

Community assemblies may enforce their own hierarchies, which warrants critique and reflection.

3.4.2. Integrated people-driven approach to disaster risk reduction

The United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015) emphasizes the importance of people-centred approaches in mitigating and addressing disaster impacts. People-centred approaches range from crowdsourcing to citizen science, with each approach presenting varying degrees of citizen participation (Wolff 2021). This is a critical intervention in setting global standards for post-disaster recovery. Disasters can leave societies vulnerable to strong-handed state responses, such as forced evictions of communities from disaster-prone areas or the deployment of the military to use harsh tactics to maintain social order (Curato 2018). A global framework that emphasizes people-centred approaches creates momentum for local leaders, civil society groups, volunteers and disaster-affected communities to assert their right to craft the blueprint for their own recovery.

One example of a radically inclusive and deliberative approach to disaster risk reduction is an integrated people-driven approach.

One example of a radically inclusive and deliberative approach to disaster risk reduction is an integrated people-driven approach. This approach was most evident in the Philippines in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, which, at that time, was considered the world's strongest storm, leaving 7,000 people dead and 11 million homeless. In the aftermath of the typhoon, urban poor community organizers, Catholic organizations and local church groups built a consortium to develop an in-city relocation programme for more than 500 disaster-affected households in Tacloban City—the epicentre of the storm. They mobilized disaster-affected communities to engage in a series of deliberations about building climate-resilient homes and sustainable livelihood programmes. With the guidance of Urban Poor Associates—an experienced group of community organizers—disaster-affected residents set up committees to identify shared problems, deliberate and decide on all matters related to their relocation. Community members served as both decision makers and implementers of the project. They decided on every facet of the housing project, from choosing the materials to build their homes to considering options for installing renewable energy sources. They implemented the project themselves, with some community members constructing the houses and others handling procurement, accounting and attending livelihood training programmes (Reyes 2018). This initiative took place outside the state's official agenda of relocating coastal communities from the city to the foot of the mountains and instead was driven by a network of religious organizations and community organizers. While community organizers maintained a collaborative relationship with the state so

that they could secure infrastructure projects like roads and school buildings, this project built an alternative space governed by norms of deliberation and inclusive decision making, informed by the principles of the 'right to the city' (Harvey 2015).

This approach is not without weaknesses (Curato 2018). Some members of the community dropped out of the project as they found the meetings time-consuming and incompatible with the demands of household work and earning a living. Others preferred to take the offer of the government to relocate outside the city, as this was the more expedient option for housing. Deliberative and participatory approaches take time and this integrated housing programme took years to complete. Nevertheless, community organizers considered their investment in time and effort worth the outcome, as practices of participatory and deliberative governance continue to be implemented by the community today.

3.5. LESSONS FOR CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES

This chapter provided an overview of citizen deliberation practices in the Global South. It started by challenging the narrative that citizen deliberation emerged from the West and must be exported to the rest of the world to ramp up climate action. Instead, this chapter provided a counter-narrative that established deliberation as a practice rooted in various societies historically and in contemporary times. It provided paradigmatic examples of citizen deliberation that have been institutionalized by the state, as well as in spaces claimed by activists, grassroots movements and civil society actors. This chapter portrayed the vibrancy of innovations and long-established traditions in democratic deliberation in the Global South from which the Global North can take inspiration.

Aside from characterizing the structures of citizen deliberation in the Global South, this chapter also identified some of their shortcomings in realizing the principles of deliberative democracy. Many of these shortcomings have not been addressed by design tweaks or ad-hoc responses by state actors or civil society groups, because many of these shortcomings stem from the broader societal structures of inequality in which these innovations are embedded.

First, citizen deliberation in invited and claimed spaces has demonstrated the limits of inclusion. Some of these processes ended

Many of the shortcomings stem from the broader societal structures of inequality in which these innovations are embedded.

up amplifying the voices of village elites, as in the case of village assemblies in Indonesia, while others were vulnerable to partisanship, as in the case of participatory budgeting. Claimed spaces may also reinforce gender hierarchies, as in the case of Mexico's community assemblies, and exclude people who are time-poor, as in the case of the people-driven recovery programme in the Philippines.

Second, citizen deliberation is a demanding form of participation that requires epistemic and political capacity for everyday people. Information given in public hearings is often inaccessible to people with no formal training in reading technical documents. Participatory budgeting is most useful for communities that have the capacity to self-organize and propose programmes for funding, while lower-income communities with weaker organizational capacity are often left out.

Are climate assemblies at risk of these shortcomings, too? Can their design features overcome some of the structural barriers to inclusion and deliberation? What complementary or disruptive role can climate assemblies play in the participatory ecology of countries from the Global South? The next chapter seeks to answer these questions.

REFERENCES: CHAPTER 3

- Bawole, J. N., 'Public hearing or "hearing public"? An evaluation of the participation of local stakeholders in environmental impact assessment of Ghana's Jubilee Oil Fields', *Environmental Management*, 52/2 (2013), pp. 385–97, <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00267-013-0086-9>>
- Bortoleto, A. P. and Hanaki, K., 'Report: Citizen participation as a part of integrated solid waste management: Porto Alegre case', *Waste Management & Research*, 25/3 (2007), pp. 276–82, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0734242X07079204>>
- Cabannes, Y., 'The impact of participatory budgeting on basic services: Municipal practices and evidence from the field', *Environment and Urbanization*, 27/1, (2015), pp. 257–84, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0956247815572297>>
- , 'Contributions of participatory budgeting to climate change adaptation and mitigation: Current local practices around the world and lessons from the field', *Environment and Urbanization*, 33/2 (2021), pp. 356–75, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/09562478211021710>>
- Calisto Friant, M., 'Deliberating for sustainability: Lessons from the Porto Alegre experiment with participatory budgeting', *International Journal of Urban Sustainable Development*, 11/1 (2019), pp. 81–99, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/19463138.2019.1570219>>
- Curato, N., 'From authoritarian enclave to deliberative space: Governance logics in post-disaster reconstruction', *Disasters*, 42/4 (2018), pp. 635–54, <<https://doi.org/10.1111/disa.12280>>
- , 'The Philippines: An uneven trajectory of deliberative democracy', in B. He, M. Breen and J. Fishkin (eds), *Deliberative Democracy in Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2021), <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003102441-8>>
- Datta, P. K., 'Exploring the dynamics of deliberative democracy in rural India: Lessons from the working of gram sabhas in India and gram sansads in West Bengal', *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, 65/1 (2019), pp. 117–35, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0019556118814937>>
- Delina, L. L., 'Topographies of coal mining dissent: Power, politics, and protests in southern Philippines', *World Development*, 137 (2021), 105194, <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.105194>>
- Dilay, A., Diduck, A. P. and Patel, K., 'Environmental justice in India: A case study of environmental impact assessment, community engagement and public interest litigation', *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal*, 38/1 (2020), pp. 16–27, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14615517.2019.1611035>>
- Gandhi, M. K., *Village Swaraj* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1962), <https://www.mkgandhi.org/ebks/village_swaraj.pdf>, accessed 25 April 2024
- Goldfrank, B. and Schneider, A., 'Competitive institution building: The PT and participatory budgeting in Rio Grande do Sul', *Latin American Politics and Society*, 48/3 (2006), pp. 1–31, <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-2456.2006.tb00354.x>>
- Grillos, T., 'Participatory budgeting and the poor: Tracing bias in a multi-staged process in Solo, Indonesia', *World Development*, 96 (2017), pp. 343–58, <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2017.03.019>>

- Harvey, D., 'The right to the city', in R. T. LeGates and F. Stout (eds), *The City Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 314–22, <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315748504-46>>
- He, B. and Wagenaar, H., 'Authoritarian deliberation revisited', *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 19/4 (2018), pp. 622–29, <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1468109918000257>>
- He, B. and Warren, M. E., 'Authoritarian deliberation: The deliberative turn in Chinese political development', *Perspectives on Politics*, 9/2 (2011), pp. 269–89, <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592711000892>>
- Heller, P., 'Democracy in the Global South', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 48 (2022), pp. 463–84, <<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-030320-123449>>
- Katiman, K., 'Village Governance and Deliberative Democracy: Examining Empowered Deliberative Forums in Rural Villages, Indonesia', doctoral dissertation, Australian National University (2021)
- Keane, J., *The Shortest History of Democracy* (Collingwood: Black, Inc., 2022)
- Ma, D. and Hsu S.-C., 'The political consequences of deliberative democracy and electoral democracy in China: An empirical comparative analysis from four counties', *China Review*, 18/2 (2018), pp. 1–32, <https://cup.cuhk.edu.hk/chinesepress/journal/CR18.2/CR18.2_1-31.pdf>, accessed 15 April 2024
- Menegat, R., 'Participatory democracy and sustainable development: Integrated urban environmental management in Porto Alegre, Brazil', *Environment and Urbanization*, 14/2 (2002), pp. 181–206, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/095624780201400215>>
- Neto, P. B. and Mallett, A., 'Public participation in environmental impact assessment processes through various channels—Can you listen to us now? Lessons from a Brazilian mining case', *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 13 (2023), <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2022.101186>>
- Niu, P. and Wagenaar, H., 'The limits of authoritarian rule: Policy making and deliberation in urban village regeneration in China', *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 19/4 (2018), pp. 678–93, <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1468109918000294>>
- Parthasarathy, R., Rao, V. and Palaniswamy, N., 'Deliberative democracy in an unequal world: A Text-As-Data study of south India's village assemblies', *American Political Science Review*, 113/3 (2019), pp. 623–40, <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055419000182>>
- Pogrebinschi, T., *Innovating Democracy? The Means and Ends of Citizen Participation in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), <<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108690010>>
- Rao, V. and Walton, M., 'Culture and public action: Relationality, equality of agency and development', in V. Rao and M. Walton (eds), *Culture and Public Action: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on Development Policy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), <<https://doi.org/10.1596/0-8047-4787-3>>
- Rattani, V., *Coping with Climate Change: An Analysis of India's National Action Plan on Climate Change* (New Delhi: Centre for Science and Environment, 2018), <https://cdn.cseindia.org/attachments/0.55359500_1519109483_coping-climate-change-NAPCC.pdf>, accessed 25 March 2024

- Restrepo-Mieth, A., Perry, J., Garnick, J. and Weisberg, M., 'Community-based participatory climate action', *Global Sustainability*, 6/14 (2023), pp. 1–6, <<https://doi.org/10.1017/sus.2023.12>>
- Reyes, R. O., 'Pope Francis Village serves as "model" for Yolanda housing', *Sunstar*, 12 November 2018, <<https://www.sunstar.com.ph/tacloban/local-news/pope-francis-village-serves-as-model-for-yolanda-housing>>, accessed 25 March 2024
- Sani, M. A. M. and Hara, A. B. E., 'Deliberative democracy in Malaysia and Indonesia: A comparison' (2007), <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237620648_Deliberative_Democracy_in_Malaysia_and_Indonesia_A_Comparison>, accessed 25 March 2024
- Sanyal, P. and Rao, V., *Oral Democracy: Deliberation in Indian Village Assemblies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), <<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139095716>>
- Sareen, S. and Nathan, I., 'Under what conditions can local government nurture Indigenous people's democratic practice? A case study of two Ho village assemblies in Jharkhand', *The Journal of Development Studies*, 54/8 (2018), pp. 1354–73, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2017.1329523>>
- Sintomer, Y., Herzberg, C., Allegretti, G., Röcke, A. and Alves, M. L., *Participatory Budgeting Worldwide*, Dialog Global No. 25 (Bonn: Engagement Global and Service Agency Communities in One World, 2013), <https://skew.engagement-global.de/files/2_Mediathek/Mediathek_Microsites/SKEW_EN/Publications/Dialog%20Global/skew_dialog_global_no25_participatory_budgeting_study.pdf>, accessed 25 March 2024
- Torres-Wong, M. and Jimenez-Sandoval, A., 'Indigenous resource governance as an alternative to mining: Redefining the boundaries of Indigenous participation', *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 9 (2022), 101001, <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2021.101001>>
- Wampler, B., McNulty, S. and Touchton, M., *Participatory Budgeting in Global Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), <<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192897756.001.0001>>
- Williamson, A. and Fung, A., 'Public deliberation: Where we are and where can we go?', *National Civic Review*, 93/4 (2004), pp. 3–15, <<https://doi.org/10.1002/ncr.66>>
- Wolff, E., 'The promise of a "people-centred" approach to floods: Types of participation in the global literature of citizen science and community-based flood risk reduction in the context of the Sendai Framework', *Progress in Disaster Science*, 10 (2021), 100171, <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pdisas.2021.100171>>
- Zaremborg, G., Guarneros-Meza, V., Flores-Ivich, G. and Róo Rubí, M., *Conversando con Goliat: Participación, movilización y represión en torno a conflictos neoextractivistas y ambientales* [Conversing with Goliath: Participation, mobilization and repression around neo-extractivist and environmental conflicts], 2018, <https://e71a4bd2-e242-48ec-ba9b-625aa3426522.filesusr.com/ugd/1b04d5_d52507bdf51442a0a36eaf228a99f565.pdf>, accessed 25 March 2024

Chapter 4

CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Nicole Curato

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in implementing climate assemblies in societies most deeply affected by climate change.

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in implementing climate assemblies in societies most deeply affected by climate change. Although there are a range of institutionalized and extra-institutional mechanisms in place for citizen deliberation in the Global South (Chapter 3), climate assemblies posit new opportunities to deepen citizen participation in catalysing climate action.

This chapter introduces climate assemblies in the Global South. It begins in section 4.2 by identifying the design features and added value of climate assemblies compared with established forms of citizen deliberation, such as public hearings, village assemblies and participatory budgeting. Section 4.3 provides an inventory of climate assemblies that have been completed or are being rolled out in the Global South. Using information from Participedia, LATINNO and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) databases, this section maps emerging patterns in the design features, governance mechanisms and impacts of these assemblies. The final section, section 4.4, maps emerging debates and lessons from the theory and practice of climate assemblies—and citizen deliberation more broadly—in the Global South. Various case studies are presented in boxes to ground the insights presented throughout the chapter.

Overall, this chapter considers climate assemblies as potent tools for inclusive and informed policymaking and implementation of programmes related to climate change, but notes that these assemblies must be deeply embedded within the wider political and social context to secure meaningful and sustainable impact (Bussu et al. 2022). It argues that climate assemblies in Europe may serve as an inspiration but not a template for climate assemblies in the Global South. Climate assemblies in various contexts serve different purposes, are promoted by different actors and generate diverse outcomes.

4.2. WHY CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES?

Key takeaways

- Climate assemblies deepen climate governance by introducing a new approach to governance that directly involves everyday citizens in policymaking.
- Climate assemblies empower people to consider trade-offs, generate informed judgement and co-develop mutually acceptable outcomes.
- Climate assemblies can transform demands from protests to actionable policy recommendations.

Climate assemblies share similar design features with various forms of citizen deliberation. Like public hearings, climate assemblies provide information for everyday citizens to consider as they assess policy options. Like participatory budgeting, climate assemblies challenge citizens to weigh and prioritize recommendations after listening to a range of views. And, like village assemblies, climate assemblies seek to hold political elites accountable by exerting political pressure on climate action.

What sets climate assemblies apart from established forms of citizen participation? What is the added value of climate assemblies in sparking climate action in participatory contexts that already seek to give voice to everyday citizens?

Citizens' assemblies are a form of direct deliberative democracy where everyday citizens speak *with* each other instead of citizens being *spoken for* by their representatives.

4.2.1. Climate assemblies democratize climate governance by directly involving everyday citizens in policymaking

Chapter 3 established the practices of deliberation in claimed and invited spaces in the Global South. Typically, these practices of deliberation involve elected representatives (as in the case of village councils in India and participatory budgeting in Brazil), organized groups and activist organizations (as in the case of people-led recovery in the Philippines), or self-selected participants (as in the case of public hearings). Climate assemblies have a distinctive approach to inclusion. As discussed in Chapter 2, participants in citizens' assemblies⁴ (called assembly members) are recruited through stratified random selection or democratic lotteries to form a microcosm of society, as part of which they are then tasked to deliberate on one or more issues to generate a collective statement or a set of recommendations (Curato et al. 2021). Citizens' assemblies are a form of direct deliberative democracy where everyday citizens speak *with* each other to address matters of common concern instead of citizens being *spoken for* by their representatives (elected or self-appointed).

This distinctive design of climate assemblies can democratize climate governance in the Global South in two ways.

First, climate assemblies extend democratization initiatives outwards, via decentralization, where agenda-setting and policymaking powers are shared not just with local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), businesses and civil society groups but also with everyday citizens (Vlahos 2024). One of the common critiques of decentralization in the Global South is its unintended consequence of entrenching the dominance of local elites (Mattingly 2016). Political elites instrumentalize their relationship with NGOs and businesses who have been given the role of selecting and providing public services through clientelist strategies that build political elites' electoral base, while presenting themselves as champions of democratic reforms (Porio 2017). Citizens' assemblies hold the potential to overcome vulnerabilities to co-optation of citizen participation. Apart from sortition, rotation is a key feature of citizens' assemblies (Owen and Smith 2018). Membership in citizens' assemblies is typically limited to a one-off process lasting three days to a dozen weekends and is rotated within the community

4 This chapter uses the term 'citizens' assemblies' to refer to processes of citizen engagement that use sortition and random selection. The term 'climate assemblies' is used to refer to citizens' assemblies specifically focusing on the topic of climate change.

through a civic lottery. The limited length of an assembly member's term lessens their vulnerability from local elites building a clientelist relationship. It may also reduce the risk of concentrating power to a handful of active and organized citizens as, in principle, everyone in the community has a fair shot of being selected for succeeding citizens' assemblies instead of relying on 'the usual suspects' in citizen participation.

Second, climate assemblies are investments in human capital. Typically, investments in human capital are directed towards educational campaigns on climate resilience and community empowerment programmes that build NGOs' and civil society actors' capacity to develop community-based adaptation strategies (Khan, Mfitumukiza and Huq 2021). Investing in climate assemblies can be seen as an extension of, if not a necessary complement to, such investments in human capital. Citizens' assemblies are a resource-intensive form of citizen participation. Part of the cost of running citizens' assemblies is financial compensation to assembly members to lower the barrier to participation. Investment is also directed at hiring trained facilitators, who keep assembly members focused on the task at hand while enforcing norms of deliberation, as well as experts who translate complex information into accessible language to inform citizens' deliberations. These investments set climate assemblies apart from, for example, public hearings, where citizens are left alone to peruse complex information. Scholarly research on citizens' assemblies (and deliberative mini-publics more broadly) has demonstrated the power of these forums in developing capacities for perspective-taking, reflective political reasoning, cognitive complexity, open-mindedness and political efficacy (Knobloch, Barthel and Gastil 2020; Muradova 2021; Fishkin et al. 2017).

Building communities' deliberative capacities is critical, especially in contexts where citizens are faced with intractable conflict and deep division. Deliberation, as John Dryzek argues, provides an 'effective democratic way' to dispel instability, arbitrariness and civil conflict, which put countries undergoing democratic transition or consolidation at risk of backsliding to dictatorship (Dryzek 2009: 1392). In Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, an agenda-setting citizens' assembly was held to empower citizens to identify shared concerns as a way to overcome political gridlock across ethnic lines. This approach was instrumental in generating trust among newly elected officials in a city that has not held elections for a long time (Kapidžić and Dejaeghere 2024). Climate assemblies are not a panacea, but they are specifically designed to build everyday

**Climate assemblies
are investments in
human capital.**

Climate assemblies are not a panacea, but they are specifically designed to build everyday people's capacity to dispel disinformation, listen across differences and imagine a shared future together.

people's capacity to dispel disinformation, listen across differences and imagine a shared future together. These capacities are especially relevant as climate impacts such as food and water insecurity can spark social unrest, particularly in urban settings divided along ethnic and sectarian lines (Koren, Bagozzi and Benson 2021; Von Uexkull and Buhaug 2021).

4.2.2. Climate assemblies empower citizens to weigh trade-offs and generate informed judgement to develop mutually acceptable outcomes

Policies related to climate action involve trade-offs. For example, families living by the coast may refuse to leave their ancestral lands, even if this means they are at risk of sea level rise. Some households may be adamant that they will not relocate as this disrupts their social support system and undermines their pride of place, but the intensification of sea level rise in the future, as well as slow-moving disasters, may force households to resettle. This poses a dilemma for policymakers. They are in a difficult position of assessing short-term versus long-term priorities, conflicting interests and clashing values. There are many ways for policymakers to listen to people's preferences. Reading polling data, holding village meetings and reading citizens' feedback on social media are some examples. These avenues may provide a range of citizens' views, but what they do not provide is a sense of citizens' views after they consider evidence, listen to people who hold different views, and reflect on their preferences.

Citizens' assemblies are a potent tool for public engagement, empowering everyday citizens to weigh different considerations before generating collective recommendations. Climate change adaptation strategies do not just need technical interventions but a definition of societal priorities, especially in the context of limited funding. As Maximilian N. Burger and colleagues put it, 'the way people assign importance to certain alternatives, that is, valuation and deliberation, is inherently part of any decision on how to deal with reducing vulnerabilities to hazards to avoid disasters' (Burger et al. 2023: 1). A deliberative experiment in Tanzania demonstrates this point. Tanzania is a low-income democracy that has rich natural gas reserves. To understand how Tanzanian voters prefer to allocate resources from the natural gas reserves, researchers convened a nationally representative sample of Tanzanian voters to take part in a deliberative poll, which entailed measuring people's preferences before and after listening to experts and taking part in small-group deliberations. Before taking part in deliberations, researchers

found that the participants had a wish list of spending priorities for natural gas reserves. Participants ‘wanted natural gas to pay for everything’—producing cheaper energy, saving the revenues for future generations, investing in infrastructure and financing cash transfers (Sandefur et al. 2022: 589). Deliberation changed this. Researchers found deliberation (not just gaining new information from experts) ‘heightened respondents’ appreciation for trade-offs’ (Sandefur et al. 2022: 589). Participants retained their strong preference to spend the gas revenues, but their preferences prioritized social sector spending on health and education instead of infrastructure and cash transfers. This example demonstrates the potential of a citizens’ assembly in supporting communities to rank the order of their recommendations instead of turning over a ‘wish list’ to policymakers. This provides policymakers with a unique insight into a community’s priorities, which, in turn, can inform the allocation of scarce resources.

4.2.3. Climate assemblies provide the avenue to transform protest demands into actionable recommendations

Democracies in the Global South face two related challenges: protecting spaces for ‘popular demand-making’ and developing processes that allow citizens to coordinate those demands and translate them into state action (Heller 2022: 474). Protests are typical avenues for the former, while citizens’ assemblies can serve as a forum to do the latter.

Lebanon is a case in point. People’s grievances about repeated power cuts sparked widespread protests. This led academics and civil society groups to form the Citizens’ Assembly on Electricity and Energy Justice (see Box 4.1). Lebanon’s case demonstrates the ways in which a citizens’ assembly creates a civic space that goes beyond street protests to facilitate informed and careful thinking about energy futures (Shehabi and Al-Masri 2022). It challenged technocratic gatekeepers, who hold influence in policymaking, by giving everyday citizens the opportunity to craft ‘people-centred visions of what is feasible, possible and desirable, particularly when future imaginaries are constrained by state retrenchment and bleak political realities’ (Shehabi and Al-Masri 2022: 2). More than providing a list of impossible demands, assembly members put forward recommendations based on a ‘politically realistic outlook’ (Shehabi and Al-Masri 2022: 10). Unlike experts who proposed a 50 per cent renewable energy target, the assembly proposed a lower target of 26 per cent (Shehabi and Al-Masri 2022). Assembly members recognized the lack of state capacity to realize ambitious targets and so they provided alternative recommendations, such as taking a

Citizens’ assemblies are a potent tool for public engagement.

Citizens' assemblies can serve as space to revisit, critique, build on and synthesize demands made in protests, co-construct shared imaginaries for climate futures and generate plausible plans of action.

circular approach that connected solutions to the problems of food, water, waste and energy.

This example illustrates the synergy between protests and deliberation. As Ricardo Mendonça and Selen Ercan argue, 'contentious politics do not necessarily stand in opposition to the idea of deliberative democracy' (Mendonça and Ercan 2015: 267). Citizens' assemblies can serve as space to revisit, critique, build on and synthesize demands made in protests, co-construct shared imaginaries for climate futures and generate plausible plans of action. Citizens' assemblies may be resource-intensive exercises, but as in the case of democratic institutions such as elections, referendums and open government bodies, their effective administration requires investment.

Box 4.1. Citizens' assemblies as spaces for nurturing political imaginaries in Beirut, Lebanon

By Muzna Al-Masri

Citizens' assemblies, particularly in periods of crisis and instability, allow for the articulation of a political imaginary that centres people's perspective and traces the way forward. This is a key lesson learned from the Citizens' Assembly on Electricity and Energy Justice convened in Lebanon in 2020, and a testament to the value of this form of deliberation in learning and imagining alternative and possible realities within community and activist spaces and claiming political voice. This is a key political contribution even if a climate assembly's recommendations are not formally carried forward by policymakers and state institutions.

In October and November 2020, the pilot Citizens' Assembly on Electricity and

Energy Justice was conducted in the Hamra neighbourhood of Beirut, Lebanon, by the RELIEF Centre, along with its partner the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut. The citizens' assembly was convened for five sessions over three days and was attended by a total of 34 participants (21 men and 13 women). The citizens' assembly benefited from existing research about the neighbourhood implemented by the RELIEF Centre, which also aided stratified sampling for a process of open and flexible assembly member recruitment (rather than strict sortition). As it was convened during the Covid-19 pandemic, it was a hybrid event and sessions where members physically met and deliberated were interwoven with discussion on

Box 4.1. Citizens' assemblies as spaces for nurturing political imaginaries in Beirut, Lebanon (cont.)

WhatsApp groups, sharing of recorded expert presentations and online meetings.

The citizens' assembly in Beirut was implemented as a pilot or in better words as 'a conceptual and methodological experiment' at an emergent political moment (Shehabi et al. 2021: 2). In parallel with the protests that started in October 2019, an active political discussion was already under way in public squares and among political activists. Energy had its fair share in these discussions and protests, given Lebanon's long-standing load shedding and mismanagement of the sector, but the conversation was still led by a handful of technical experts with little feedback from the popular base. In planning the event, the organizers hoped that the citizens' assembly would offer space for an inclusive dialogue between citizens, technical experts and policymakers. They hoped that a technically viable solution responsive to citizens' needs would transpire through deliberation and would be too difficult for policy and decision makers to ignore, particularly as it could be pushed forward by the protest movement. The key themes set for the citizens' assembly to contribute to were: a contextualized understanding of energy justice, the energy mix that it aspires to, and the role of communities in achieving that mix. Yet before the assembly could convene, political opposition had waned, as the regime and its corrupt ruling elite proved their resilience, and Covid-19 measures and the August 2020 explosion exhausted the remaining power of a divided political movement.

Clearly, the political will to implement the recommendations of a citizens' assembly is crucial to its success. A key learning from the Beirut citizens' assembly is the confirmation that an assembly is, first and foremost, a political forum, not a technical innovation or community consultation space. The visions that a citizens' assembly allows and the recommendations it produces need the political agency to carry them forward, be it the lobbying and pressure of a political movement or the will of a dutiful elite. Neither of these materialized and the recommendations were not carried forward.

Yet what we learned from this experience is that the impact of the citizens' assembly is not limited to its effect on state institutions, especially when authoritarian governments refuse to engage with and listen to people's demands. The citizens' assembly in Lebanon opened up a political imaginary, which centred people's perspective and their political scepticism and spoke to a techno solutionist imaginary, as well as the privatization agenda. As a result, the deliberation in the citizens' assembly still proved politically pertinent and deepened our and the experts' understanding of the political—as being not only about policy and action but also about a praxis of hope and solidarity and nurturing visions of a possible new world at opaque and turbulent periods. Three years now since the citizens' assembly convened, the political scepticism that the members voiced proves more valid than ever, and the vision they traced appears the only pertinent and viable one in practice.

4.3. DESIGN FEATURES, GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS AND IMPACT OF CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Key takeaways

- The design of citizens' assemblies in the Global South typically recruits people through stratified random selection.
- The forum lasts two to six days, with the majority taking place in person.
- Urban planning is one of the most popular topics of deliberation.
- Academic institutions, deliberative democracy networks, international development and aid agencies, and philanthropic organizers drive the growth of citizens' assemblies.
- Outputs take the form of recommendations or a report outlining participants' policy preferences before and after the deliberation.
- Capacity building is the main impact of these forums.

There are various forums for citizen deliberation in the Global South that combine sortition with deliberation and collective decision making. Deliberative polling, consensus conferences and citizens' assemblies are some examples. While there are differences between the specific design features of each of these forums, this section follows the approach from the Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies (KNOCA), which is to use the phrase 'citizens' assemblies' in broad terms to refer to all processes of citizen deliberation that combine sortition and deliberation.

Based on the Participedia and LATINNO databases, there have been nine 'climate assemblies' in the Global South—citizens' assemblies specifically convened to address concerns related to the climate crisis. Three of these assemblies were in the Maldives, one in Brazil, and a region-wide assembly took place in four Latin American cities. To broaden the scope of the study, citizens' assemblies that cover topics related to environmental issues were included in the database search (see Table 4.1).

Among the emerging trends in design features were:

- **Recruitment.** Participants or assembly members were selected through stratified random selection. The number of assembly members ranged from 15 to 480.

- **Duration.** The forum typically lasted between two and six days. Most meetings took place over consecutive days, while others were spread over a few weeks. The length of these assemblies is comparable to the average length of citizens' juries and consensus conferences in OECD countries, which is four days, as opposed to the average length of citizens' assemblies in OECD countries, which is 18 days.
- **Venue.** Most assemblies took place in person. Only one took place online and two were a mix of online and offline meetings.
- **Topic.** The topics of deliberation in citizens' assemblies in the Global South were consistent with the topics of deliberation in OECD countries—mostly related to urban planning, climate change, energy, infrastructure and public spending. Topics related to climate change focused on issues relating to water governance, energy justice and pollution, among others.
- **Outputs.** Forums using the format of a citizens' assembly generated policy recommendations or a citizens' statement sent to local government officials, while forums that used the format of a deliberative poll generated a report demonstrating the shift of participants' preferences in terms of policy options.
- **Impacts.** Most reports defined impact as capacity building for assembly members. Participating in a citizens' assembly enhanced participants' sense of political efficacy or empowerment and increased their expectations of the government to take their policy inputs seriously. There is not enough information on the policy impacts of citizens' assemblies.

In terms of governance, citizens' assemblies in the Global South have the following characteristics:

- **Initiators.** Universities and research laboratories drove early versions of citizens' assemblies in partnership with international development and aid agencies. In Latin America, recent experiments in climate assemblies were initiated by members of Democracy R&D—a global network of deliberative democracy practitioners supported by not-for-profit foundations and philanthropic organizations.

Table 4.1. Citizens' assemblies in the Global South

Title or type of mechanism	Location, date, length and size	Aim	Organizers
Deliberative poll	Bududa, Uganda 7–8 July 2014 2 days, 201 people	Provide policy input on environmental disasters and increased population pressures	Makerere University; Stanford University (Centre for Deliberative Democracy)
Deliberative poll	Butaleja, Uganda 9–10 July 2014 2 days 217 people	Provide policy input on environmental disasters and increased population pressures	Makerere University; Stanford University (Centre for Deliberative Democracy)
Deliberative poll	Tamale, Ghana 10–11 January 2015 2 days 208 people	Provide policy input on water, sanitation, hygiene, livelihood and food security	West Africa Resilience Innovation Lab; Stanford University (Centre for Deliberative Democracy)
Deliberative poll	Nationwide, Tanzania April 2015 2 days 370 people	Garner citizens' perspectives on the use of natural gas	Research on Poverty Alleviation Programme, Economic Development Initiatives; Stanford University
Deliberative poll	Tivaouane-Peulh, Senegal 24–25 September 2016 2 days 167 people	Provide input for allocating most needed resources to people in town facing rapid urbanization	Cheikh Anta Diop University, West Africa Resilience Innovation Lab; Stanford University
Deci Agua: Deliberación ciudadana sobre el agua (consensus conference)	Nationwide, Uruguay October–November 2016 6 days, over 3 weekends 15 people	Provide input into the draft National Water Plan with a focus on urban governance	Universidad de la República
Deliberative poll	Nsanje District, Malawi 3–4 June 2017 2 days 480 people	Provide input into addressing flooding	South Africa Resilience Innovation Lab, Lilongwe University; Stanford University
Conselho de Cidadãos (Citizens' Council)	Fortaleza, Brazil 26 October–20 December 2019 5 days 40 people	Dealing with waste and making Fortaleza a cleaner city for everyone	Delibera Brasil and newDemocracy Foundation
Citizens' Assembly on Electricity and Energy Justice	Beirut, Lebanon 23–31 October 2020 3 days 34 people	Energy justice and energy futures	RELIEF Centre, Institute for Global Prosperity (IGP) at University College London, with the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut

Funders	Output (public institution involved)	Impact	Lessons learned and sources
USAID	Report turned over to government officials	Policy officials commented on the deliberative polls with positive stances and support towards recommendations.	Significant changes of opinion towards many issues, highlighting the impact of informed deliberation when given the time. https://participedia.net/case/4289 https://www.jstor.org/stable/48563103
USAID	Report turned over to government officials	Policy officials commented on the deliberative polls with positive stances and support towards recommendations.	Significant changes of opinion towards many issues, highlighting the impact of informed deliberation when given the time. https://participedia.net/case/4289
USAID	Policy brief turned over to local government	Policymakers valued the deliberative poll being a voice for citizens and their recommendations and made efforts to implement them, such as dedicating funding to key policy issues.	Deliberation design, particularly around information sharing, is key for success, particularly in contexts where information is shared in different ways and where literacy rates may be low. https://participedia.net/case/4394 https://deliberation.stanford.edu/projects/location/africa/ghana
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie), IGC and IDRC	Outcome was disseminated to 125 people in Dar es Salaam considered to represent the elite, such as civil society organizations, academia, government officials and development bank employees. See Sandefur et al. (2022) for additional details.	Democratic deliberation appears to be the key to changes in policy preferences at the individual level. See Sandefur et al. (2022).	Information alone is not enough to change views on policy; it needs to be coupled with deliberation for meaningful change of perspectives. The change of views happened without the influence of elites or facilitators. https://participedia.net/case/8294 See Sandefur et al. (2022).
USAID	Policy brief turned over to local government	No publicly available information on the impact on policy. Participants valued the process and felt the government would take their recommendations seriously.	It is possible to have effective deliberation in communities with low literacy levels. https://participedia.net/case/8295 https://deliberation.stanford.edu/news/deliberative-polling-tivaouane-peul-senegal
Universidad de la República	Report containing recommendations, which were incorporated into the National Water Plan	Deliberation impacted both framework and tangible proposals of the National Water Plan. It brought ethics to the forefront of the plan, which it was missing before this deliberation. Citizen input was planned for following planned consultations around Uruguay's water management.	Deliberation gave space for citizens to problematize issues contained in the National Water Plan and encourage government to reassess priorities. https://participedia.net/case/7226 https://www.deciagua.uy https://iwaponline.com/wp/article/23/3/487/81768/Citizen-deliberation-in-the-context-of-Uruguay-s
USAID	Participants provided recommendations to government proposals, including support for some and reworking others	Deliberation led to consensus and increased understanding between communities about how to respond to crisis.	Participants highly valued the research team returning to let them know the outcomes of deliberation and requested that others in similar positions do the same. https://participedia.net/case/8297
UN Democracy Fund and newDemocracy Foundation	Report with recommendations presented to government which was formulated into a proposal	Policymakers saw the value of deliberation and were planning more citizens' assemblies on other issues.	People in a polarized environment can come together to agree upon recommendations in response to an issue. https://participedia.net/case/13158 https://latinno.net/en/case/3409
UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Public Engagement, Citizen Science Exploration Grants	Report outlining the Assembly's vision and learning on the process of organizing a citizens' assembly	Demonstrated the potential of citizens' assemblies to provide recommendations to government about energy services, revealing areas where more needs to be done to enhance trust and participation between state and citizens for decision making.	Citizens' assemblies allow for the articulation of a political imaginary that centres people's perspective if efforts are invested in educating the general public in a clear and digestible way; more is needed to eliminate distrust by government towards citizen input in decision making; and more space should be given to participants sharing their lived experience of the issue being deliberated. https://participedia.net/case/7594

Table 4.1. Citizens' assemblies in the Global South (cont.)

Title or type of mechanism	Location, date, length and size	Aim	Organizers	Funders	Output (public institution involved)	Impact	Lessons learned and sources
Citizens' Assembly of Auroville	Auroville, India October 2020–January 2021 41 people before Covid-19 restrictions, 27 people after	Vision and strategy for water	Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research	Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research	Report outlining the assembly's water vision	Participants felt empowered to engage in decision-making processes and valued the skills they learned through participation.	It is important to ensure that enough time and resources are allocated to making information about the issue accessible to all participants, and to have participants from a range of backgrounds take part; needs to be a good balance between informing and deliberating; deliberation needs to be varied and not prioritize one format (e.g. rational); process needs to be responsive and flexible to feedback from participants during deliberation; have a group that is responsible for supporting implementation. https://participedia.net/case/13160 https://caexplorationauroville.files.wordpress.com/2021/07/ca_av_pilot_2020_water-vision_full-report.pdf (see pp. 63–65 for more lessons learned)
Itinerant Citizens' Assembly	Colombia 5–12 December 2020, 9–10 October 2021, 27 May 2023 5 days in total (2 in 2020, 2 in 2021, 1 in 2023) (Periodic deliberation over 3 years, was originally planned for 4 years) 110 people (first assembly) 60 people (second assembly) 70 people (third assembly)	Environment and environmental services, environmental services for cities, mobility (public and private transportation), public space and land use	DemoLab, Laboratorio del Concejo de Bogotá	Bogotá Council	Report identifying 30 challenges and 34 proposals submitted to government	The itinerant design allowed citizens to gain greater experience by participating in more than one assembly. The itinerant model established the idea of 'passing the torch' to the next assembly, which is being replicated in other assemblies in Latin America.	This design is unique as citizens circulate through the assembly at various stages, each assembly building on the previous, to deliberate on issues, recommendations and evaluation. This approach is beneficial for a more complex policy issue that needs more time. https://participedia.net/case/13159 https://latinno.net/en/case/5348
Climate Assembly of Francisco Morato (part of Decidanía programme)	São Paulo, Brazil 8 October–12 November 2022 5 days 40 people	Provide input into how to improve city's sanitation system	Delibera Brasil	National Endowment for Democracy (NED)	Recommendations provided to local government who committed to implementing them (with necessary changes if needed)	A range of participants took part, including elderly, who valued being included in process.	Including a range of people in deliberations enhances the discussion and broadens it. https://participedia.net/case/13161
Climate Assembly of Salvador (part of Decidanía programme)	Salvador, Brazil November–December 2022 6 days 40 people	Input to municipal response to climate change	Delibera Brasil	Joint Environmentalist Parliamentary Front of the City Council/ NED	Report with recommendations submitted to City Council's President and Mayor	Participants felt closer to decision-making process.	Considering this as part of the Decidanía programme, it showed those involved that citizens can deliberate about complex issues and provide appropriate recommendations https://www.buergerrat.de/en/news/brazil-five-citizens-assemblies-in-one-fell-swoop
Citizens' Assembly of Toritama (part of Decidanía programme)	Toritama, Brazil November 2022–February 2023 7 days 27 people	Consider ways to reduce industrial laundry pollution (and aid employment)	Delibera Brasil	National Endowment for Democracy (NED)	Proposals turned over to City Council	Participants saw uniting capability of citizens' assemblies.	A survey was used for participant selection. This was quite useful, as it mitigated the difficulty of not having complete and updated data on the inhabitants (a frequent difficulty in the Global South). https://participedia.net/case/13162
Climate assembly	Addu City, Maldives 26–28 February 2023 3 days 37 people	Generate recommendations on climate action	Ecocare Maldives	National Democratic Institute (NDI)	National Citizens' Manifesto on Environment and Climate Action	No publicly available information as initiative only recently took place.	No publicly available information as initiative only recently took place. https://www.climateassembly.mv/home
Climate assembly	Haa Alif Atoll, Maldives 17–19 June 2023 3 days 50 people invited	Generate recommendations on climate action	Ecocare Maldives	National Democratic Institute (NDI)	National Citizens' Manifesto on Environment and Climate Action	No publicly available information as initiative only recently took place.	No publicly available information as initiative only recently took place. https://www.climateassembly.mv/home
Climate assembly	Malé, Maldives 11–24 November 2023 3 days 50 people invited	Generate recommendations on climate action	Ecocare Maldives	National Democratic Institute (NDI)	National Citizens' Manifesto on Environment and Climate Action	No publicly available information as initiative only recently took place.	No publicly available information as initiative only recently took place. https://www.climateassembly.mv/home

- **Funding.** International development agencies (such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)), universities or research centres, and NGOs funded the citizens' assemblies. Some were jointly funded by local governments, universities and practitioner organizations.
- **Implementing bodies.** Unlike OECD countries, where most processes were implemented by private sector organizations (such as consulting companies specializing in citizen deliberation), most citizens' assemblies in the Global South were run by universities and civil society groups.

These trends demonstrate that climate assemblies in the Global South are in their experimental phase. Universities, research centres and civil society groups are providing a proof of concept that alternative forms of citizen deliberation, particularly ones that use sortition, can deepen climate governance. The next section focuses on key lessons from these assemblies so far.

4.4. EMERGING DEBATES AND PRELIMINARY LESSONS

Key takeaways

- Designing citizens' assemblies can benefit from a North–South conversation about institutional design. Citizens' assemblies are a craft, requiring skilled design and implementation, and not a technocratic fix based on a model that can be transplanted from one context to another.
- Citizens' assemblies are faced with the tension of balancing the need to be embedded in the political contexts in which they occur, so as to generate legitimacy, while also disrupting the power relations that undermine climate action.
- There is evidence to suggest that citizens with just a few years of formal education and little knowledge about climate change are willing and able to take part in citizens' assemblies. The key is in inclusive design and execution.
- There are various ways to assess the impact of a citizens' assembly, including its impact on building citizens' capacity to develop communicative skills in handling climate-related conflict.

As interest in citizens' assemblies in the Global South grows, so do critiques and hesitations. Some see citizens' assemblies as another Western import parachuted into the Global South, oblivious to local contexts and political structures. Others consider climate assemblies a replication of already existing participatory structures, such as village assemblies and participatory budgeting, but find that village assemblies and participatory budgeting have gone much further in institutionalizing empowered grassroots participation (Asenbaum et al. 2024; Missions Publiques 2022). This section maps emerging debates about citizens' assemblies in the Global South, puts together preliminary lessons that funders, process designers, policymakers and civil society groups can consider when planning on convening these forums, and identifies open questions that warrant further investigation.

4.4.1. Citizens' assemblies are a craft, not a technocratic fix

In Western liberal democracies, citizens' assemblies have gained prominence at a time of political deadlocks, disinformation and increasing distrust towards institutions of representative democracy. They have been portrayed as a corrective to those deficiencies, given their track record of depolarizing citizens' views, increasing assembly members' sense of political efficacy, and producing considered judgements that can inform policymaking (Curato et al. 2021). The fields of international development and democracy promotion have started supporting the implementation of citizens' assemblies in the Global South, not only to address similar concerns faced by the Global North but also to address country-specific issues, such as extreme poverty, poor delivery of social services and climate change adaptation. USAID, the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) are among the early promoters of citizens' assemblies in the Global South.

While there is increasing interest in the application of citizens' assemblies outside Europe, concerns have been raised about the extent to which this democratic innovation is promoting a Eurocentric paradigm for citizen engagement, thereby replicating epistemic and political inequalities. There is concern over Europeans taking the role of 'standard-setter' for the application of citizens' assemblies around the world (Nicolaidis and Youngs 2023: 1607), especially in light of the publication of guidebooks and toolkits that set the parameters of what counts as high-quality citizens' assemblies. Lucy J. Parry's (2023) research on deliberative mini-publics is instructive in this regard. Based on over 50 interviews from deliberative democracy's global community of practice, her research found that a number of stakeholders were concerned about the importation

of a standardized design of citizens' assembly, which glosses over contextual nuances and cultural assumptions in different contexts. Some religions, for example, may be averse to using the language of sortition or 'democratic lotteries' when recruiting assembly members because this practice, for some cultures, is akin to gambling. Others consider their community leaders as the rightful representatives of their villages in deliberations and not randomly selected 'everyday people' who have not extensively listened to the grievances of community members. In some contexts, participants prefer to organize small group deliberations along the lines of gender instead of mixing groups with different demographic characteristics. Are societies that are unable to adhere to the sortition plus deliberation formula considered deficient deliberative democracies? Do all citizens' assemblies have to adhere to standards developed in Europe to be a viable form of democratic practice?

The craft of citizens' assemblies entails an honest and transparent assessment of its viability as a democratic practice in a particular context.

There are two related ways to answer these questions. The first is to consider citizens' assemblies as a craft and not a technocratic fix that can be applied in a standard manner to all contexts. As a craft, citizens' assemblies 'require flexibility and adaptation to social, political, economic and institutional circumstances' (Escobar and Henderson 2024: 2). The craft of citizens' assemblies entails an honest and transparent assessment of its viability as a democratic practice in a particular context, depending on its purpose, available resources, safety considerations and institutional support, among other things. It involves mobilizing and nurturing a community of practice that facilitates iterative learning between funders, commissioning authorities, service delivery partners, policymakers and the wider public. The World Health Organization's *Guide to Mini-Publics* also emphasizes the importance of such a community of practice (or a 'project network') that engages key stakeholders in co-developing the purpose of the citizens' assemblies, as well as shared principles and standards of practice against which the success of the citizens' assemblies will be assessed (Escobar and Henderson 2024: 17–18). Instead of being a technocratic, top-down approach to citizen engagement, thinking of citizens' assemblies as a craft foregrounds the virtues of collaboration and collective critical reflection.

The second approach to decentring the European paradigm of citizen engagement is to foster North–South and South–South dialogues about citizens' assemblies. As Kalypso Nicolaidis and Ricard Youngs put it, European institutions, including the democracy promotion community, need to 'reverse the gaze' by asking what it can learn from others' democratic experiences and innovations' (Nicolaidis and Youngs 2023: 1605). One can, for example, facilitate learning

from Ghana's Citizens' Assembly, which demonstrates the value of recognizing the epistemic authority that assembly members accord to everyday people. The learning phase of deliberation did not only feature scientists and experts, which could be intimidating for people with few years of formal education. Instead, participants were shown videos of everyday people that assembly members consider legitimate bearers of knowledge, such as grandmothers and neighbours who provided insights on food security. Meanwhile, facilitators in small group deliberations appealed to the communal identities of participants by addressing them as brothers and sisters instead of foregrounding their civic identities as citizens (Chen 2021). The practice of emphasizing the deep connection between individual assembly members and their families and communities is increasingly practised in the Global North. In Canada, it has become common practice to decentre the individual in the citizens' assembly and, learning from Indigenous practices, invite assembly members to see themselves as grounded to the places where they live and work and, therefore, serve as representatives of their communities.⁵ South–South conversations are also critical. In Latin America, for example, a region-wide climate assembly created shared standards of operation, such as using sortition and deliberation, but each city running a climate assembly had the power to set the design of the programme based on their local needs and contexts (see Box 4.2). Democracy R&D—the global network of deliberative democracy advocates and practitioners—has also started developing a 'living guidebook' on North–South engagement, which defines good practices between funders, commissioning bodies and local practitioners. These are some examples of how the design and practice of citizens' assemblies evolve as global conversations about design and implementation unfold.

4.4.2. Embed citizens' assemblies in the broader political context

Citizens' assemblies are not discrete forums for citizen engagement disconnected from the political system. Instead, effective citizens' assemblies are designed to be embedded in the broader political and societal context in which they take place. There are three ways in which citizens' assemblies can be embedded in the political system (Rountree and Curato 2023), as detailed below.

First, they can contribute to public deliberation by disseminating the assembly's recommendations to policymakers and the broader public. There are various ways of going about this. Some of the

The democracy promotion community needs to 'reverse the gaze' by asking what it can learn from others' democratic experiences and innovations.

⁵ Thank you to Chim Alao and Sarah Jaffe from MASS LBP for sharing this insight at the Democracy R&D's Annual Conference in Copenhagen, 4 October 2023.

Box 4.2. Resurgentes: Climate assemblies in Latin America

By Felipe Rey and Indira Latorre

Resurgentes is the first region-wide climate assembly in Latin America. The project commenced in March 2023 and is anticipated to conclude in November 2024. The Open Society Foundations funded the project.

The primary objective of Resurgentes is to formulate recommendations for climate adaptation in four cities in different countries: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico.

Resurgentes is a multibody assembly, conducting four citizens' assemblies, each possessing unique characteristics but sharing common elements. This innovative approach is inspired by projects such as Decidanía in Brazil, which implemented three deliberative mini-publics to address climate change mitigation in distinct municipalities, and the Itinerant Citizens' Assembly in Bogotá, which involved sequential deliberation across various chapters or assemblies over time.

Organizers in all countries agreed to general design principles. The assembly should have at least 50 members. There should be at least four days of deliberation. All assemblies should focus on how citizens can contribute to advancing climate justice in Latin America.

Beyond these minimum standards, each city has the power to determine other design elements. Each city will cover a different topic related to climate change. So, the city in Mexico is expected to deliberate on urban rivers, Brazil on development and sustainability, and Colombia on solid waste. At the time of writing, Argentina's topic was yet to be defined.

The multinational character of the project, led by a consortium of six organizations, has presented several governance challenges. To tackle these challenges, a governance system was devised, deviating in part from the typical structures observed in national projects. The consortium, featuring centralized and decentralized competencies, instituted a governance body consisting of one representative from each organization. This body assumes a pivotal role in making methodological decisions that have broad implications for the entire project. Despite having a common design in place, many decisions are decentralized, striking a balance between the consortium and the individual organizations involved.

most common ways of contributing to public deliberation are by disseminating the final report of the assembly to journalists, uploading the report online for interested parties to scrutinize, and holding a public event where people can ask assembly members questions about their recommendations. Others, like Climate Assembly UK, live-streamed the proceedings of the assembly on YouTube, while the Maldives Climate Assembly posted short summaries and photos of deliberations on social media. Documentaries, podcasts and short films have also been produced to communicate the outcomes of citizens' assemblies. Reflecting

on their experience organizing the Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis (the Global Assembly), local organizers from Mozambique considered it important for local journalists, such as radio commentators, to be invited to observe the proceedings of the assembly and be tasked to explain the process to the public. This is a critical design feature, as citizens' assemblies are helpful not only in supporting policymakers' decision-making processes but also in enriching the broader deliberations in the public sphere.

Second, citizens' assemblies can invite public deliberation by setting an agenda related to climate policies that have not been the subject of debate in parliament, in municipalities or across the wider public. Instead of limiting deliberations among assembly members selected through sortition, climate assemblies can connect with existing institutions of deliberative engagement, such as village assemblies or public hearings, and use these forums to generate public input that assembly members can consider as they engage in deliberation. Assembly members may also invite submissions from interest and stakeholder groups, political parties and activists to ensure that they consider a range of perspectives in their deliberations. This design feature helps address the concern that citizens' assemblies are displacing the voices of people who have long worked in the area of climate policy (see Boxes 4.3 and 4.4; also Josette 2019; Rey 2022), by creating mechanisms for the assembly to actively listen to a range of voices.

Finally, citizens' assemblies can spark meta-deliberation or a discussion about the governance structures in their respective societies. Advocates of climate assemblies argue that these forums not only 'raise the bar for climate policy' but also introduce a new piece of governance infrastructure 'that explicitly activates *all* citizens as powerful agents of change' (Mellier and Wilson 2023; emphasis added). However, the design features of the climate assembly may not sit well with existing power holders, as well as the wider public. Sortition, for example, may be viewed as a suspicious and opaque way of recruiting participants in a deliberative forum—one that is contrary to norms where household heads or village elders have the unique privilege of speaking in such forums (see Box 4.5). Climate assemblies may enlist the support of traditional leaders, such as religious figures and village leaders, as well as social media influencers, in conveying the value of sortition to various constituencies and seeking out input on how to improve the design of the assembly in line with local norms and values.

Citizens' assemblies are helpful not only in supporting policymakers' decision-making processes but also in enriching the broader deliberations in the public sphere.

Box 4.3. Hard questions on sortition

By Nicole Curato, Felipe Rey and Indira Latorre

There are many ways to go about sortition in practice. Some citizens' assemblies commission market research or polling companies to generate a stratified random sample of the population to be invited to the assembly. In countries like Ireland, where citizens' assemblies have been institutionalized, sortition for citizens' assemblies has become part of the remit of the Electoral Commission. Selecting assembly members through democratic lotteries, however, is not a straightforward process. Here are some hard questions on sortition:

- Sortition is a resource-intensive form of recruitment. How can it be done well with limited resources?
- How can sortition work in contexts with unreliable demographic information?
- Demographic data is a political construct. Can people trust sortition as a recruitment process if the data used as the basis for random selection is politicized or used for racial or religious profiling?
- Is sortition really a fair way of involving citizens in policymaking? Doesn't it create a 'lottocracy' or an unelected elite that deliberates on behalf of others? Where does a sortition body get its legitimacy?
- Does sortition apply cross-culturally? Don't some cultures see 'democratic lotteries' as a form of gambling?
- How can low-trust societies have confidence in sortition if recruitment via random selection happens behind the scenes through polling companies?

While these remain open questions, citizens' assemblies in the Global South have made design adjustments to address these concerns. Due to budgetary constraints, climate assemblies in three municipalities in Brazil resorted to conducting in-person recruitment targeting schools, universities and neighbourhoods instead of conducting massive recruitment campaigns. These had implications on the extent to which the sortition process was fair and inclusive, but this was the best option given limited resources. The combined budget for three citizens' assemblies in Brazil was USD 44,000—a fraction of the OECD average. One unintended consequence of this approach is the increased visibility of the assembly. In-person recruitment—going door-to-door—created a new avenue for civic involvement, making the recruitment process more transparent.

Box 4.4. Do citizens' assemblies displace civil society? The case of Decidadañia in Brazil

By Felipe Rey and Indira Latorre

Decidadañia is one of the pioneers of climate assemblies in Latin America. The assemblies took place in three municipalities, with each municipality focusing on one topic related to climate change. Salvador focused on defining priority actions for a climate adaptation plan, Francisco Morato on city sanitation and Toritama on air quality. The assemblies took place between October 2022 and February 2023, with 27–40 people participating in each assembly. Deliberations lasted between five and seven days.

Some civil society actors viewed Decidadañia with scepticism, perceiving climate assemblies as substitutes for their long-standing efforts. To address this concern, Delibera Brazil—the organization that designed and implemented the assemblies—created a governance body

called Grupo de Conteudo. The aim of this governance body was to foster inclusive decision making by involving NGOs, social movements, universities and the branches of government at the territorial level (particularly city councils and mayors) when making methodological decisions impacting the assemblies.

Aside from setting up the Grupo de Conteudo, Delibera also convened the Brazilian Meeting of Citizens' Assemblies. Social leaders and public authorities participated in this meeting, such as the Deputy Mayor, two secretaries and two senior officials of the City Hall. The meeting was designed to establish a community of practice dedicated to citizen deliberation in Brazil, with specific emphasis on sortition and deliberation. This made it possible to bring civil society closer to the practice of citizens' assemblies, so that they could present their reactions and comments.

Box 4.5. Sortition needs community connection

By Nicole Curato

Recruitment via random selection is only meaningful with community connection. This was the biggest lesson learned by the environmental NGO Radeza in their role as local organizer of the world's first Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis (the Global Assembly).

In June 2021, the Global Assembly conducted a 'global location lottery' to determine 100 points in the world map from which assembly members would be selected. One of these points is the province of Zambezia in Mozambique. Organizers of the Global Assembly commissioned Radeza to recruit one assembly member from the province, following the principles and protocols of sortition.

For 68 hours over 11 weeks, the assembly member from Zambezia joined 99 other participants from around the world in online deliberations to co-develop the People's Declaration for the Sustainable Future of Planet Earth, delivered in the blue and green zones of COP26.

Two years after the Global Assembly, Radeza carried out research to take stock of the lessons learned from organizing a global climate assembly (Veloso and Luis 2023).

They found that NGOs and civil society groups are, for the most part, receptive to the idea of a climate assembly, but many expressed concerns with sortition. Some considered sortition to be limiting of the voices represented in the climate assembly.

Civil society groups enquired about the expectations of assembly members, whether it is fair to expect them to consult with their communities first before taking part in the assembly or ask assembly members to disseminate the knowledge they learned from deliberations to the wider community. Sortition, one could argue, was viewed as an individual-focused enterprise. An assembly member is only expected to focus on sharing their personal views, stories and perspectives, which is contrary to local cultures that emphasize collective voice and knowledge sharing.

Radeza's research generated several recommendations on how sortition can be better embedded within communities where assembly members are from. They propose to connect climate assemblies with existing spaces of participation. These spaces may include formal institutions, such as the local consultative councils and natural resource committees where citizens have direct access to government officials. Research participants also emphasized the importance of collaborating with community leaders. 'You can't just enter an area and start holding meetings without speaking to community leaders,' one research participant said. 'But if you can win over the community leaders, they will mobilize the entire community to participate in your meetings' (Veloso and Luis 2023: 15).

Engaging with local media, including radio commentators and influencers, is also critical, not only to introduce the assembly member selected through sortition but also to raise awareness about the climate

Box 4.5. Sortition needs community connection (cont.)

assembly. Aside from having an assembly member represent the wider community in the climate assembly, research participants also suggested identifying a ‘figure’ or respected personality who can amplify the story of the climate assembly and explain its outcomes to the wider community. Creating a ‘structure that is not too heavy’ was proposed

so that organizers of the climate assembly and the assembly members are better connected to NGOs, civil society groups and local organizations who can benefit from, as well as support, the process and outcomes of deliberation. The legitimacy of the climate assembly depends on this effort.

4.4.3. Overcome constraints in participation

Can climate assemblies work in contexts marked by sharp income and education inequality? The answer is a qualified yes. The key is inclusive design and execution.

Climate assemblies are specifically designed to lower the barriers to participation. It is common practice for organizers to provide an allowance to assembly members as well as covering the cost of their transportation, accommodation and, in the case of online deliberation, data allowance and gadgets. In the Global Assembly, all assembly members were paired with a community host, whose task was to provide the necessary infrastructure for assembly members to fully participate in deliberations—from organizing stable Internet connection to providing live translation of the proceedings (Global Assembly Team 2022).

To reduce information deficits, climate assemblies curate expert evidence and stakeholder input in a manner accessible to laypeople and in accordance with local customs (in contrast to the common critique against public hearings). In Ghana, for example, a third of the participants in a citizens’ assembly were illiterate, so briefing materials took the form of a video to introduce evidence on water, sanitation and food security (Chen 2021). Similarly, Lebanon’s Citizens’ Assembly on Electricity and Energy Justice maximized the affordances of using video-based expert testimonies. What was originally designed as a response to the pandemic, uploading expert testimonies online instead of gathering assembly members together to listen to experts, ‘ended up enriching the overall experience’ (Shehabi and Al-Masri 2022: 8). Organizers shared videos via WhatsApp—a familiar messaging service for most participants. Assembly members watched the video at a convenient time of

their own. They were able to pause, watch and rewatch the video to understand difficult concepts and reflect on the questions they wanted to ask the expert before posting them online. Had expert testimonies been delivered in person, these additional benefits of watching videos online would not have been available.

Learning about climate change serves as one of the most cited motivations for everyday people to join the climate assembly.

One critique that citizens' assemblies often face, at least in Europe, is their tendency to recruit assembly members from educated backgrounds or people already interested in politics (Michels 2019). So far, studies in the Global South have not found similar outcomes. Low literacy or limited knowledge about climate change are not necessarily obstacles to participation. Quite the contrary, learning about climate change serves as one of the most cited motivations for everyday people to join the climate assembly. Participants from disadvantaged backgrounds in the Global Assembly, for example, identified learning about climate change as their primary reason for accepting the invitation. Several participants from the Global South described the assembly as remedial lessons, for they missed out on many years of formal education.

While such enthusiasm signals good news for organizers of future climate assemblies, its implications must be read with caution. In Malawi, for example, spaces for open discussion tend to morph into a classroom-type situation where the facilitator comes across as quizzing participants to produce the 'correct answer' (Swidler and Watkins 2015: 155). The *Evaluation Report* of the Global Assembly had similar findings, where assembly members 'saw facilitators as "teachers" who collected responses from the group, while fellow Assembly Members were treated as classmates or friends who were co-recipients of knowledge instead of bearers of ideas or fellow interlocutors' (Curato et al. 2023: 39). Part of the reason for this could be cultural—that everyday people use the classroom as a referent for talk-based activities. There are various remedies to this concern, including training facilitators in 'deliberative facilitation' where facilitators clarify assembly members' roles as well as enforce norms of democratic deliberation (White, Hunter and Greaves 2022). Designing activities for collective problem solving that are resonant to various cultural contexts may also be considered. The assembly can be designed to appeal to 'visual deliberators', or people who can better communicate and understand others through images, as well as 'kinetic deliberators', or those who can best express their views and learn through action (White, Hunter and Greaves 2022: 66). Various assemblies in the Global South include song and poetry as part of the programme, to build connection among assembly members and express the emotional depth of the issue under discussion.

4.4.4. Design for impact

The impact of citizens' assemblies is a critical area of conversation, in both the Global North and the Global South. Typically, the impact of citizens' assemblies is assessed in three ways: (a) *policy congruence* or the extent to which the assembly's recommendations were reflected in policies adopted by decision makers; (b) *policy consideration* or the manner in which decision makers dealt with the assembly's input in their deliberations; and (c) *structural change* or the transformation of the policymaking process because of the citizens' assembly (Jacquet and Van der Does 2021). Within the scholarly literature, there is no consensus on the ideal impact of citizens' assemblies (Curato et al. 2021). Some argue that citizens' assemblies' recommendations should be treated as one of many inputs in policymaking, alongside polling and focus group data, while others consider citizens' recommendations to be epistemically superior to other inputs because they reflect people's considered judgement not just raw public opinion (Hong and Page 2004). Meanwhile, others see citizens' assemblies as part of a longer game of institutionalizing new terms for citizen engagement, to democratize climate policymaking.

So far, citizens' assemblies in the Global South have similar conceptualizations of impact. Typically, citizens' assemblies present their outputs to policymakers or key government leaders, as in the case of the Maldives, where the recommendations of the climate assembly were translated into a National Citizens' Manifesto on Environment and Climate Action. In Uruguay, the citizens' report considered access to clean water as a human right, which then informed the development of the country's first National Water Plan. Various guides and handbooks on citizens' assemblies emphasize the importance of collaborating with relevant public authorities early on in the design process to set expectations around the authorities' level of commitment to the process and outcome of the assembly.

In some cases, however, the relationship between the state and organizers of the citizens' assemblies is fraught, which limits possibilities for policy impact. In Lebanon, for example, invitations to the Ministry of Energy and Water received 'flat rejections'; a state official stated that 'democracy and deliberation among experts' were 'safe and sound', but 'anything else can only lead to chaos' (Shehabi and Al-Masri 2022: 9). Organizers from the academe were also faced with the dilemma of whether it was reasonable to engage with state officials who were seen to be part of a corrupt regime, or whether it was necessary to do so if the citizens' assembly were to secure real impact. This challenge, as might be expected, is a widely

shared concern, given that most assemblies in the Global South are organized by civil society groups and universities that maintain both oppositional and constructive relationships with state actors.

Beyond policy impact, however, assemblies can deliver sustainable impact in building the public sphere. Citizens' assemblies can contribute to the 'deliberative democratization' of climate policymaking (Curato and Steiner 2018). Simply put, deliberative democratization means creating institutional mechanisms and promoting political practices that give everyday citizens a direct voice in crafting policies that affect their lives (Curato and Steiner 2018). While the substantive policy impact of climate assemblies remains to be seen, there is growing evidence, as discussed in section 4.4, about the successes of citizens' assemblies in building the communicative capacities of citizens and communities that are necessary to resolve climate-related conflicts. This, one could argue, could be a useful focus area when designing the impact of climate assemblies in the Global South.

4.5. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This chapter provided an overview of climate assemblies in the Global South. It situated the development of such assemblies as part of the long-existing practices of deliberation outside Western liberal democracies and made a normative and practical case for the reinvigoration of such practices through citizens' assemblies, particularly on climate action. The growing catalogue of citizens' assemblies in the Global South was presented, as well as emerging trends in terms of design features. Finally, debates about the prospects and limits of climate assemblies were presented, as well as open questions.

REFERENCES: CHAPTER 4

- Asenbaum, H., Curato, N., Ibhawoh, B., Fuji Johnson, G., McCaul, J. and Mendonca, R. F., *Can Deliberative Democracy Be Decolonized?* Working Paper Series 2024/1 (Canberra: Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance, Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis, University of Canberra, 2024), <https://www.delibdem.org/_files/ugd/2965ca_7779e86126c8481e8d2e3c5e098fe989.pdf>, accessed 11 April 2024
- Burger, M. N., Nilgen, M., Steimanis, I. and Vollan, B., 'Relational values and citizens' assemblies in the context of adaptation to sea-level rise', *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 62 (2023), 101295, <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2023.101295>>
- Bussu, S., Bua, A., Dean, R. and Smith, G., 'Introduction: Embedding participatory governance', *Critical Policy Studies*, 16/2 (2022), pp. 133–45, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2022.2053179>>
- Chen, K., 'How deliberative designs empower citizens' voices: A case study on Ghana's deliberative poll on agriculture and the environment', *Public Understanding of Science*, 30/2 (2021), pp. 179–95, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0963662520966742>>
- Curato, N. and Steiner, J., 'Deliberative democracy and comparative democratization studies', in J. Dryzek, J. Mansbridge, A. Bächtiger and M. Warren (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), <<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198747369.013.35>>
- Curato, N., Farrell, D., Geißel, B., Grönlund, K., Pilet, J.-B., Mockler, P., Renwick, A., Rose, J., Setälä, M. and Suiter, J., *Deliberative Mini-Publics: Core Design Features* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2021), <<https://doi.org/10.1332/policypress/9781529214109.001.0001>>
- Curato, N., Chalaye, P., Conway-Lamb, W., De Pryck, K., Elstub, S., Morán, A., Oppold, D., Romero, J., Ross, M., Sanchez, E., Sari, N., Stasiak, D., Tilikete, S., Veloso, L., von Schneidmesser, D. and Werner, H., *Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis: Evaluation Report* (Center for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance, University of Canberra, 2023), <https://researchsystem.canberra.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/82182314/Global_Assembly_Evaluation_Report.pdf>, accessed 25 March 2024
- Dryzek, J. S., 'Democratization as deliberative capacity building', *Comparative Political Studies*, 42/11 (2009), pp. 1379–402, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414009332129>>
- Escobar, O. and Henderson, J., *Citizen Engagement in Evidence-Informed Policy Making: A Guide to Mini-Publics* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2024)
- Fishkin, J. S., Mayega, R. W., Atuyambe, L., Tumuhameye, N., Ssentongo, J., Siu, A. and Bazeyo, W., 'Applying deliberative democracy in Africa: Uganda's first deliberative polls', *Daedalus*, 146/3 (2017), pp. 140–54, <https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED_a_00453>
- Global Assembly Team, *Report of the 2021 Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis* (Global Assembly, 2022), <<https://globalassembly.org/resources/downloads/GlobalAssembly2021-FullReport.pdf>>, accessed 10 April 2024
- Heller, P., 'Democracy in the Global South', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 48 (2022), pp. 463–84, <<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-030320-123449>>

- Hong, L. and Page, S., 'Groups of diverse problem solvers can outperform groups of high-ability problem solvers', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States*, 101/46 (2004), pp. 16385–89
- Jacquet, V. and Van der Does, R., 'Deliberation and policy-making: Three ways to think about minipublics' consequences', *Administration & Society*, 53/3 (2021), pp. 468–87, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399720964511>>
- Josette, N., 'People of colour are the most impacted by climate change, yet Extinction Rebellion is erasing them from the conversation', *The Independent*, 21 April 2019, <<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/extinctionrebellion-arrests-london-protests-climate-change-people-of-colour-global-south-a8879846.html>>, accessed 23 March 2024
- Kapidžić, D. and Dejaeghere, Y., 'Inclusive topic selection: Reflections on Mostar's first citizens' assembly', *Deliberative Democracy Digest*, 15 February 2024, <<https://www.publicdeliberation.net/inclusive-topic-selection-reflections-on-mostars-first-citizens-assembly>>, accessed 23 March 2024
- Khan, M., Mfitumukiza, D. and Huq, S., 'Capacity building for implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement', in W. P. Pauw and R. J. T. Klein (eds), *Making Climate Action More Effective* (London: Routledge, 2021), pp. 95–106, <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003162407-8>>
- Knobloch, K. R., Barthel, M. L. and Gastil, J., 'Emanating effects: The impact of the Oregon citizens' initiative review on voters' political efficacy', *Political Studies*, 68/2 (2020), pp. 426–45, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321719852254>>
- Koren, O., Bagozzi, B. E. and Benson, T. S., 'Food and water insecurity as causes of social unrest: Evidence from geolocated Twitter data', *Journal of Peace Research*, 58/1 (2021), pp. 67–82, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343320975091>>
- Mattingly, D. C., 'Elite capture: How decentralization and informal institutions weaken property rights in China', *World Politics*, 68/3 (2016), pp. 383–412, <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887116000083>>
- Mellier, C. and Wilson, R., 'A global citizens' assembly on the climate and ecological crisis', Carnegie Europe, 14 February 2023, <<https://carnegieeurope.eu/2023/02/14/global-citizens-assembly-on-climate-and-ecological-crisis-pub-88985>>, accessed 25 March 2024
- Mendonça, R. F. and Ercan, S. A., 'Deliberation and protest: Strange bedfellows? Revealing the deliberative potential of 2013 protests in Turkey and Brazil', *Policy Studies*, 36/3 (2015), pp. 267–82, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01442872.2015.1065970>>
- Michels, A., 'Participation in citizens' summits and public engagement', *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 85/2 (2019), pp. 211–27, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852317691117>>
- Missions Publiques, 'Let's decolonize our knowledge about deliberative democracy', 17 October 2022, <<https://missionspubliques.org/lets-decolonize-our-knowledge-about-deliberative-democracy/?lang=en>>, accessed 25 March 2024
- Muradova, L., 'Seeing the other side? Perspective-taking and reflective political judgements in interpersonal deliberation', *Political Studies*, 69/3 (2021), pp. 644–64, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321720916605>>

- Nicolaidis, K. and Youngs, R., 'Reversing the gaze: Can the EU import democracy from others?', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 61/6 (2023), pp. 1605–21, <<https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13477>>
- Owen, D. and Smith, G., 'Sortition, rotation and mandate: Conditions for political equality and deliberative reasoning', *Politics & Society*, 46/3 (2018), pp. 419–34, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329218789892>>
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2020), <<https://www.oecd.org/gov/innovative-citizen-participation-and-new-democratic-institutions-339306da-en.htm>>, accessed 25 March 2024
- Parry, L. J., 'The Standards Debate', Research Note #6., Deliberative Integrity Project, November 2023, <<https://deliberativeintegrityproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2023-Nov-Standards-Debate-1.pdf>>, accessed 25 March 2024
- Porio, E., 'Citizen participation and decentralization in the Philippines', in W. Berenschot, H. G. C. Schulte Nordholt and L. Bakker (eds), *Citizenship and Democratization in Southeast Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 29–50, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004329669_003>
- Rey, F., 'New frontiers for the deliberative wave', in N. Curato (ed.), Resisting colonisation, avoiding tropicalisation: Deliberative wave in the Global South, *Deliberative Democracy Digest*, 3 May 2022, <<https://www.publicdeliberation.net/resisting-colonisation-avoiding-tropicalisation-deliberative-wave-in-the-global-south>>, accessed 25 March 2024
- Rountree, J. and Curato, N., 'Citizens' assemblies and the public sphere', in M. Reuchamps, J. Vrydagh and Y. Welp (eds), *De Gruyter Handbook of Citizens' Assemblies* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2023), pp. 73–84, <<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110758269-008>>
- Sandefur, J., Birdsall, N., Fishkin, J. and Moyo, M., 'Democratic deliberation and the resource curse: A nationwide experiment in Tanzania', *World Politics*, 74/4 (2022), pp. 564–609, <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887122000090>>
- Shehabi, A. and Al-Masri, M., 'Foregrounding citizen imaginaries: Exploring just energy futures through a citizens' assembly in Lebanon', *Futures*, 140 (2022), 102956, <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2022.102956>>
- Shehabi, A., Al-Masri, M., Obeid, J., Ayoub, M., Jallad, M. and Daher, M., *A Pilot Citizens' Assembly on Electricity and Energy Justice in Hamra, Lebanon* (London: UCL Institute for Global Prosperity, 2021), <<https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10129878>>, accessed 25 March 2024
- Swidler, A. and Watkins, S. C., 'Practices of deliberation in rural Malawi', in P. Heller and V. Rao (eds), *Deliberation and Development: Rethinking the Role of Voice and Collective Action in Unequal Societies* (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-0501-1_ch7>
- Veloso, L. and Luís, A., 'Embedding global citizens' assemblies: A bottom-up perspective from Mozambican rural communities', Technical Paper No. 3/2023 (Global Citizens' Assembly Network, 2023), <<https://glocan.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Technical-Paper-3-2023-Veloso-and-Luis.pdf>>, accessed 25 March 2024

Vlahos, N., 'Integrating participatory budgeting and institutionalized citizens' assemblies: A community-driven perspective', *National Civic Review*, 4/112 (2024), <<https://www.nationalcivicleague.org/ncr-article/integrating-participatory-budgeting-and-institutionalized-citizens-assemblies-a-community-driven-perspective>>, accessed 25 March 2024

Von Uexkull, N. and Buhaug, H., 'Security implications of climate change: A decade of scientific progress', *Journal of Peace Research*, 58/1 (2021), pp. 3–17, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343320984210>>

White, K., Hunter, N. and Greaves, K., *Facilitating Deliberation: A Practical Guide* (MosaicLab, 2022), <<https://www.mosaiclab.com.au/the-big-book>>, accessed 25 March 2024

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

David Rosén

5.1. CAN CLIMATE DELIBERATION IMPROVE HOW DEMOCRACIES ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE?

The introduction to this Report (Chapter 1) presented several reasons why democratic institutions and processes face difficult challenges in steering societies towards the net zero transition through inclusive, effective and democratic climate governance. It is not only the scale, complexity and socio-economic consequences of the transition that are daunting from a policy perspective. Fossil fuel economic interests, political blockages, competing short-term policy priorities, and a disconnect between public opinion and political coalitions can all contribute towards weakening or delaying climate action.

International IDEA's Discussion Paper *Democracy and the Challenge of Climate Change* (Lindvall 2021) outlined a broad range of recommendations to reform democratic institutions and processes to be in better shape to respond effectively to the climate crisis. The options presented ranged from efforts to protect the integrity of the democratic space, such as counteracting disinformation, aggressive lobbying and policy capture, to acting on climate injustice by strengthening the role of women, young people and traditionally marginalized groups in climate action and ensuring that the benefits of renewable energy are equally distributed.

Another important set of recommendations focused on the different options to better ensure citizens' participation in the formulation

Democratic institutions and processes face difficult challenges in steering societies towards the net zero transition.

and implementation of climate policies (Lindvall 2021). The options included the increased use of climate assemblies and other deliberative and participatory practices to engage citizens directly in the policymaking process—for example, through the use of participatory budgeting. The rationale for this recommendation rests on the two core features of deliberative mini-publics: the use of democratic sortition to create a broadly representative group of citizens; and the deliberative process of learning, interaction and decision making that the group engages in. The driving idea behind the use of climate assemblies is that involving citizens directly in the deliberation and formulation of recommendations on climate policy can raise climate ambitions in a way that existing institutions have not been able to do.

This Report has zoomed in on and summarized new findings from the research on two central questions relevant to how, why and when citizens' assemblies and practices of citizen deliberation work best:

1. How can citizens' assemblies and other practices of citizen deliberation contribute to changing the way that democracies address climate change?
2. What relevance do citizens' assemblies and other practices of citizen deliberation have in the Global South for climate action? What factors can make them successful and what are their limitations?

In response to the first question, Chapters 1 and 2 highlighted several distinctive features of climate assemblies and other citizen deliberation practices. They can potentially:

- raise climate policy ambitions by involving citizens directly in the deliberation and formulation of recommendations on climate policy;
- strengthen the legitimacy of the difficult policy choices and trade-offs needed in transitions towards net zero;
- create and make visible strong social mandates for climate action, moving beyond the political barriers created by high-carbon economic interests;
- contribute to breaking political deadlocks and short-termism;
- transform protest into actionable recommendations and proposals;

- create spaces for deliberation and agreement between citizens across the political spectrum in the face of increasing polarization and distrust; and
- strengthen and complement representative democracy institutions through citizen engagement on climate, not dependent on the normal cycles of political attention.

In response to the second question, Chapter 3 illustrated that institutionalized practices of citizen deliberation exist in several countries in the Global South. It described how citizens, activists and grassroots movements have claimed spaces for citizen deliberation and more inclusive climate decision making. Chapter 4 focused on the climate assemblies held in the Global South and surveyed and discussed their success factors and the limitations that the assemblies have met as tools for policymaking.

5.1.1. The potential and limitations of climate deliberation in the Global North

The first wave of climate assemblies has primarily taken place in Europe and the Global North. Chapter 2 showcases the rationale for commissioning citizens' assemblies in democracies to improve how climate policy and action are formulated. It asks the central question of what the purpose of the assembly is and what expectations are put on the assembly. It outlines how climate assemblies have been used to:

- raise climate policy ambitions;
- open up climate policy on a specific issue;
- generate recommendations to feed into policy development on climate action;
- break political deadlocks and extend policy ambitions;
- help decision makers decide between a range of options available; and
- strengthen the legitimacy of the process of formulating climate action, especially in view of the ongoing backlashes against the costs of climate transition.

The experience accumulated from climate assemblies and similar citizen deliberation processes commissioned by governments mainly in the Global North is starting to form a growing set of standards and successful practices for the design and planning process of climate assemblies. Based on the potential and limitations seen in this wave of citizen deliberation on climate, Chapters 1 and 2 identified key practices and considerations to take into account:

The experience accumulated from climate assemblies is starting to form a growing set of standards and successful practices for the design and planning process of climate assemblies.

- **Formulate the remit to make sense in policy processes.** The remit needs to fit the policy process context, whether the government is looking for citizens' insights on a particular policy dilemma or a review of a specific national climate policy, or is open to citizens' own formulation of recommendations.
- **Consider how citizen deliberation tends to produce different policy recommendations** from existing political processes. The Report describes how citizens are more likely to develop policy recommendations that involve regulating individuals or business, or policies that include limits on consumption and production.
- **Prepare to respond to the climate assembly's report.** This is critical for the exercise to be meaningfully reflected in climate policy. It also matters for the continued trust of participants in the political system. Failure to respond to the recommendations may foster increased distrust.
- **Consider that who commissions the climate assembly matters for its policy impact.** When the government response is the responsibility of politicians and public officials with power to respond, the assembly report has a higher likelihood of impacting policy. For whole-of-government responses to recommendations, ownership by the core executive can be a clear advantage, as the climate assembly in Luxembourg suggests.
- **Develop robust communication and media policies.** This is essential for creating public awareness of the climate assembly and its recommendations, as well as creating buy-in for the process from civil society organizations and climate activists. The French and Austrian climate assemblies both achieved a high degree of public recognition.
- **Plan for comprehensive stakeholder engagement.** This allows the climate assembly to draw on stakeholders' insights and better connect with democratic institutions and actors, while retaining the decisions on the recommendations for the assembly members.
- **Build stakeholder buy-in.** This increases the likelihood that they will respond to the climate assembly's recommendations within their sphere of responsibility.

- **Ensure that deliberative processes are used to respond to genuine climate policy needs.** Seeing the recommendations of the climate assembly providing meaningful and timely input to climate policymaking can strengthen its legitimacy.
- **Consider the different purposes for running climate assemblies.** While most assemblies have been commissioned by formal government institutions, climate civil society organizations and activists can employ climate assemblies to strengthen their advocacy and campaigning, shift public opinion on climate action, and build alternative sites of power to influence government action or form part of independent climate action.
- **Explore ways to embed citizen deliberation in climate policymaking.** Introducing practices of citizen deliberation could bring people's views more directly into climate policy and foster a positive cycle of interaction between citizens and policymakers.
- **Make citizen deliberation a recurring or permanent feature of democratic politics.** While most climate assemblies have been one-off processes, some attempts are being made at the city level in, for example, Milan and the Brussels–Capital Region to make assemblies more permanent features in local democratic institutions. Such a process may also expand the purpose of the assembly to include agenda-setting and monitoring roles for the implementation of climate policies, potentially strengthening local democratic accountability.
- **Allow citizen deliberation in claimed spaces to influence formal processes.** The Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis showed the potential of citizen deliberation in a global claimed space to tackle complex issues and co-create shared climate agendas. Chapter 1 notes the potential of enabling citizen deliberation about systemic changes to economic and social systems to influence formal processes.

5.1.2. The potential and limitations of climate deliberation in the Global South

Chapters 3 and 4 of this Report reviewed the track record of climate assemblies and practices of citizen deliberation in the Global South and identified a range of emerging lessons:

- **Climate assemblies can help raise climate policy ambitions.** While climate assemblies are no silver bullet to a more effective and democratic climate policy, the emerging experience shows that they can play a role in a positive direction. Their specific role and added value in a given context depend very much on how they relate to and complement existing political institutions.
- **Climate assemblies can complement democratic decentralization efforts.** A major risk in efforts towards democratic decentralization is dominance by local elites. Chapter 4 underlines how citizens' assemblies can extend agenda-setting and policymaking powers on climate change beyond the traditionally influential actors, such as local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and businesses, to everyday citizens. Since citizens' assemblies are often one-off events and members are selected through stratified random selection, they are more difficult for local elites to dominate.
- **It is important to embed citizen deliberation in climate policymaking.** Consider constructive ways in which citizen deliberation can directly reinforce and strengthen the different phases of climate policymaking, from the early phases of identifying problems, setting the agenda and considering actions to decision making, implementation and evaluation. Chapter 4 discusses how climate assemblies can contribute to public deliberation by disseminating their recommendations or inviting contributions from the public to the assembly. It also describes how climate assemblies, by activating citizens as agents of change, could spark broader discussions about the governance architecture needed for climate action.
- **Social movements and local coalitions can strengthen existing institutions of citizen deliberation,** such as public hearings or village assemblies—for example, when public hearings are legally mandated as part of Environmental Impact Assessments.

- **It is important to understand climate assemblies in the broader democracy landscape as community-based capacity-building tools.** This Report emphasizes the usefulness of seeing investments in climate assemblies as tools for building the deliberative capacity of local communities. They have the potential to strengthen the capacity of communities to collectively resist disinformation and resolve civic conflict and deep divisions, as such factors can otherwise undermine democratic transitions or democratic consolidation.
- **The design of climate assemblies should consider impact.** The impact of a climate assembly needs to be assessed in light of its remit. While the small number of climate assemblies held in the Global South makes the evidence about the policy impact limited, there is emerging evidence about the role of citizens' assemblies in building citizens' capacity to develop communicative skills in handling climate-related conflict, a central element in climate-vulnerable countries in the Global South.
- **Climate assemblies and other practices of citizen deliberation should be located within the wider political context.** As democratic innovations, climate assemblies have to balance the need to be embedded in the political contexts in which they occur while retaining the capacity to challenge unequal power relations that undermine climate action. This Report highlights the dilemma faced by climate assembly organizers in countries with weak democratic rights and high levels of corruption. Connecting with state officials is central to policy impact but may be difficult for actors that play oppositional roles to the incumbent regime. This dilemma also highlights the question of how innovative practices of citizen deliberation function in, and relate to, the state of democracy in a given country, and whether they can play positive roles in democratization processes or strengthen local democratic resilience.
- **Pre-existing constraints in participation must be overcome.** Climate assemblies and other practices of citizen deliberation need to be designed with inclusion and gender equality in mind to lower the barriers to political participation for citizens with less formal education, less knowledge about climate change or less opportunity to take time off for political participation.

- **Global South actors are leading the innovating and institutionalizing of mechanisms for citizen deliberation.** These innovations seek to empower people and their governments to take climate action, using both invited and claimed spaces. The emerging experience from implementing climate assemblies in the Global South offers important lessons to the Global North on the shape and future of climate deliberation. One lesson revolves around seeing climate assemblies as a craft requiring a degree of flexibility as opposed to a technocratic top-down fix. Another lesson focuses on fostering communities of practice with all actors involved in the climate assembly, so as to strengthen learning, which will benefit future deliberative practices.
- **Customary institutions, such as community assemblies, can play important roles** in allowing deliberation among community members and generate positions on specific climate-related policies, such as natural resource governance.
- **Climate adaptation and resilience can especially benefit from community deliberation,** since formulating sustainable climate adaptation policies requires not only technical interventions but a community-owned deliberation of societal priorities. Section 3.4.2 shows how an inclusive and deliberative approach to disaster risk reduction was pioneered in the Philippines in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 by urban poor community organizers, Catholic organizations and local church groups.
- **Climate assemblies can be used to address divisive climate adaptation issues.** Climate assemblies provide training for citizens to listen across differences and imagine shared futures together, which is particularly relevant for dealing collectively with negative climate change impacts, such as food and water insecurity. Climate assemblies may complement investments towards educational campaigns on climate resilience and community empowerment programmes for community-based adaptation strategies.
- **Climate assemblies can claim political voice and imagine alternative political visions,** even in contexts where government officials are not responsive to the assembly's recommendations, as the Citizens' Assembly on Electricity and Energy Justice in Lebanon in 2020 demonstrates.

5.1.3. Planning and design recommendations for climate assemblies in the Global South

This Report testifies to a growing interest in commissioning and supporting climate assemblies as a way to complement and improve the formulation, substance and legitimacy of climate policy processes, in both the Global South and the Global North. Chapter 4 notes that a relatively small number of citizens' assemblies have been held on environmental matters in the Global South. This makes the development of a comprehensive set of recommendations for policymakers and other stakeholders premature.

Instead, the considerations below focus on central questions around for what purposes and in what contexts climate assemblies and other practices of citizen deliberation could be considered, and how and under what circumstances they could impact climate policy outcomes, the broader democratic system, or the participating communities and citizens.

The list below summarizes specific planning and design options when considering the use of citizens' assemblies and other practices of citizen deliberation in the Global South.

Understanding the political and democratic context

- **Weigh the advantages and disadvantages of different practices of citizen deliberation.** While citizens' assemblies on climate change have recently drawn much attention from academics, civil society organizations and development cooperation agencies, they are still a relatively new phenomenon globally and even more so in the Global South. In many contexts, they are entirely untried. A robust understanding of how and where climate policy takes shape is essential to understanding the potential added benefits of climate assemblies. Surveying the existing invited or claimed spaces for citizen deliberation, such as village assemblies or participatory budgeting, can create a better understanding of the specific challenges that a climate assembly needs to address—for example, unequal participation. In some contexts, using other practices of citizen deliberation, such as deliberative polls, may be preferable to a focus on climate assemblies.
- **Understand the legal environment and political context for climate deliberation.** In many Global South countries, public hearings, village assemblies and participatory budgeting are legally enabled channels of people's participation in climate policy (see Table 3.1). This Report underlines the need to understand and build on the potential of such existing formal channels for

climate deliberation while paying attention to their constraints in terms of inclusive participation of citizens, especially marginalized communities.

- **Be mindful of political and electoral timelines.** Analysing the political environment in which the climate assembly will operate is essential to understand its possible constraints, such as time pressures from elections or shifting political coalitions affecting the willingness of formal institutions to hear and respond to its recommendations.
- **Consider levels of trust in local and state government.** Many countries in the Global South have high levels of distrust in local and state-level government. The inventory in Table 4.1 indicates that most citizens' assemblies on environmental matters have been initiated by non-governmental actors. This may reflect the novelty of climate assemblies and is likely needed in the short term. Whether such leadership is advisable and sustainable in the long run is uncertain.
- **Build on existing deliberative practices and learn from Indigenous knowledge.** This Report presents ideas for connecting climate assemblies with existing deliberative practices and incorporating Indigenous knowledge and practices as two ways to strengthen the process and avoid perceptions that climate assemblies are a novel concept imported from the Global North.
- **Consider what citizen deliberation practices entail in different regime types.** Deliberative traditions and practices can be observed in some authoritarian states as well. These practices may be used by regimes to stabilize authoritarian rule but could potentially also spark broader political changes towards democratization.

Planning the climate assembly

- **Define the purpose and impact criteria early in the process.** Climate deliberation practices in the Global South have primarily been reported on through the lens of capacity-building tools for participants, with less focus on policy impact on the national or local climate action. In some contexts, there may be room for scaling up and planning climate assemblies to aim for tangible policy impact or transformations of public opinion and awareness of climate action. In other cases, it was incorporated into the policymaking process, such as in Uruguay's National Water Plan.

- **Foster constructive relationships with the policymakers receiving the assembly report.** While this may seem self-evident when considering the potential policy impact of citizens' input or recommendations, it could require substantial efforts, including countering misconceptions about deliberation among elected policymakers and officials. This vertical relationship building may be especially important in contexts where citizens have limited trust in government institutions, or where policymakers lack exposure to climate assemblies—two factors that are likely to be prevalent in some Global South regions.
- **Build local alliances of support for the climate assembly.** Community leaders, civil society organizations and local media can all play positive roles in supporting and raising awareness about the climate assembly's purpose and work. If a climate assembly can generate and sustain public debate on climate policy, this provides its own arena for impact on the formal political system, outside of any response from policymakers that the specific report of the climate assembly may receive. Building such horizontal links between assembly members, media and civil society organizations has independent value in addition to responses from formal political institutions, especially as it can foster longer-term learning around citizen deliberation.
- **Ensure sufficient funding.** As countries in the Global South are often more resource-constrained than those in the Global North, it is not surprising to see that a majority of citizens' assemblies and citizen deliberation practices on environmental matters on the inventory (Table 4.1) are funded by bilateral and multilateral development agencies (United States Agency for International Development and United Nations Democracy Fund), foundations and institutes (National Endowment for Democracy, newDemocracy Foundation and National Democratic Institute) and university-based deliberative democracy research centres (such as the Deliberative Democracy Lab at Stanford University). The Itinerant Citizens' Assembly in Colombia funded by the Bogotá Council stands out as an exception of a domestically funded climate assembly.
- **Consider how the funder impacts climate assemblies.** Since climate assemblies in the Global South are in an experimental phase, there is little evidence about the impact of external funding on the self-assessed or perceived independence and popular legitimacy of climate assemblies. Long-standing challenges of

development cooperation projects around issues such as donor conditionalities, local ownership and the sustainability beyond the project duration may require attention early in planning the climate assembly. It is crucial to also critically examine the role that external actors such as NGOs, think tanks and academic institutions play in activating and shaping the initiatives and incentives for climate deliberation in the Global South.

- **Follow a do-no-harm approach.** Since many countries in the Global South are not consolidated democracies, following a do-no-harm approach means being mindful that deliberative exercises do not weaken representative institutions or get co-opted for non-genuine or symbolic citizen engagement. This Report shows that climate assemblies considered by their members to be ineffectual risk increasing distrust in the political system.

Setting the design of the climate assembly

- **Set the remit carefully.** Climate assemblies in Europe have focused on both climate mitigation and adaptation. Based on the European experience, the Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies (KNOCA) has developed practical guidelines for how best to set a relevant remit (Brancaforte and Pfeffer 2022). The inventory of citizens' assemblies on environmental issues in the Global South (see Table 4.1) suggests a policy focus primarily on climate adaptation and sectoral issues, such as water and food security, energy use, disaster recovery, transportation or waste management. It remains to be seen whether future climate assemblies in the Global South will select similar policy priorities.
- **Contextualize the key deliberative principles.** This Report underlines the need to anchor design choices for the climate assembly or other citizen deliberation practices in a detailed contextual understanding of how the core deliberative elements of randomized selection/sortition and deliberation are locally understood and have been practised in the past. Such considerations can help introduce and connect these democratic innovations with the existing practices in the political environment in a sustainable and impactful way. Randomized sortition could be questioned in post-conflict contexts—for example, where the inclusion of specific actors is seen as crucial.
- **Consider ways to handle resistance to sortition.** While randomized sortition for the selection of climate assembly members is an essential deliberative democracy principle, it may raise resistance

from civil society organizations or communities who perceive it as akin to gambling or distrust the agent responsible for the sortition. This Report shows how building community connections and project networks around the climate assembly can help make randomized sortition meaningful for Global South communities and acceptable to local politicians and civil society organizations. Another way to handle such resistance is making use of local practices and including people seen as legitimate knowledge bearers in the learning phase of the citizens' assembly, as was the case in Ghana's Citizen Assembly.

- **Understand how the available budget has an impact on deliberation.** The available budget can constrain the ambition, scope and public awareness of a climate assembly. This Report lists several innovative ways in which assembly organizers have arranged impactful assemblies within limited budgets. Due to budget limitations, the three citizens' assemblies in Brazil, for example, used in-person recruitment, which also generated increased visibility for the process. The inventory of citizens' assemblies held on environmental issues in the Global South (Table 4.1) shows that participation of around 30 to 50 citizens per assembly has been common.
- **Acknowledge different levels of knowledge about climate change and challenge power dynamics.** This Report finds that the wish to learn more about climate change can motivate citizens from disadvantaged backgrounds to join climate assemblies. The design of the climate assembly still needs to pay close attention to power dynamics among assembly members and between facilitators and assembly members.
- **Adapt the technical requirements** of the climate assembly design to the available data and technology—for example, in the randomized sortition process to select assembly members.
- **Address the digital divide.** The evaluation of the Global Climate Assembly conducted in 2021 demonstrates several ways to deal with the digital divide and limited access to the Internet among assembly members for assemblies with online elements—for example, the use of community hosts that provide Internet access, technical support and relevant translations of material (Curato et al. 2023). The majority of citizens' assemblies in the current study were held in person, which partly helped to circumvent the digital divide.

Building a learning culture around practices of climate deliberation

- **Invest time and resources in thorough impact evaluation.** The use of climate assemblies in the Global South is still a relatively recent trend, and impact evaluations can help build a knowledge base of good practices and success factors for planning impactful assemblies. The evaluation framework developed by KNOCA presents a useful conceptual overview of the types of impact to track (KNOCA 2022).
- **Assess the impact of deliberative practices with a long view.** Drawing on Porto Alegre's introduction in 1989 of participatory budgeting, Chapter 3 highlights the significant positive outcomes in the long term of citizen involvement that is deeply embedded in government decision making and implementation.
- **Develop and use regional standards of operation.** Different forms of South–South knowledge sharing can be beneficial to lower costs and extend expertise on climate deliberation. This Report shows how a region-wide climate assembly in Latin America created shared standards of operation while adapting the assembly remit and programme to the local needs and contexts of participating cities.
- **Establish and support permanent centres of excellence and regional networks in the Global South on climate deliberation.** This could be an opportunity to share and systematize lessons learned and best practices from the emerging evidence about climate deliberation in the Global South. Such centres and networks can play a central role in disseminating knowledge, practical skills and emerging lessons on climate deliberation in the Global South to, for example, local government officials, civil society and grassroots organizations, as well as international professional networks (such as Demo.Reset: Deliberation in the Global South, and Democracy R&D).

5.2. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Climate assemblies are still a relatively new phenomenon in many Global South contexts. While this Report contributes to research and operational lessons for future climate assemblies, there are many remaining issues on which our current understanding is only gradually emerging. The increasing research interest and networks

in the Global South and Global North on climate assemblies will help paint a more detailed picture of the state of play of practices of climate deliberation globally.

An overarching theme in this Report has been the efforts to better understand how to embed practices of citizen deliberation within the democratic architecture and actors engaged in climate policymaking. Bussu et al. (2022) outline how efforts to embed deliberative participatory initiatives have been interpreted. They point towards embeddedness over time (regular or recurring practices), embeddedness in terms of space (practices are accessible to citizens and connected to broader civil society) and practice-level embeddedness (when practices are rooted both in the formal rules governing citizen deliberation and in support from informal actors and networks). Recognizing how the embedding of citizen deliberation works could help to unlock the broader discussion about where, when and how practices of citizen deliberation could have the potential to complement and strengthen existing democratic institutions and processes. It would also anchor in current experience the discussion about the scalability of practices of climate deliberation—for example, the question of what is needed for innovative practices such as climate assemblies to be as rooted as regular institutions of democratic participation, and to be widely viewed as equally legitimate.

In the interaction and friction between citizen deliberation and existing political institutions and processes, there could be promising remedies for specific concerns for climate policymaking, such as lack of trust in institutions, unequal participation and political polarization. This Report speaks to the need to better grasp how legal frameworks and political systems set the opportunities and limitations for practices of citizen deliberation on climate policy. Such knowledge could provide better guidance about what deliberative practices are most relevant for strengthening how citizens and communities play decisive roles in climate policymaking.

A growing interest by development cooperation agencies, international organizations and civil society organizations in supporting citizens' assemblies will also contribute to building a more solid body of evidence, with detailed contextual knowledge and operational recommendations for their relevance in strengthening climate action in Global South countries. Central elements of this Report emphasize the need to better situate and understand climate assemblies in the political economies and contexts that they are

Recognizing how the embedding of citizen deliberation works could help to unlock the discussion about where, when and how practices of citizen deliberation could strengthen existing democratic processes.

In the interaction and friction between citizen deliberation and existing political institutions and processes, there could be promising remedies for specific concerns for climate policymaking.

intended to benefit. Many recommendations in this Report align with recent frameworks on development cooperation, such as Doing Development Differently, Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation, and Thinking and Working Politically (Wood 2020). While these frameworks differ in certain respects, shared elements focus on flexible and iterative approaches to learning, being guided by local political realities and power dynamics, local problem formulation and the facilitation of local coalitions of interest.

These principles would caution against seeing efforts to strengthen climate deliberation as one-off or stand-alone solutions to climate policy formulation and implementation. Instead, efforts would build on the lessons and limitations of past climate assemblies, and work on climate deliberation would be conceived as a longer-term, recurring or permanent feature of the local interface between formal institutions, civil society and citizens. Such an approach is knowledge-intense and would require improved forms of South–South and South–North learning exchanges. These new development frameworks also place up front the fact that citizen deliberation in assemblies, if taken seriously, happens in a political environment and could face resistance from actors in traditional positions of authority.

This Report also points towards extending the use of climate assemblies and other forms of citizen deliberation practices (such as deliberative polls) not only for climate policy formulation or review of policies but also as a citizen-owned democratic accountability tool to monitor the implementation and effects of climate policy and initiatives. The representative sample of citizens and deliberation may enhance the credibility of such efforts, especially if the exercise mobilizes widespread media visibility and the attention of local civil society organizations, building communities of practice and learning around citizens' assemblies. Such efforts are essential in what is often termed a growing implementation gap between climate commitments and action.

Learning from experiences in the Global South can enrich practices and future possibilities for citizen deliberation practices on climate change in the Global North.

The value of South–South and South–North dialogues on climate assemblies should not be underestimated. Learning from experiences in the Global South has the potential to enrich and expand existing practices and future possibilities for citizen deliberation practices on climate in the Global North. For organizations supporting democracy, such openness to learning on climate deliberation goes hand in hand with a recognition of the irreducible diversity of democratic experience, processes and institutions.

This Report illustrates how citizen deliberation researchers and practitioners alike are engaged in a broader conversation about strategies to realize the transformative democratic potential of climate assemblies. In addition to strengthening the formal mandate and independence of climate assemblies, there are several examples—such as Ejsing, Veng and Papazu (2023)—that point to the transformational power of the individuals who have been part of a citizens’ assembly. If an emphasis on individuals and their communities is combined with increased use of citizens’ assemblies at local and national levels, the result could be positive, with the creation of dynamic coalitions for change that enable citizen deliberation to play a key part in climate action, while helping to renew how democracy works for this and coming generations.

Finally, while the renewal and innovative use of citizen deliberation practices could have a positive impact on how citizens and communities engage on climate policy, these practices need to be combined with a broader focus on building resilient and responsive democratic processes and institutions.

REFERENCES: CHAPTER 5

- Brancaforte, S. and Pfeffer, J., 'Draft Guidance: Setting the Remit for a Climate Assembly: Key Questions for Commissioners', Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies (KNOCA), June 2022, <<https://knoca.eu/app/uploads/2022/06/KDP1-Guidance-draft-June-2022-v2.pdf>>, accessed 25 March 2024
- Bussu, S., Bua, A., Dean, R. and Smith, G. 'Introduction: Embedding participatory governance', *Critical Policy Studies*, 16/2 (2022), pp. 133–45, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2022.2053179>>
- Curato, N., Chalaye, P., Conway-Lamb, W., De Pryck, K., Elstub, S., Morán, A., Oppold, D., Romero, J., Ross, M., Sanchez, E., Sari, N., Stasiak, D., Tilikete, S., Veloso, L., von Schneidemesser, D. and Werner, H., *Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis: Evaluation Report* (Center for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance, University of Canberra, 2023), <https://researchsystem.canberra.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/82182314/Global_Assembly_Evaluation_Report.pdf>, accessed 25 March 2024
- Ejsing, M., Veng, A. and Papazu, I., 'Green politics beyond the state: Radicalizing the democratic potentials of climate citizens' assemblies', *Climatic Change* 176, 73 (2023), <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-023-03550-z>>
- Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies (KNOCA), Impact evaluation framework for climate assemblies, Version 1.0, 30 June 2022, <<https://www.knoca.eu/guidances-documents/impact-evaluation-framework>>, accessed 12 April 2024
- Lindvall, D., *Democracy and the Challenge of Climate Change*, International IDEA Discussion Paper 3/2021 (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2021), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2021.88>>
- Wood, T., 'The problem with doing development differently', DevPolicyBlog, 19 May 2020, <<https://devpolicy.org/the-problem-with-doing-development-differently-20200519-1>>, accessed 9 March 2024

RESOURCES

Databases

Bürgerrat compiles case studies of climate assemblies worldwide, <<https://www.buergerrat.de/en/news/climate-action-through-citizens-assemblies/climate-assemblies-worldwide>>

LATINNO is a database of democratic innovations in Latin America, <<https://www.latinno.net/en>>

OECD's Deliberative Wave database catalogues 'representative deliberative processes' around the world, <<https://airtable.com/appP4czQIAU1My2M3/shrX048tmQLI8yzdc/tblrtrtW98WGpdnX3Y/viwX5ZutDDGdDMEep>>

Participedia is a crowdsourcing platform that catalogues democratic innovations from around the world, <<https://participedia.net>>

Networks

Democracy Next is an international, non-profit and non-partisan research and action institute that is a knowledge hub for deliberative democracy. <<https://www.demnext.org>>

Democracy R&D is an international network of organizations, associations and individuals that promote citizen engagement using sortition and deliberation. <<https://democracyrd.org>>

Demo.Reset: Deliberation in the Global South is a network of deliberative democracy advocates and actors in the Global South. <<https://www.demoreset.org/en>>

Federation for Innovation in Democracy – Europe (FIDE) is a network of leading democratic innovators in Europe and North America, advising governments and policy-makers on how to involve everyday people in the decision-making process. <<https://www.fide.eu>>

Global Citizens' Assembly Network (GloCAN) is a research collective that generates actionable insights on designing, implementing and evaluating global citizens' assemblies. <<https://glocan.org>>

The Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies (KNOCA) is a community of policymakers, practitioners, activists, researchers and other actors with experience and interest in climate assemblies who co-create activities and knowledge with the aims of improving the commissioning, design, implementation and impact of climate assemblies, using evidence, knowledge exchange and dialogue. <<https://knoca.eu>>

Publications

Deliberation and Development, edited by Patrick Heller and Vijayendra Rao (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2015), <https://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/10.1596/978-1-4648-0501-1_ch1>

Deliberative Democracy in Asia, edited by Baogang He, Michael Breen and James Fishkin (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022), <<https://www.routledge.com/Deliberative-Democracy-in-Asia/He-Breen-Fishkin/p/book/9780367608958>>

Deliberative Democracy: Understanding the Indian Experience, edited by Teresa Joseph and Siby K. Joseph (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), <<https://www.routledge.com/Deliberative-Democracy-Understanding-the-Indian-Experience/Joseph-Joseph/p/book/9781032653433>>

About the authors

Nicole Curato is a Professor of Political Sociology at the Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance at the University of Canberra. Her research demonstrates the transformative power of deliberative governance in fragile and conflict-affected settings and examines the enabling conditions for marginalized communities to assert their voices in policymaking and implementation to secure better outcomes. Nicole has written 3 books and over 30 journal articles on deliberative democracy and Global South studies, including the prize-winning *Democracy in a Time of Misery: From Spectacular Tragedy to Deliberative Action* (Oxford University Press, 2019). Aside from her academic work, Nicole has written op-eds for the *New York Times*, *The Guardian* and *Australian Foreign Affairs*, and has provided expert advice to various international development and aid agencies.

Graham Smith is a Professor of Politics at the Centre for the Study of Democracy at the University of Westminster. Currently, he is spending much of his time working as the founding Chair of the Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies funded by the European Climate Foundation. His main research interests are in democratic theory and practice, particularly democratic innovations, participatory democratic institutions and their relationship with climate governance and other long-term political challenges. His book *Democratic Innovations: Designing Institutions for Citizen Participation* (Cambridge University Press, 2009) is widely recognized as key to the establishment of this area of study. Recent publications include *Democracy in a Pandemic: Participation in Response to Crisis* (University of Westminster Press, 2021) and *Can Democracy Safeguard the Future?* (Polity Press, 2021). Graham is a collaborator with the global Participedia network (funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council).

Rebecca Willis is a Professor in Energy and Climate Governance at Lancaster Environment Centre, where she leads the Climate Citizens project. In 2020, she was an Expert Lead for Climate Assembly UK, the citizens' assembly established by the UK Parliament. Rebecca is an adviser to the National Lottery's Climate Action Fund. She featured on the Woman's Hour Our Planet Power List, which highlighted 30

women making an impact by helping to protect our planet. Her book, *Too Hot To Handle? The Democratic Challenge of Climate Change*, was published by Bristol University Press in March 2020. She was Vice-Chair of the UK Sustainable Development Commission, advising the prime minister and first ministers of the devolved administrations, from 2004 to 2011. Rebecca is a member of International IDEA's Expert Advisory Group on Climate Change and Democracy.

David Rosén works as an Advisor in International IDEA's Climate Change and Democracy programme, on democratic innovation, citizen engagement and climate deliberation. Working on democracy building for more than 10 years, he has previously been responsible for governance and Member State relations and supported the workstreams on constitution-building processes, citizen-led democracy assessments and women's political participation and representation. He has contributed to research on sustainable energy governance and citizen protests at Uppsala University's Department of Government.

About International IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with 35 Member States founded in 1995, with a mandate to support sustainable democracy worldwide.

WHAT WE DO

We develop policy-friendly research related to elections, parliaments, constitutions, digitalization, climate change, inclusion and political representation, all under the umbrella of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We assess the performance of democracies around the world through our unique Global State of Democracy Indices and Democracy Tracker.

We provide capacity development and expert advice to democratic actors including governments, parliaments, election officials and civil society. We develop tools and publish databases, books and primers in several languages on topics ranging from voter turnout to gender quotas.

We bring states and non-state actors together for dialogues and lesson sharing. We stand up and speak out to promote and protect democracy worldwide.

WHERE WE WORK

Our headquarters is in Stockholm, and we have regional and country offices in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean. International IDEA is a Permanent Observer to the United Nations and is accredited to European Union institutions.

OUR PUBLICATIONS AND DATABASES

We have a catalogue with more than 1,000 publications and over 25 databases on our website. Most of our publications can be downloaded free of charge.

<https://www.idea.int>



International IDEA
Strömsborg
SE-103 34 Stockholm
SWEDEN
+46 8 698 37 00
info@idea.int
www.idea.int



Agence Française de Développement
5, rue Roland Barthes
75598 PARIS CEDEX 12
+33 1 53 44 31 31
www.afd.fr

Climate change is one of the defining challenges of our time that will determine the fate of coming generations on our planet. Climate action since the 2015 Paris Agreement shows that while solutions are available, neither ambition nor implementation are progressing at the required pace. Democratic institutions must adapt to the cause not only to protect the climate but also since climate change poses an existential risk to democracy. Democracy will struggle to remain a credible and legitimate political system if it does not identify effective solutions to the climate crisis.

Climate assemblies are examples of innovation that includes citizens directly in developing climate policy, which can raise climate ambition and strengthen the legitimacy of the difficult policy choices involved in the transition towards net zero. Climate assemblies can potentially turn protest demands into actionable recommendations and help build social mandates for change. This Report examines lessons learned from the first wave of climate assemblies and discusses how deliberative practices may help build more ambitious and citizen-owned climate agendas.

ISBN: 978-91-7671-767-7 (PDF)