



The Stockholm Series of Public Lectures on Climate Change and Democracy



The promise of participation – How collective decision making can get us to more effective climate policies

Greta Ríos

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The Stockholm Series of Public Lectures on Climate Change and Democracy (“Stockholm Series”) is a cooperation between renowned Stockholm-based institutions with a particular focus on climate change and democracy from different perspectives, including the Stockholm Environment Institute; the Stockholm Resilience Centre; Future Earth; the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung’s Nordics Office; LSU – The National Council of Swedish Children and Youth Organisations; and We Don’t Have Time. It aims to inform, inspire, and engage experts and the general public alike by providing high-profile public lectures on the interlinkages between climate change and democracy, followed by debate.

Greta Ríos’s lecture **“The promise of participation – How collective decision making can get us to more effective climate policies”** took place on Tuesday, 12 November 2024, at International IDEA’s Headquarters at Strömsborg in Stockholm, Sweden.

To tackle the climate crisis, governments have a mandate to enable and encourage citizens and civil society to participate in shaping and implementing impactful climate policies. By expanding public participation and bringing marginalized voices into decision making, governments can create climate-focused policies that are more equitable and responsive to communities’ needs. Learn about positive examples of how governments around the world are involving citizens through participatory budgeting, legislative theatres, and participatory policymaking to build real climate democracy and increase community resilience.

The lecture was opened by **Dr Massimo Tommasoli**, Director of Global Programmes at International IDEA, and followed by a conversation with **Sara-Elvira Kuhmunen**, President of Sámi Youth Organization Sáminuorra and LSU Board Member, as well as by questions and comments from the audience, and a reception.

**Stockholm,
12 November 2024**

Greetings, everyone. My name is Greta Ríos, and I am the Co-Executive Director at [People Powered](#), a global hub for participatory democracy. Today I am standing before you with not one but three different stories to tell about how people around the world are using participatory democracy to solve problems big and small, in creative and effective ways, along with their governments and their communities. In particular, I am going to talk about how communities out there are organizing themselves to face climate change and become more resilient.

But first let me tell you a little bit about myself. Today I am standing in front of all of you because a decade (or so) ago I fell in love with an idea that I came across on a subway train in my commute to work in Mexico City. This idea was simple: the city was going to let citizens have a say in deciding how to spend a part of the public budget by allowing them to present project proposals and vote on them for implementation.

It must have been around 2013 or so when I learned about the polling stations for neighbourhood projects that would be set up in that subway station the following Sunday. I had returned to Mexico City after spending some time abroad, and I had no clue what these neighbourhood projects were about. At that time, I was in the third year of being the founder and Executive Director at [Ollin](#), a Mexican non-governmental organization (NGO) focused on democracy and the rule of law. One of Ollin's areas of interest at the time was youth inclusion in democracy and social change, so the idea of these neighbourhood projects was really appealing to me. Later on that evening, I spent some time learning about the neighbourhood projects and how participatory budgeting, which was the technical name for them, worked.

I did not know it back then, but that poster changed my life for the better. Ollin ended up developing expertise on participatory budgeting: we created the first website to track the progress made by the projects, participated in creating a new legislative framework to make the process smoother, evaluated other experiences of participatory budgeting in several cities in Mexico, and to this day Ollin is still sharing this idea.

The first story is coming; bear with me. But first, I need to give you a little bit more context on why my team and I thought that it was worth dedicating a lot of time, energy and love to try to expand and improve participatory budgeting.

Mexicans, like the citizens of many other countries around the world, have fallen out of love with democracy. Not only did they have to struggle for decades to get some sort of democracy in place, but this shiny new system failed to deliver on most of the things it had promised us. It is not a surprise that most Mexicans feel no excitement about going to polling stations or getting involved in political affairs.

A decade ago I fell in love with an idea that I came across on a subway train in my commute to work in Mexico City. This idea was simple: the city was going to let citizens have a say in deciding how to spend a part of the public budget.

But participatory budgeting offers new insights into democracy on at least three different fronts. The **first** one has to do with how long it takes for you to actually see results. Spoiler alert: it does not take long. From the moment you vote on your favourite proposal to the actual execution of the winning project, just a few months go by. In Mexico City, for example, citizens go to the polling stations in May, and projects must be concluded by the end of the year. This makes it easy (or at least easier) to track the whole process, from promises to execution. Thanks to Ollin and other entities, it is now possible to track the projects that have been selected per neighbourhood, as well as the costs associated with them and their completion status.

This brings me to the **second** insight: participatory budgeting is a great way to use democracy to teach people of all ages about fairly abstract and quite technical concepts, such as public procurement, public budgets, fiscal transparency and accountability. It is really encouraging to be able to track the transformation that happens when citizens go from being amateur democracy enthusiasts to understanding in depth how public projects should unfold, from start to finish. And the fact that participatory budgeting teaches this through experience and, in a sense, gamification makes it even stronger because it is always easier to learn something by doing than by sitting in a classroom and just reading about a concept that is absolutely foreign to you.

The **third** aspect I want to highlight is the most important. It has to do with the sense of agency that this sort of process conveys to the people who participate. It is truly transformative knowing deep inside you that you are able to change things in your neighbourhood to make it better and that the way to get there is by talking to your neighbours, by creating visions of your street together, by doing research on the legal status of that piece of land that has been abandoned for decades—in a nutshell, by making democracy work for you. I believe that people who have become involved in participatory budgeting also become more active in their communities. And now they even have the tools to do so: they are known in their neighbourhoods as leaders, they have direct contact with the local authorities, they understand some of the problems of the community, and they know at least of one mechanism that they can use to solve those problems.

The three components of participatory democracy are the visible and quick effects of the process, the pedagogical component and the creation of agency among the population.

These three components (the visible and quick effects of the process, the pedagogical component and the creation of agency among the population) are present not only in participatory budgeting but are common effects of participatory democracy processes in general. You see, participatory budgeting is part of a broader family of innovative democracy practices around the world that have the ultimate goal of getting more people to participate in decision making, along with their governments, on things that affect their lives. During this talk, I will discuss some of the mechanisms that are used in the field of participatory democracy and, in particular, their effectiveness for tackling climate change.

Participatory budgeting in Santa Ana Tzacuala, Mexico

This is where the first story begins. In 2022 the Ollin team worked in the state of Hidalgo and specifically with the community of Santa Ana Tzacuala, in the municipality of Acaxochitlán. This is an Indigenous community of 5,000 inhabitants, where local customs and traditions reign and permeate the political structures as well as citizens' understanding of their civic duties and belonging.

When you enter this very small town, it is evident that it is a tight-knit community and that the inhabitants hold their traditions really close to their hearts. Women in Santa Ana wear traditional clothing, woven and embroidered locally. Santa Ana's main economic activity is the flower trade: locals buy flowers from nearby producers and then resell them. This means that many of the people who live in this community are not usually around during weekdays. The town is also known for its high emigration rate, especially among young males. The number of 5,000 inhabitants is actually an estimate because it is really hard to keep track of the population under such conditions.

In Santa Ana there is a traditional representative body that acts as the highest authority when it comes to taking decisions that have a direct impact on the community. This body, known as the 'delegation', is made up of four people who have strong bonds with the community and are elected to serve a full-time one-year term with no remuneration. It is a great honour to serve on this body, and this job is taken with the utmost seriousness. The members of the delegation were the first brick wall I bumped into when my team and I were trying to convince them to take a leap of faith and engage in a project to expand democracy in Santa Ana by running a pilot participatory budgeting programme in the community.

Picture the following: it is the early afternoon on a very foggy day in Santa Ana when Karla, a 24-year-old democracy enthusiast, and I arrive to have our first hearing with the delegation. We have no clue what to expect or how to address this group of older and very conservative men, and we are also the only two people in the room wearing facemasks, as there is a high number of Covid cases in town, and we are both afraid we might catch it. We then spend more than three hours going back and forth, discussing the project's specifications, the reasons why we think it's a great idea and how we would devote almost a full year to training and working with the community to design and run the pilot until the winning projects are fully delivered.



Santa Ana Tzacuala, Mexico. Photos by Ollin.

It is very evident that both the delegation and my partner and I are out of our comfort zones. The all-female team in Ollin is more used to working with audiences that look and speak a bit more like us. The all-male, all-middle-aged delegation members are also not used to speaking to women, least of all to young women who come unaccompanied to present projects at the town hall. We left Santa Ana very late that day without a concrete reply on their part and also with a lot of doubts in our hearts. The fact that it was a super dark and rainy night did nothing to help our mood.

But, apparently, the saying 'after the storm comes the sun' is correct. Luckily for all, after a few days we received a call from the delegation saying they approved of this collaboration. This was the beginning of a series of visits to Santa Ana, during which we truly fell in love with the community and with its people.

The Ollin team spent the following six months working with the Sanataneros (this is how they refer to themselves) to set the rules of the process, but also to train relevant actors on how participatory budgeting works. They made sure that women had seats in the decision-making bodies, and they also pushed for children to be able to participate in the process. Both requests were granted, and some very easy actions were taken to make sure that these two groups were represented throughout the process.

One of the actions consisted in bringing the training sessions on participatory budgeting to the schools so children could learn about the process and start thinking about their options for voting. I absolutely love participatory budgeting sessions with children because they are so used to being left out that when you tell them they will be able to present proposals and vote in the process, their first reaction is always disbelief, but their second reaction tends to be joy and empowerment and agency. This is what we were going for.

The people of Santa Ana decided that children aged 10 and up were eligible to participate in the process. The reason they made this decision had to do with the fact that, when a child in the community turns 10, they are required to start providing the community with services like mowing the grass or cleaning up common areas because they are part of the community. The logic applied here was that if they were old enough to be accountable to perform these tasks, they should also have the right to fully participate in the democracy project.

The Ollin team spent many hours at the local middle school, getting to know these children and talking to them about the problems facing their community and seeing them come up with creative solutions to these problems. At the end of the process, two of the three winning projects were proposed by children and youth, but let's not get ahead of ourselves. I will tell you more about the winning projects in a bit.

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Getting the women involved was a bit harder, but it was not impossible. 'We just met them where they were', was the explanation the Ollin team gave me when I asked how they had managed to get the women to participate. They went to public parks, the church atrium and the community gardens, where women normally congregate to weave together while they talk to each other and take care of their children. The third winning project was proposed by a mother of two young kids. In her project proposal, she asked for a playground where the kids could play safely while the women could weave and look after them.

But let me go back to the children and youth and introduce you all to Heidy, who is a living prototype of the citizen we want to empower and make sure they stay engaged for life. Heidy is a 12-year-old Indigenous girl who lives in Santa Ana. She found out about the participatory budgeting pilot when the Ollin team went to her school to invite the children to participate.



Heidy. Photo by Ollin.

Heidy had been concerned about the environment for some time, and she saw this project as a great opportunity to do something about it. She had heard from her grandfather that, many years ago, there had been a dense forest in Santa Ana, but that this forest had burned down in a wildfire and had not succeeded in regrowing on its own. With this in mind, she proposed a reforestation project where she and her classmates could help plant trees and take care of them so they could bring the forest back to Santa Ana.

It was a great victory for Heidy, but also for the community, because the project was designed in such a way that it increased the chances that these trees would survive. What Heidy's school did was adopt the trees and water them and take care of them regularly. This is a great example of community action to mitigate climate change, carried out by using participatory budgeting.

They learned that they could tackle the problems of their community in innovative ways and that the adults could follow their lead.

Through this project, the schoolchildren learned about negotiation, project management, climate change and civic engagement. They also learned that they could tackle the problems of their community in innovative ways and that the adults could follow their lead. In 2023 Heidy was awarded the State of Hidalgo Youth Award for her contributions to her community and as a recognition of her leadership skills.

Some unintended but really welcomed consequences of this project were the following:

1. The participatory budgeting voting process saw more than twice as much participation as the previous official democratic exercise in the community.
2. In 2024 a woman was appointed as part of the delegation for the first time in the town's history.
3. Nearby communities passed legislative acts that allow them to have participatory budgeting processes.
4. Others have asked for technical assistance to replicate this process locally.

All of these impacts resonate with the results that People Powered has been getting through its [Climate Democracy Accelerator](#), where we work with local organizations and governments to implement a participatory democracy process to tackle or mitigate climate change at the local level. But first, let me tell you a bit more about People Powered and how I ended up being part of this incredible organization.

People Powered is a global hub for participatory democracy. We work to build the power and impact of organizations and leaders around the world who are building a more participatory democracy. Through this work, we expand people's power to make decisions along with their governments. The way I explained this to my mom was: People Powered works so that the Ollins of the world can have bigger impacts and struggle less when creating new processes. I applied for a position at People Powered at the end of 2022 because it was an opportunity for me to grow professionally and to do some work at the international level and use the lessons I had learned from creating and directing Ollin to benefit more people.

Now let me say a word or two about participatory democracy before jumping to the second story I want to share with you. As I said before, participatory democracy aims to get more people involved in decision making, along with their governments, about things that affect them directly. Whether it means adding a new set of swings to the local park or designing and implementing a new policy to regulate CO2 emissions, the key component here is the degree of participation that the local citizens have when making these decisions.

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Participatory budgeting is just one method for implementing participatory democracy. Some others include citizens' assemblies, participatory planning, participatory policymaking and legislative theatre. I am aware that Nicole Curato did a great job at her Stockholm Series talk, where she talked to you about the role of citizens' assemblies and their value as a tool for designing climate change solutions, so I will focus on other participatory democracy tools that are just as powerful.

Participatory policymaking in Chipinge, Zimbabwe

Brace yourselves as I will now take you to Zimbabwe, specifically to the town of Chipinge, in the rural district that bears the same name. People Powered got to know about Chipinge in the context of our Climate Democracy Accelerator. This programme was initially launched in 2021 and has evolved through four cohorts of participants who are using participatory democracy practices to mitigate the effects of climate change at the local level around the world.

Chipinge is a rural district in the Manicaland province of Zimbabwe. It has around 25,000 inhabitants. This location was chosen by Kudzaishe Seti, from the local NGO Green Institute, to run a participatory policymaking process due to the vulnerability of the district's population vis-à-vis the effects of climate change. Kudzaishe used this project to apply to our Climate Democracy Accelerator and got accepted. This is part of his story.

In previous years, the town of Chipinge had experienced extreme weather phenomena. For example, they were extremely affected by the passage of Cyclone Idai in 2019, which meant that they experienced extreme flooding and heavy rain that lasted for days and left a trail of destruction in its path. While there are national provisions in Zimbabwe to tackle climate change, at the local level things look quite different, as these policies are not properly enforced, and those who suffer all the effects of natural phenomena are the local communities.

This is a common situation in many parts of the globe: national policy is normally created at the top and does not necessarily fit the needs or the capacity of local communities. This is one of the reasons People Powered created the Climate Democracy Accelerator, where we work hand in hand with teams of local governments and civil society groups to develop and implement participatory democracy mechanisms to help people solve these problems locally, with tailor-made processes that end up with locally actionable plans.



Chipinge, Zimbabwe. Photo by Green Institute.

The project that Kudzaiishe and the Green Institute decided to run as part of the People Powered Climate Democracy Accelerator consisted of running a co-creation process among government workers, local authorities and civil society members (including farmer groups), who deliberated on the challenges that Chipinge was facing and that could be addressed through the enactment of a Chipinge climate change policy. The technical term to describe this is ‘participatory policymaking’, and the idea behind it is simple: it means that the government is open to dialogue and co-creation when it comes to designing policies to be later implemented in the community.

In the case of Chipinge, the process was particularly insightful because one of the first things that participants pointed out was that, while inhabitants were suffering from the direct consequences of climate change, a large number of them were not aware of what climate change actually meant or of how it could affect them in the future. According to the Green Institute, only one in five residents were aware of what climate change was and of how it was a threat to the community.



Chipinge, Zimbabwe. Photo by Green Institute.

Just like with participatory budgeting, one of the key components of participatory policymaking (and of all participatory democracy instruments, in fact) is its pedagogical element. People who participate and people who live in the vicinity of those who participate get to learn and forge informed opinions on subject matters that affect their lives, in a contained, joyful and respectful environment, where the learning process is nurtured and encouraged. The best part is that they do not even realize how much they are learning, because they learn while taking part in discussions with their peers. In the case of Chipinge, after the participatory policymaking process was complete, the community decided to create a brochure on climate change and its effects so everyone could have access to this important information in the future. This pamphlet was published in Ndau and English.

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The way our Climate Democracy Accelerator works is that the People Powered team, along with a group of highly qualified mentors from around the world, work with civil society organizations and local governments to build their capacities so that they can create and implement an action plan. The teams are assigned a mentor who oversees the process and given an implementation grant at the end of the training phase of the programme. Kudzaiishe Seti and Mateusz Wojcieszak from the Field of Dialogue Foundation in Poland, Kudzaiishe’s mentor for this project, are still in touch and working together on new projects.

But let's go back to Chipinge. An important element about the Chipinge process was that Kudzaishe made sure that the headmen (as traditional leaders are known in this community) took part in the discussions, and their participation was a key component when it came to implementing the policy within the communities. This is of particular importance because not only did it mean that the policies would be correctly implemented, but it also helped make the relationship between the local community and the government more collaborative.

After several rounds of discussion took place in Chipinge, the local government ended up with a draft policy on climate change mitigation actions that they committed to enacting as a policy as soon as it was politically possible (elections were just about to take place), as well as action plans for the communities. These action plans include local projects, such as gardens where citizens can grow produce for the community, terracing, reforestation, strengthening Indigenous knowledge systems in agriculture and nature-based solutions in forestry conservation.

A year after the participatory process concluded in Chipinge, there are indicators that show that deforestation decreased, women's participation in climate change mitigation increased, and over 50,000 people have learned about climate change and its effects.

A really powerful consequence of this project was that nearby towns and communities approached the Green Institute and requested similar processes with the participation of their inhabitants. So far, they have engaged in training councillors, traditional and religious leaders in two districts and are waiting for local funds to be released so they can replicate this process elsewhere, including in other districts.

These are the kind of results that we want to be able to report on: people self-organizing to get access to innovative ways to use participatory democracy to improve the living conditions in their own communities.

For us at People Powered, these are the kind of results that we want to be able to report on: people self-organizing to get access to innovative ways to use participatory democracy to improve the living conditions in their own communities, people who are learning by example from nearby towns and their decision making processes, and people who are not only able to cope with climate change challenges but are even taking advantage of some of them by introducing new species of fruits and vegetables in their community gardens because the weather now favours them. They also enacted policies related to clean energy, crop and irrigation changes to provide economic security, prevent erosion, support ecosystems and promote traditional knowledge to do all the above.

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As you can see, this story also has the three magic elements:

- people's realization that what was discussed in the process became a policy that was enforced successfully and quickly;
- the ludic component of using participatory democracy to ensure that people were informed about complex social concepts, such as climate change, policymaking and mitigation strategies;
- the sense within the community that they are empowered to design their own strategies when it comes to facing extreme problems, such as the ones posed by climate change.

In this story, we even find a reconciliation process between the local government and the community. Because these two groups built trust in one another during the participatory policymaking process, they are more likely to work together in the future by using the channel for dialogue that this process helped create.

The creation of empathy can be a game changer when it comes to finding ways of weaving better relationships between communities and their governments. This is often a by-product of legislative theatre processes, which is another one of the participatory democracy mechanisms that we use and promote at People Powered. I intentionally added a story that involves this process so I can have a chance to explain to you what it looks like in action, since it is the least well known of these mechanisms.

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Legislative theatre in Masajja, Uganda

The idea behind legislative theatre is, as I said, to create empathy among decision makers and community members so that better policies and governance decisions can be made together. Legislative theatre involves gathering a group of people and having them enact a situation where they have to find solutions to everyday problems that a certain community is going through, but intentionally having the different actors work together to put the scene into motion.

Each side in a situation gets to see and feel what the other side is feeling and thinking when making decisions. Afterwards, they use that information to jointly create solutions.

As such, we could end up with local public servants acting as citizens who are affected by the public servants' daily decisions or, on the contrary, we could have the citizens play the role of the public officials who have to enforce such decisions and report on their results to the public. In this manner, each side in a situation gets to see and feel what the other side is feeling and thinking when making decisions. Afterwards, they use that information to jointly create solutions or identify actions to solve the problems in question.

The case study I want to bring to your attention is taking place in Uganda and combines legislative theatre and a technique called Music, Dance and Drama to establish a dialogue between civil servants and girls, boys, people with disabilities and refugees on the topic of swamp degradation in the village of Masajja B. This process is led by our partner, the Might Foundation, a participant in our fourth and newest cohort of the Climate Democracy Accelerator.

Masajja B is a village in central Uganda, located around 8 kilometres south of Kampala. Even though it is located very close to the capital city, this area has become more and more vulnerable to flooding as a consequence of climate change since it is located in a swampy area. When there are heavy rains, the roads in the community become impassable, greatly affecting the inhabitants for days and even weeks at a time. The legislative theatre process that the Might Foundation is currently designing aims to find joint solutions to this problem.

The team at the Might Foundation will shortly begin working with their mentor to create the legislative theatre experience. In the meantime, let's imagine what that will look like. Think for a second that we are the inhabitants and authorities of Masajja, and we have all been given roles to play, using music, dance and drama, during the legislative theatre process.

One of us will be handed a slate of paper that will read: 'You are the highest authority in the village of Masajja. You were elected democratically, and you are well liked in the community because of your deep understanding and swift solving of the problems the people of Masajja face. Lately, however, you have been losing popularity because the roads that connect Masajja to Kampala have become flooded again, and people are afraid they will lose their businesses. What is worse, there has been an outbreak of malaria due to the stagnant water, and even some crops have gone to waste. Even your own family is struggling, as your children are not able to attend school, and your spouse had to miss a medical appointment because of the flooding. You really want to put an end to these floods, but, for God's sake, rain is something that is absolutely out of your control! There is only so much you can do about this. If things do not improve, you are beginning to fear that the people will start rioting or moving elsewhere. Please prepare a five-minute monologue, using rap, to communicate your current status to the audience.'

Yet another one of us will get the following assignment: 'You are a 14-year-old girl who lives in Masajja. You attend the local middle school and enjoy spending time with your friends. Your favourite subject in school is biology, and you plan to become a doctor in a few years. Lately you have been missing school a lot because of the floods. When you miss school, you get a bit anxious. You have been working hard to get admitted to the best high school in Kampala, as a first step to attending medical school later on. You are thinking about moving with your auntie in Kampala permanently and transferring to another school there, but this will take a big economic toll on your family. If it comes to that, you are willing to do it. Nothing will come between you and your dreams. Please prepare a five-minute dialogue between you and your mother, explaining the reasons why you have decided to move with your aunt.'

And a third role will read: 'You are a scholar who has devoted your life to studying the impacts of climate change around the world. You have been hired by the authorities of Masajja to inform the community about climate change, its possible future impacts in the community, ways to increase the resilience of this particular settlement and some case studies in nearby places where successful measures have been taken to tackle or mitigate climate change. Please prepare a short song that uses local rhythms to convey this message.'

After the scene is set, the participants will gather and conduct a debrief that will enable them to collect information and lessons learned on how everyone is experiencing the situation, the things they would like to change and possible solutions from different points of view. The outcomes of the legislative theatre exercise will then be used to debate, propose, vote on and decide on policies to improve the situation surrounding the swamps in the region.

This might sound unbelievable to some of you, but legislative theatre has helped many people say things they would not normally voice out loud for fear of repression or, worse, for lack of words to express them. In spaces where civic restrictions and fear are high, the use of ludic instruments such as legislative theatre and music, dance and drama help address those restrictions and bring about a more even ground for establishing dialogue among actors.

In the case of the village of Masajja, there will be two stages in the process. One of them will take place in person and the other one online. The in-person process has been especially designed to include people with disabilities as well as people who may not be able to afford Internet access to participate in the later stages of the process.

After the in-person stage concludes, there will be a month-long process that will take place online, where people will receive training and participate in the discussion around the policies created by the in-person group. In this way, the team of the Might Foundation made sure that the whole process remains inclusive throughout every stage of execution.

As you can see, legislative theatre shares the three main components I have been highlighting throughout the presentation. I would say this is the mechanism that has the highest rank when it comes to learning by playing. People seldom realize it, but when they are playing the role of whoever is on the other side, they gain big insights into why the problem may be harder (or more urgent) to solve than they first thought, for example.

The speed factor is also present here. The time it takes from conducting the legislative theatre process to setting in motion agreed-upon measures to tackle a problem will always be shorter than waiting for the government to come up with a top-down solution that most times will not be tailor-made for the affected community.

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The third element is the power of agency that the process conveys to the people. It is those affected by the problem who are using their voices, putting the problem into words and then helping find solutions to it. People who participate in these processes normally adopt the idea that they do not need to sit and wait for the authorities to solve their problems: they can contribute their ideas, inside knowledge and creativity to find solutions and improve their communities.

Although the legislative theatre process in Masajja has not happened yet, I wanted to present this example as a case we could all follow closely to see what results the people in this community come up with. This is one of the 15 projects that will be taking place after their teams finish their training process in our Climate Democracy Accelerator and receive their implementation grants.

Our strategy at People Powered is to help launch pilot programmes that can then inspire broader waves of change. And this is happening. Nearby communities in both Santa Ana and Chipinge have started similar processes to the ones I talked about today, and we are sure that, as our programmes expand, more and more communities will follow.

The challenges that climate change presents to governments and communities are not easy to solve. Some of these challenges pose a direct threat to the communities' ways of life, to their traditions and beliefs, and even to their land.

However, at People Powered we believe that one way to create more inclusive and sustainable solutions to these challenges is by making sure that every individual gets a chance to express their views and ideas on how to jointly prevent, face and solve the crises that climate change will bring about. We are using democracy to create and replicate these solutions around the world, and we are inviting others to join us in this adventure.

Climate change is scary, but there are also great stories along the way. I want to end this talk with a picture of the community of Santa Ana. This is how the trees look 1.5 years after they were planted. Heidi's forest is growing back and, hopefully, it will not be the only one.



Santa Ana, Mexico. Photo by Ollin.



Greta Ríos is the Co-Executive Director of People Powered, a global hub for participatory democracy. She has over ten years of experience in the nonprofit sector, in particular as the founder of Ollin, an NGO she developed into one of the leading organizations supporting civic engagement, transparency, anti-corruption, rule of law, and direct democracy in Mexico.

Greta has activated thousands of young people to participate in their communities; supported innovative, large-scale participatory budgeting programs in several Mexican cities; and coordinated research and monitoring to hold government accountable. In 2019, she won a lawsuit challenging a modification to the Mexico City Citizen Participation Law, which resulted in a new law being enacted.

Greta is part of the Ashoka global network of social entrepreneurs, the BMW Foundation Responsible Leaders network, and a Vital Voices lead participant; in 2019, she was awarded the UBS Visionaries prize for social entrepreneurship. Greta has served as a professor at Tec de Monterrey, teaching courses on social movements and social project management.



People Powered is a global hub for participatory democracy - the direct participation of community members in making the policy decisions that affect their lives. People Powered builds the power and impact of organizations and leaders around the world who are building a more participatory democracy, through programs such as participatory budgeting, participatory policymaking, participatory planning, and citizen assemblies.

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