ASSESSING THE POTENTIAL OF CITIZENS' DELIBERATIVE FORUMS TO REVITALISE POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Findings from a two-day study-workshop exploring the role of citizens' deliberative forums for addressing environmental challenges

Organised for the Horizon REDIRECT project.

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INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the themes arising from a two-day workshop on climate deliberation organised by the Exeter Horizon REDIRECT research group and the SPSPA Department (Politics) at the University of Exeter[1]. Practitioners and academics were invited to address the question: **Can public deliberation help address the environmental crisis?** More generally, the workshop considered **the question of the role that citizens' deliberative forums, such as mini-publics and community assemblies, might play in revitalising the representative political system.** The workshop considered issues such as the impacts of citizens' deliberative forums, and how these might be integrated or institutionalised within representative democracy. We considered forums of different varieties and forms, led by different types of organisations or groups, including public bodies, non-profit organisations and community groups. The main idea was to bring together academics who study related topics, those with experience in designing, running or evaluating deliberative forums such as mini-publics and other types of community assembly, to foster a rich discussion about how public deliberation could be more embedded into representative democracy, to help remedy the democratic 'disconnect'.

In more detail, the objectives of the workshop were to:

- Foster a dialogue between political representatives, public administrators, civic activists, and researchers about the challenges and the proposals for citizens' involvement in public debate, political deliberation and policy making for a sustainable environment.
- Develop connections between these different actors.
- Collectively generate bottom-up strategies for public engagement in environmental policy-making and politics.
- Advance thinking about the varieties of public deliberation on climate change, including those led by public bodies at central and local level, and those initiated by community organisers and activists.
- Think creatively about the integration and impact of public deliberative forums within systems of representative politics.

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[1] The full workshop agenda can be found in Appendix A.

BACKGROUND TO THE WORKSHOP

The need for active engagement amongst members of the public in dialogue about how to address climate change and environmental challenges is increasingly recognised. The workshop explored the rationale for public engagement on climate change, as well as forms the engagement could take.

Benefits of engaging the public in conversations about climate change include:

- Helping policymakers develop policy which is sensitive to the needs of diverse publics, identifying potential adverse effects or even resistance to the changes that might be needed.
- Enhancing knowledge and understanding of climate issues amongst the public, which may help influence citizen attitudes and behaviours.
- Ensuring that the diverse needs of communities, including those particularly affected by climate change, are taken into account in policy development.
- Playing a role in countering misinformation.

Forms of deliberative engagement, their limits and possibilities:

One means of enhancing public dialogue and engagement on climate issues is through the use of novel forms of deliberative citizen engagement which have recently been trialled by public organisations, including national and local governments across Europe and beyond (OECD 2020; 2021). So-called 'democratic innovations' are increasingly being experimented with, including citizens' assemblies, citizens' juries, and varieties of 'mini-public' (Smith 2009; Grönlund et al. 2014). These institutions entail randomly selecting members of a population to take part in debates and deliberations on specific topics and questions, usually over a period of weeks or months, to help generate insights and recommendations for policy makers.

In addition, communities themselves have initiated bottom-up 'grassroots' citizens' assemblies to bring people together to discuss and tackle climate change and a variety of other social and environmental issues at a local level. These bottom-up forms of citizens' assembly are less likely to entail random selection of participants and be connected with policy processes. Instead, they help connect those concerned about climate change and other issues, providing them with an avenue to express views and develop collective actions.

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More broadly, mini-publics are often regarded as one means of addressing limitations in current practices of representative democracy which can often make citizens feel disconnected and alienated from the political system. As a variety of 'democratic innovation', mini-publics are often viewed as providing ways of meaningfully involving members of the public in political discussions and policy development, in order to 're-connect' them with democratic processes (Bächtiger et al. 2018).

At the same time, there are several limitations and challenges associated with mini-publics which have been recognised, particularly those initiated by public authorities. First, the record of mini-publics suggests that they often have limited real policy impact, lacking formal status or formal policy making powers, resulting in policy makers either cherry-picking recommendations or neglecting them altogether (Goodin & Dryzek 2006). Politicians are often suspicious of them for a variety of reasons, and they may be seen to lack the legitimacy that politicians in representative systems derive from their status as elected representatives (for research on politicians' perspectives see Hendriks & Lees-Marshment 2019).

Second, mini-publics have been criticised for including only a small section of the public, effectively by-passing the wider publics that do not have the opportunity, or desire, to engage in such processes (Lafont 2015; Curato & Böker 2016). Although mini-publics may be statistically representative in terms of key demographic characteristics, participation is voluntary, so there may be an element of self-selection bias in terms of the kinds of people that accept the invitation to participate, i.e. those who are already more civically engaged, or care more about the issue being deliberated. There is substantial evidence that members of the wider public tend not to engage much with specific mini-publics, with non-involved citizens often unaware that they are taking place, and the mass media showing relatively little interest in reporting on them.

A third challenge is that these types of processes can be financially costly and very time consuming to plan and conduct. They tend to be established on an ad-hoc basis to address specific policy dilemmas, and public agencies often lack the expertise, experience or resources to be able to conduct them efficiently. Public authorities often use external experts in public engagement to conduct these processes, which can bring benefits both in terms of expertise and engaging a 'neutral' third party seen to be without specific interests in the outcomes, but can also be costly. Some advocates of these types of deliberative forum have argued that they ought to be more routinely used by public authorities, and that

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this may help build capacity for conducting them, reduce running costs and create a culture where deliberative public engagement becomes the norm.

Acknowledging these limitations and critiques, scholars and practitioners are increasingly exploring how deliberative mini-publics and other deliberative public engagement forums might be better utilised, examining how they can be adapted and conducted in different ways, and led by different types of actors, to produce different kinds of outcomes. This includes questions related to institutionalising and integrating them within systems of representative politics, to complement and enhance existing democratic practices and work alongside electoral representatives and public authorities. There have also been efforts to understand better how deliberative forums such as mini-publics might be used by other types of civic actors, including NGOs and community groups, to engage citizens in matters of public concern.

WORKSHOP AIMS

This workshop sought to discuss these issues with those actively involved in running deliberative public engagement processes or with expertise in these and associated issues. The more specific workshop aims were as follows:

- To discuss the pros and cons of different modes of democratic engagement (including deliberative engagement) and decision making, focusing on environmental issues, using concrete examples and case studies.
- To explore the possibility for the greater integration of these modes of democratic engagement within a framework of representative politics and democratic governance.
- To provide a forum for an open, constructive, and critical engagement between researchers and practitioners directly involved in different civic, political, and administrative settings.
- To build ongoing links between academic researchers, civil society and political stakeholders, with a view to potentially working together towards the formulation of concrete institutional and policy proposals to enhance public debate and democratic participation on political and social challenges.

PARTICIPANTS

The workshop included over 40 participants from different backgrounds and sectors, as listed below (the full list can be found in Appendix B). Many had experience of conducting public engagement exercises, such as mini-publics, including those led by national government, local government, and other types of public body or non-profit organisations, whilst others had experience running or participating in grassroots community assemblies and other forms of informal deliberative public engagement (e.g. via climate cafes or activist groupings). We also had representation from local elected members and local public officials, and academics. Key groups included:

- Researchers working at Exeter and other Universities in the UK and beyond, including other members of the REDRIECT project.
- Political and administrative office holders – including elected represented and non-elected public officials such as civil servants and local government officers.
- Members of think thanks and community organisers.
- Civic activists.
- Experts in deliberative democracy and democratic innovations.

THE REDIRECT PROJECT

The two-day workshop was part of a Horizon research project (REDIRECT) on the state of representative democracy (2023-2026). This international project is financed by the EU Commission, and in the UK by UKRI (UK Research and Innovation). The REDIRECT project (https://redirect.unisi.it/) aims to analyse the current transformation of representative democracy, focussing on the different forms of 'disconnect' between citizens' involvement in, and expectations of, representative politics, on the one hand, and the governing capacity and accountability of the democratic institutions and governing class, on the other. Part of the project is also an attempt to identify strategies, mechanisms and proposals that may contribute to repair such a disconnect, either by *reconnecting* citizens through the more traditional democratic institutions (e.g. parties, formal public consultations), or by *redirecting* the process of representation and governance towards 'new' forms and venues of citizens' engagement with politics and collective decision-making (citizens' assemblies, or other deliberative processes such as participatory budgeting or citizens' juries, and other creative formats for civic engagement).

The project includes seven different partners across the EU:

1. Università degli studi di Siena (UNISI) Italy – Luca Verzichielli (present in audience) – Coordinating institution
2. (Partner) Uniwersytet Jagiellonski (JUK) Poland
3. (Partner) The University of Exeter (UNEXE) United Kingdom (members present in audience)
4. (Partner) Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) Belgium
5. (Partner) Università del Salento (UNILE) Italy
6. (Partner) Tarsadalomtudomanyi Kutatokozpont (TK) Hungary
7. (Partner) Universitetet i Oslo (UIO) – John Erik Fossum (present in audience)

The project is divided into several Work Packages (WPs), with this report stemming from activity relates to Work Packages 7, 'Strategies for redirection: institutions/mechanisms' as well as Work Package 9, 'Dissemination & engagement'.

Work Package 1: Analytical framework: The system of democratic representation – its ecology and forms of disconnect.
Work Package 2: Contextual analysis of disconnect: long-term trends.
Work Package 3: An intermediation disconnect.
Work Package 4: A governance disconnect.
Work Package 5: Responsiveness, trust and the affective disconnect.

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Work Package 6: Strategies for reconnection: party democracy.
Work Package 7: Strategies for redirection: institutions/mechanisms.
Work Package 8: Strategies for redirection: reimagining Representative democracy.
Work Package 9: Dissemination & engagement.
Work Package 10: Project management & coordination.

The project overall focused on transformations of Representative Democracy, including forms of democratic disconnect and modalities of reconnection and redirection.

Forms of "disconnect":

The representative disconnect is not just the product of the crisis of political parties, but of a variety of causes and symptoms affecting both the role of intermediate institutions (the 'intermediation disconnect'), the operations of governance and accountability (the 'governance disconnect') and citizens' and political elites' behaviour and attitudes towards politics (the 'affective disconnect').

Modalities of "reconnection" and "redirection":

Regarding strategies for *reconnection*, Work Package 6 provides a set of recommendations for revitalising those conventional mechanisms of intermediation that are typical of representative democracies. WP6 draws on WP3's representative disconnect audit and will propose a set of strategies for reconnection directed to how to revitalise parties, make parliaments more transparent and responsive, and improve youth participation in elections.

With respect to strategies for *redirection*, WP7 is collecting data on the role and legitimacy of new forms of representative intermediation in Europe, focusing specifically on mini-publics at the national level, deliberative forums at the EU-level, and civil society 'democracy fixer' organisations.

Cross-national data collection and mixed methods are used across the REDIRECT project (e.g. qualitative and quantitative, observational and experimental methods) including cross national mass and elite surveys; qualitative interviews with citizens, elites, and experts; content analysis, lab and conjoint experiments, and the Delphi method.

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Dissemination and impact:

REDIRECT expects to have impact at the scientific, policy-making and societal level. Together, the theoretical and empirical research aims to produce a fine-grained understanding of the representative disconnect that characterises European democracies. Its reconnect/redirect strategies aim to provide policymakers and societal actors with resources for policy learning: recommendations, policy briefs, conceptual toolkits and concrete strategies aimed at enhancing support for democracy, trust in political institutions, and the inclusiveness of representative democracy at local, regional, national and EU level.

In the policy and civil society realm, REDIRECT expects to influence policy-making priorities of civil society organisations, dealing with topics on democratic inclusion and innovation, participatory budgeting, citizens' assemblies and interest advocacy.

The REDIRECT measures to maximise impact (WP1, WP6 and WP9) are based on three pillars: dissemination, exploitation, and communication. Our activities have a multilevel character (local, national, and European level) and are primarily based on practices of dialogue rather than a one-way flow of information. The REDIRECT impact plan ensures a maximum distribution of the knowledge produced during the lifetime of REDIRECT and the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders in the process, following a clear and ambitious path of reflection. The passage from the up-stream phase (analysis of disconnect) to the down-stream phase (strategies for reconnect and rectification measures) will mark the most relevant feature of REDIRECT – a project whose ambition is to produce shareable rectification measures for the future of democracy in Europe.

WORKSHOP ORGANISERS: THE UNIVERSITY OF EXETER TEAM

The workshop was led and organised by Lise Herman and Alice Moseley, with the support of Dario Castiglione, Andrew Schapp and Oliver James, all at the University of Exeter (UoE). Michael Shirley provided research support and Bingshu Zhao assisted with advertising and promotion.

Dario Castiglione is the Lead on the UoE Team. He deals with much of the administrative hassle that comes with a big grant, and which we are very thankful for! Together with Andrew Schapp, Dario has been focusing on the analytical framework for the grant as a whole, specifically in providing a state-of-the-art review of the relevant literature as well as theorizing the notion of "representative ecology" which we are working with.

Lise Herman and Alice Moseley are working on the "strategies of redirection" component of this project, with a focus on climate mini-publics specifically. Their empirical contribution to REDIRECT explores the ways in which the French and British national Citizens' Assemblies on Climate (2019-2020) were politicised by key intermediaries (media, participants, political elites, Citizens' Assembly organisers) and with what effect for non-participating citizens. They adopt a broad understanding of politicization, defined as the processes by which issues gain political significance through contestation by rival actors in society, and accordingly explore the range of narratives about citizens' assemblies in the public sphere and their determinants. The objective here is to understand the role of politicisation in shaping how citizens approach mini-publics. They are particularly interested in how wider publics perceive citizens' assemblies in terms of legitimacy and representation and what are the differences in citizen support according to factors such as prior ideological orientation, political engagement, and education.

Oliver James also works on "strategies of redirection", exploring, via the use of survey experiments, how citizens and bureaucrats respond to different forms of decision-making, specifically via mini-public deliberation versus other forms of public representation and engagement.

DAY 1: DELIBERATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Why, how and with what impact?

KEY TOPICS, DEBATES AND QUESTIONS

Numerous topics were introduced by the workshop convenors and speakers before breaking out into small group discussions. These helped set the scene – providing some context, questions and debates for the subsequent deliberations.

(i) Deliberative public engagement on climate change: rationale, scope and appetite for deliberation

The workshop began with a short introduction and plenary discussion of forms of public engagement on climate change, including the rationale for public engagement and forms this might take (see figure 1). *Participants were invited to discuss the following topics in smalls groups, opening out into a plenary discussion:*

- Why should we engage the public in deliberations on climate change?
- What types of issues might be amenable to public deliberations on climate? Are mini-publics and other public deliberative forums appropriate for addressing highly contested climate/environmental issues?
- How should governments best engage the public on climate issues? What are the distinct advantages and drawbacks of different forms of public engagement and deliberation?
- How much public appetite is there for engaging in debates and discussions about climate change?

(ii) Forms of public engagement on climate change

The workshop then considered in more detail different varieties of and approaches to public engagement (see figure 1). We discussed three models of engagement, each serving different purposes, and each with its strengths and limitations. In the first model, the top-down behaviour change paradigm, government or public bodies try to effect change, seeking to influence the climate related behaviour of citizens and communities or stakeholder groups (e.g. businesses) using various means (persuasion, informational tools, behavioural public policy instruments, etc). Under the second model, more of a two-way approach, government seeks to effect behaviour change, but also 'detects' – i.e. listens to citizens, communities or other stakeholder groups and adjusts policy accordingly. This second model is associated with traditional consultative approaches (e.g. citizen surveys, public consultations, etc). Under the third model, the deliberative model, various groups in the public sphere engage in discussions and debates which in turn may influence government policy agendas and create social change.

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The third model has a two-way arrow between government and civil society, to illustrate that these deliberations may be initiated by civil society, but may also be orchestrated by government actors or public bodies in a more formal sense (e.g. through the creation of a government led deliberative mini-public).

Figure 1: Forms of public engagement
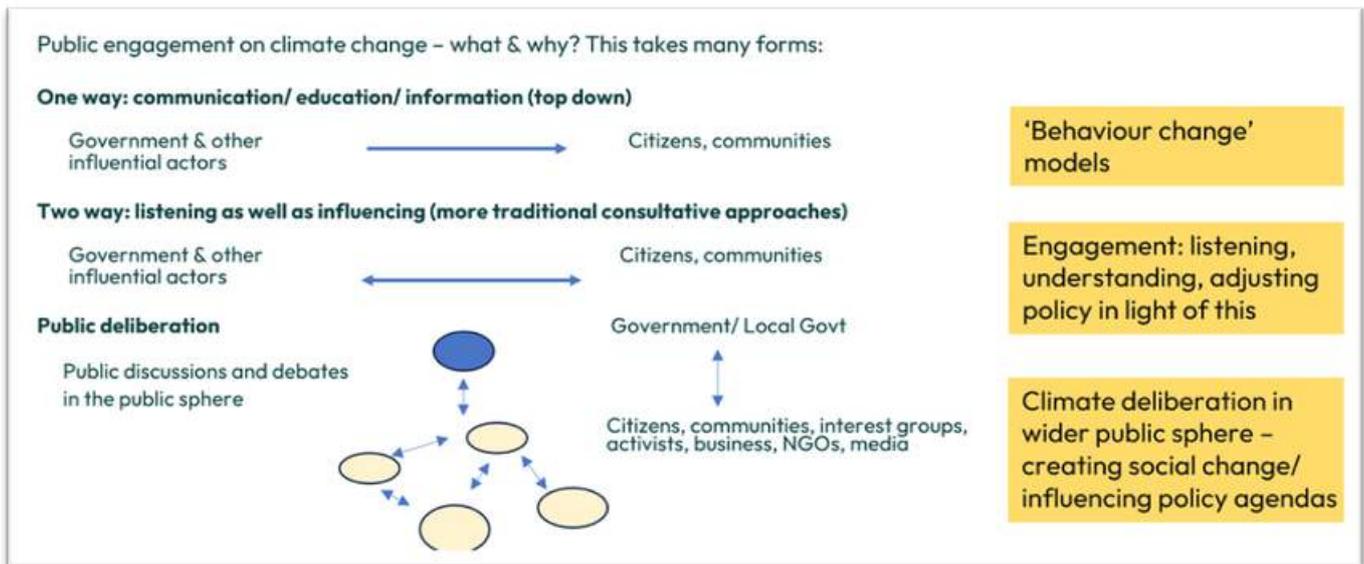
We then discussed deliberation as a concept, and the sites at which public deliberation occurs. Various definitions have been put forward in the literature for 'deliberation' in the context of public engagement (e.g. Elstub 2018; Bächtiger, et al. 2018). The OECD report circulated to participants (OECD 2021) provides a useful starting point, describing deliberation broadly as "weighing evidence and considering a wide range of perspectives in pursuit of finding common ground". According to the same report (ibid), deliberation is distinct from debate, where the aim is to advance one's own position, to persuade others and to 'win' arguments; and is different to bargaining, where people are engaged in giving concessions in exchange for other things. Dialogue is closer to deliberation because it is about developing mutual understanding, but it is not linked with making collective decisions which deliberative processes usually are. Deliberation is also more than simply 'giving' an opinion – for which other participatory methods, such as town hall meetings or citizen feedback surveys, are more appropriate. In these other sorts of participatory contexts, there is no expectation of listening to others, or learning (OECD, ibid).

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We discussed favourable conditions for promoting high quality deliberation, including the provision of balanced, broad and diverse information, sufficient time to cover topics in depth, and skilled facilitation of group work. Conditions such as reciprocal listening, equal space for contributions, and attention to power imbalances were noted. Groups were also introduced to the ideal of focusing on the 'common good' which is often inherent in deliberative processes – with those taking part in deliberations discouraged from focusing on individual interests, instead considering the interests of the group and wider society.

Participants were next encouraged to consider the distinction between formal, organised deliberative forums, taking place in 'invited' spaces, and the informal deliberations that take place in different settings in the wider deliberative 'system' (see figure 2), which often take place in what are referred to as 'claimed' spaces, or pre-existing, naturally occurring spaces.

Formal settings in the UK included deliberations occurring in the Houses of Parliament, such as select committees, and at the local level, such as local authorities' whole council meetings and committees. Formal settings also included invited spaces such as formally organised 'mini-publics' – i.e. deliberative citizens' assemblies comprised of representative samples of participants drawn from a specific geographical area, such as a town, city or nation. Other invited spaces included community assemblies – where residents are invited to participate in discussions on key issues affecting their communities. These do not usually include representative samples of participants, and tend to attract those with particular interests, for example, a shared commitment to addressing issues such as climate change, housing or poverty in their locality. These exhibit varying degrees of formality, depending on context and organisation.

Informal deliberations, it was noted, take place in various arenas – from workplaces and educational institutions to the media and households. Activist groupings or those taking part in protest, it was noted, typically engage in deliberation of sorts, although rarely in an organised or structured way like one might encounter in a mini-public or organised committee meeting.
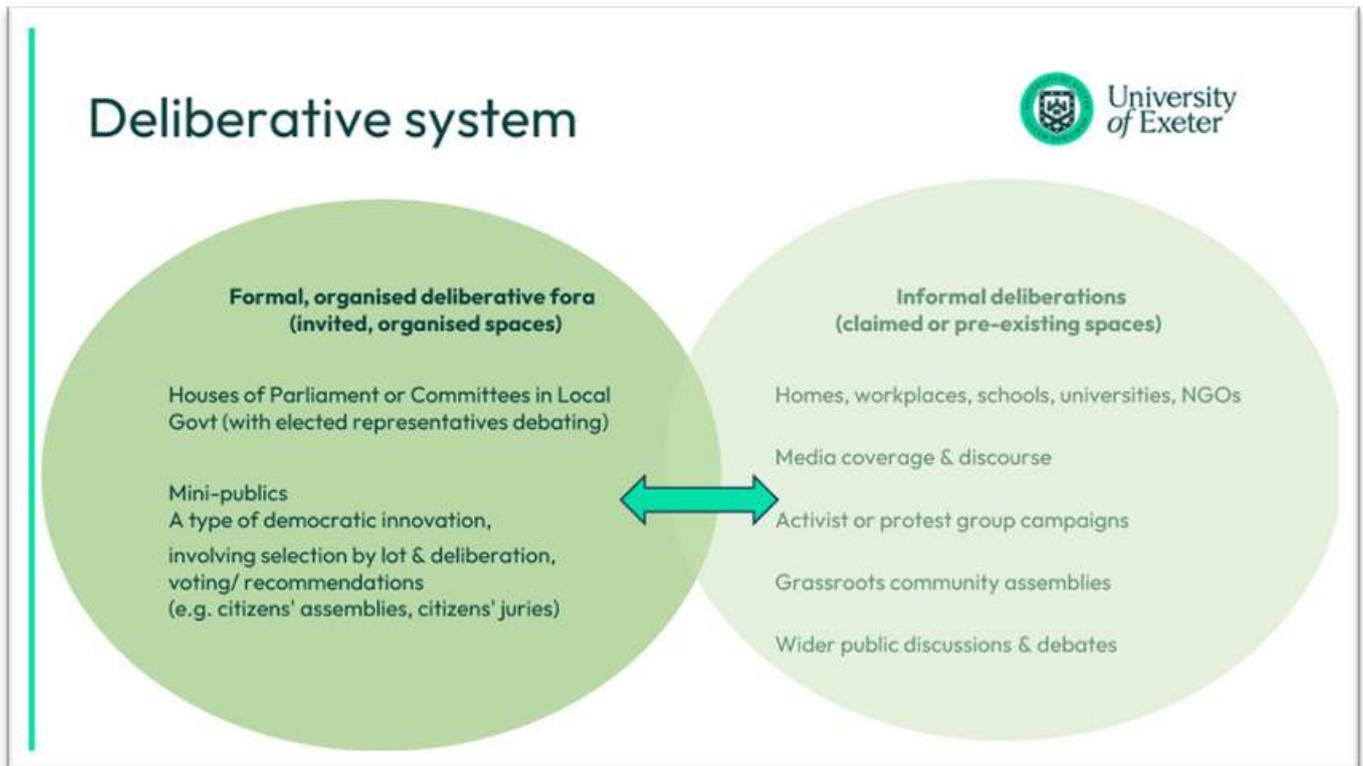
(iii) Mini-publics and Local and National Climate Assemblies in Europe

Mini-publics were discussed, a specific form of organised deliberation that are much in vogue, as described in recent reports (OECD 2020; OECD 2021; Demski et al. 2024). Mini-publics entail gathering a randomly selected group of citizens to deliberate on policy solutions to pressing public problems (Smith, 2009). A variety of types of mini-publics were introduced, including citizens' assemblies, citizens' juries, consensus conferences and participatory budgeting (see Smith 2009, for an overview). It was noted that there has been growing interest in these types of democratic innovations amongst practitioners, academics, think tanks, and those in policy-making roles. These vary in size, cost, duration and function, and there is an array to choose from (see the Participedia website).

We discussed the importance of including a diversity of participants in mini-publics – something which is promoted (to an extent) using a civic lottery to select members. Overall, the value of mini-publics, it was suggested, is that they have the potential to reach a more diverse group of people with different points of view, backgrounds and experiences, compared to other forms of public consultation or indeed compared to civil services or systems of electoral politics.

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At the same time it was acknowledged that there is a degree of self-selection into mini-publics since those invited have the opportunity to accept or decline their invitations, and even in spite of efforts by organisers to achieve representative samples of participants, acceptance of invitations is typically low and those how agree to participate do not always turn up (Caluwaerts and Reuchamps 2015; Fournier et al 2011). There is also growing evidence that there may be systematic differences between those who accept the offer to participate and those who do not (Neblo et al. 2010; Jacquet 2017; Germann 2025).

Delegates were next introduced to examples of citizens' assemblies on climate change taking place across Europe, including national and local assemblies. As illustrated in the image below, produced by KNOCA (Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies), these have taken place in many countries, both at national and local level (see also Appendix E for a list of national climate assemblies that have taken place across Europe, and a separate list of national, devolved and local climate assemblies within the UK). It was noted that whilst these are often initiated by local or national governments, they are sometimes initiated by other types of public sector body, by NGOs or by local communities themselves. It was noted that they have also taken place at the global level (e.g. the Global Citizens' Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis which took place during COP 26).

Figure 3: National and Local Climate Assemblies across Europe (Source: KNOCA)

KEY TOPICS, DEBATES AND QUESTIONS

(iv) Starting point: Expectations of climate mini-publics

Participants discussed common expectations of climate mini-publics and citizens' assemblies more broadly. Some of the most common benefits cited by those using or promoting these kinds of assemblies include the following:

- The potential ability to generate bolder, more radical action on policy issues like climate change than representative political systems have so far delivered.
- The provision of a 'social mandate' to implement more transformational solutions.
- The possibility to help break political deadlock that may be related to the interests and agendas of parties or powerful interest groups.
- A more in-depth form of engagement and more meaningful involvement in the political process (for participants), helping address the 'representative disconnect'.
- The ability to generate ideas, principles or solutions related to challenging issues where the appropriate course of action is unclear or is politically or ethically contentious.
- A potential for impacting the wider public – both in terms of shaping wider public debate and wider behaviours/actions.

(v) The puzzle: Limits to the impact of climate mini-publics

Despite the growing interest in mini-publics and their potential for improving policy as well as engaging members of the public in political and policy-related discussions in a novel and in-depth way, there remain several limits to the impacts of mini-publics to date. Some important challenges which were presented to and discussed with participants are set out below:

- Scepticism & lack of support for mini-publics from elected politicians who may not view them as 'legitimate'; a feeling that 'we' (the elected politicians) are the citizens' assembly.
- A lack of faith in citizens' ability to tackle complex, technical issues in the relatively short time scale of a mini-public – for example, in comparison to committees and communities of experts that advise governments on policy issues over a much longer period.

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- Design issues in the mini-public itself: this may constrain the scope of what participants are 'allowed' to consider, which consequently may limit their transformational potential, i.e. their ability to recommended solutions that could have more far-reaching consequences or challenge existing ways of doing things.
- Lack of clear linkage to policy processes: mini-publics are usually advisory rather than binding, and under-institutionalised, making it easy for politicians or public officials to 'cherry pick' recommendations selectively, or simply ignore recommendations.
- A lack of media traction or coverage of mini-publics, something which limits the knowledge and interest that wider publics have in them.

The workshop sought to explore if and how these limits to mini-publics might be overcome to enable them to deliver on their promise.

(vi) Key questions for the two-day workshop

Several questions were explored throughout the two days. Specifically on mini-publics or other organized deliberative forum, we explored the following:

- What can we realistically expect from climate mini-publics in terms of impacts and outcomes?
- How can climate mini-publics best be institutionalised (e.g. within systems of representative politics)?
- What kinds of impacts can assemblies, at different levels of governance, and led by different types of actors, generate?
- How can they best be linked up with wider publics?

More generally on public deliberation, the workshop sought to explore the following questions:

- Which forms of public deliberation are most appropriate, in what circumstances?
- How genuinely deliberative is the public sphere with respect to climate change?
- Are we placing too much faith in the public to deliberate their way to the right kinds of solutions?

Participants were also given the opportunity to raise and discuss other questions, including pressing challenges, such as those related to the impact of

mini-publics, or to public engagement on climate change more generally.

(vii) Varieties of deliberative forum: a typology

Delegates were introduced to different types of deliberative forum, initiated by sectors and at different scales, namely:

- Local civil society/NGO-led initiatives.
- Local public authority-led initiatives.
- National civil society/NGO-led initiatives.
- National public authority-led initiatives.

Invited workshop speakers (listed below) then shared their experiences of these different forms of deliberative forum that they had been involved in, through a variety of capacities (e.g. designing, running or evaluating them), including those led by different types of body (i.e. public sector or civil society), and at different geographical/political scales (local or national), as shown below. These varieties of forum would them become the topics discussed in the subsequent small group discussions.

Table 1: Typology of deliberative forums with examples

	Sector of commissioning/organising body	
	Public Sector	*Civil Society*
Scale		
National Level	UK Climate Assembly	National Trust/RSPB/WWF People's Assembly for Nature
Local Level	Devon Climate Assembly	Humanity Project Assemblies

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Speakers:

- **Dr Sarah Allen,** Freelance Researcher (formerly *Involve*). Speaking about an example of a National Level/Public authority-led assembly, i.e. *The UK Climate Assembly:* Climate Assembly UK.
- **Dr Michelle Twena,** University of Southampton (formerly Renew (UoE)/National Trust). Speaking about an example of National Level/Civil Society-led assembly, i.e. *The People's Assembly for Nature*: The People's Assembly | People's Plan for Nature (The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds/National Trust/World Wildlife Federation).
- **Lachlan Ayles,** Humanity Project. Speaking about Local Level/Civil society led assemblies, i.e. *Humanity Project Popular Assemblies,* Home | Humanity Project.
- **Dr Alice Moseley,** University of Exeter. Speaking about a Local Level/Public Authority-led assembly, the *Devon Climate Assembly,* Devon Climate Assembly - Devon Climate Emergency.

(viii) Frameworks for understanding the impacts of mini-publics

We next moved onto a discussion of mini-public impacts. It was noted that there are different ways of thinking about the kinds of impacts that mini-publics could achieve.

Drawing on the KNOCA Impact Evaluation framework (Demski et al 2024), as shown in Table 2, potential types of impact include:

- Instrumental impacts (e.g. changes to policy, behaviours, institutions).
- Capacity impacts (e.g. changes to resources allocated or expertise).
- Conceptual impacts (e.g. changes to knowledge, attitudes or understanding).

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Table 2: Potential impacts of climate assemblies and actors affected

Types of actors affected	Instrumental Impacts	Capacity Impacts	Conceptual impacts
State Actors/ public authorities (political dimension of impacts)	Changes to **policy, behaviour, practices** of key **state actors and institutions** – e.g. politicians, civil servants, officers	Changes **in level of resources allocated or expertise** to tackle climate change by public bodies (financial, infrastructures, personnel, expertise) or the place given to public engagement with policy	Changes to **how issues understood or thought about** – i.e. changes to knowledge, attitudes or understanding, e.g. by local or central government or regulatory bodies
Non-state/ civil society actors (social dimension of impacts)	Changes to **policy, behaviour, practices of non-state organisations** (NGOs, businesses, media editors etc); effects on behaviours of wider publics & assembly members	Changes to **resources & expertise by non-state actors**; Civil society initiatives to connect people with climate action; provision of practical or financial support by non-state actors	**Changes to knowledge, attitudes or understanding, norms**, e.g. by charities, NGOs, business, wider publics, assembly members, media narrative
Examples	French national climate assembly: ban on some short haul domestic flights; Local Devon Climate Assembly impacts on 5 year Devon Carbon Plan	Increased budgets or staffing for climate planning, projects or programmes; setting up of permanent oversight bodies to scrutinise policymaking or climate action progress	Heightened public or stakeholder awareness of climate issues; Either incremental changes or far-reaching paradigm shifts about how climate issues are understood – e.g. around rights of nature; crime as ecocide; etc

Source: Adapted from KNOCA Impact Evaluation framework (Demski et al 2024)

Another means of classifying the impacts was also introduced, i.e. *political/policy impacts vs social impacts*, reflecting academic literature which considers issues falling under these two broad categories. In terms of *political or policy impact*, this could include: impact on policy itself (i.e. new policies or changes to existing policy, including termination of current policies), changes to the policy process (e.g. a deliberative forum making recommendations about *how* to create, implement or evaluate policy), or wider political impacts, for example, on political structures, the political agenda, or on people's political interest or engagement. *Social impacts*, it was suggested, could include impacts on society, social attitudes or citizen behaviour.

We also considered *degrees of impact*, again drawing on Demski et al.'s (2024) Impact Evaluation Framework, as shown in Figure 4 below. These impacts could range from climate issues gaining policy makers' attention (lower impact), through to concrete impacts on climate goals, such as emissions reduction (highest impact). According to Demski et al. (2024: p15):

> 'The most significant and far-reaching impact of climate assemblies would arguably include changes to practices and behaviours of people and organisations that result in reduced carbon emissions, changes to social norms and culture than emphasise low carbon living, and changes to decision-making structures that support the emergence of sustainable societies'.

KEY TOPICS, DEBATES AND QUESTIONS

We considered and discussed the question *'How achievable is this by a single climate assembly'?*

Figure 4: Degrees of impact of climate assemblies

Source: KNOCA Impact Evaluation framework (Demski et al 2024)

KEY TOPICS, DEBATES AND QUESTIONS
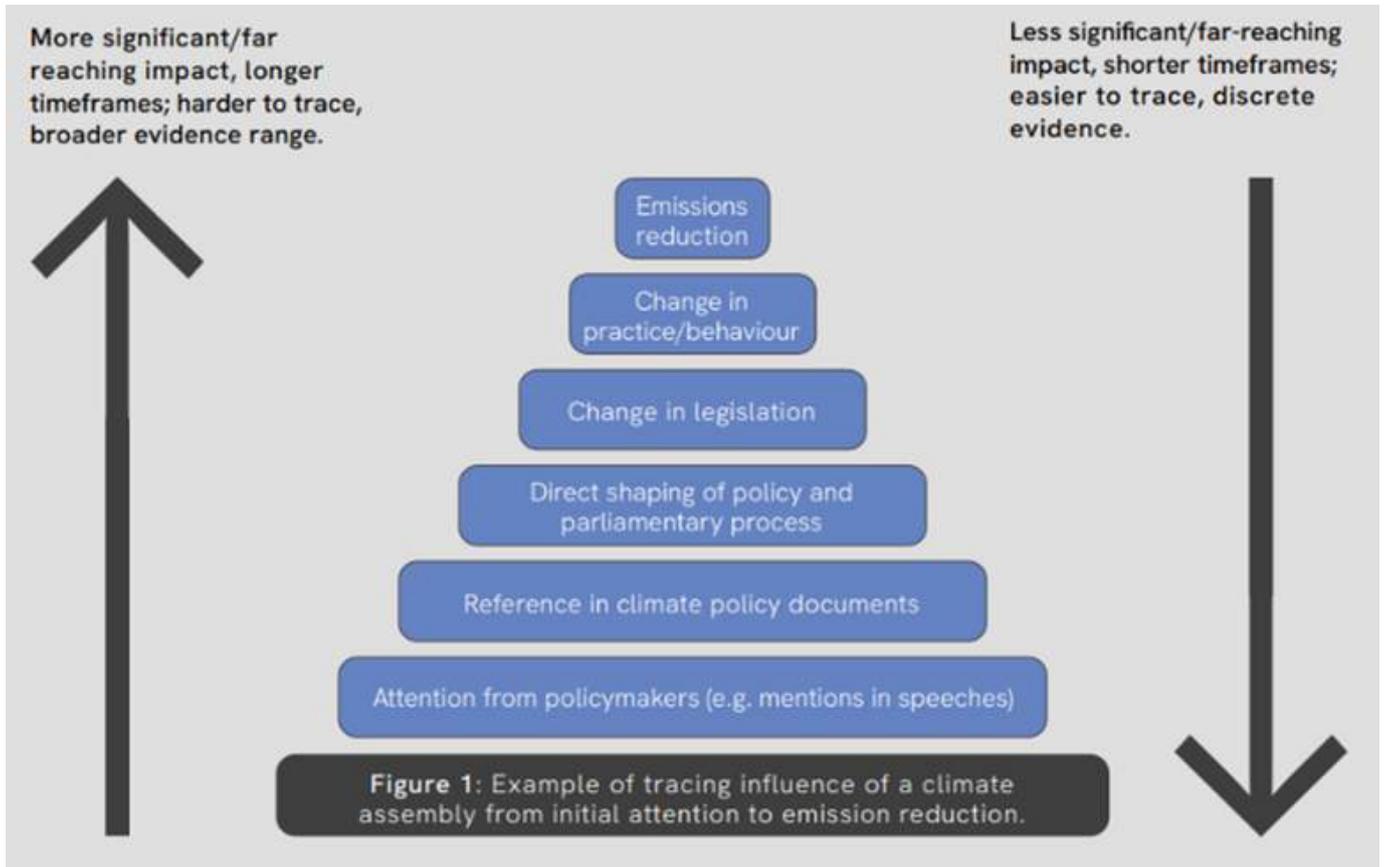
(ix) Deliberating in small groups: Principles and roles

Before engaging in the small group deliberations, the workshop facilitators introduced key principles for effective deliberation, and the role of different group participants, including the following:

Principles

- It was stressed that 'good' deliberation entails key principles such as equality of participation (allowing people equal time and opportunity to voice), mutual respect, and active listening.
- We also underscored the importance of recognising the legitimacy and relevance of different forms of discussion and expression. For example, whilst reason giving and argumentation (i.e. the give and take of suggestions, ideas and arguments) are important, and often considered to be at the heart of deliberative processes, we also acknowledged the role of storytelling, anecdote, personal experience and humour.

Roles

Groups were asked to agree key roles to enhance the quality of deliberation:

- **Moderator:** to keep group on track to deliberate well, synthesising where needed & helping group to complete task.
- **Timer:** to keep a check on progress & help moderator move on if needed.
- **Note taker:** to use an online note-taking tool & fill this in as best as they could, allowing us to capture themes from the group discussions.
- **Rapporteur:** to use the notes taken to feed back in the plenary discussion.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS: INTRODUCTION AND CHOICE OF DELIBERATIVE FORUM

Small groups were formed, introductions made, and roles allocated, as above. Based on the relevant interests and experience within each small group, groups were asked to choose two types of deliberative forum from the four listed below, to discuss throughout the day.

- Local public authority – e.g. local authority-led or initiated climate assemblies.
- Local non-governmental assembly – e.g. bottom-up, community assemblies led by citizens and community groups.
- National public authority – e.g. national level climate assemblies.
- National non-governmental – e.g. assemblies led by NGOs or coalitions of NGOs on climate or other environmental topics.

Groups began by discussing relevant examples of deliberative forums on climate or other environmental topics from the two types of forums on which they had chosen to focus.

Several groups discussed examples of local authority climate assemblies they either knew about or had been involved in. Examples included: the Kendal Climate Assembly (Northern England), Barnet, Westminster, Luton Climate Assemblies (London), and the Devon Climate Assembly (Southwest England). Some group members also discussed examples from other national contexts, such as Italy (Bologna). Some of the groups made comparisons with local non-governmental assemblies, such as Community Assemblies: such as the Exeter Community Assembly, or other deliberative panels that had focused on specific issues, such as climate adaption (e.g. flooding), whilst others compared these to national level climate assemblies led by governments (e.g. in the UK, Scotland, France, Canada or Ireland).

Groups were then asked to discuss, take notes and feedback on two issues: *policy/political impacts and social impacts*, following a set of structured topics set out below. Key themes arising from these discussions are outlined in the two sections that follow.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS: PUBLIC POLICY & POLITICAL IMPACTS

Groups were asked to consider both the intended outcomes and the policy or political impacts of the assemblies they had chosen to discuss. Examples of policy or political impact were re-capped, including: changes to climate policy or the political agenda, legislation, laws, regulation and official guidance. Participants were also referred to a variety of sources in their pre-circulated information packs, to assist them.

Participants were asked: Considering your chosen types of deliberative forum, please discuss the following:

Q1: To what extent are these designed and intended to influence public policy (compared to other potential intended impacts)? How do the two types compare?
Q2: What kinds of impacts on climate policy or politics have they had, or not? What indicators and evidence do we have? How do the two types compare?
Q3: What are the main obstacles to policy impact? What factors might help overcome these and facilitate policy impacts? How do the two types of assembly compare?
Q4: List three to four of the most important design considerations for those running mini-publics to maximize policy or political impact.

Summary of key themes from the discussion of policy/political impacts

Intended policy/political outcomes

The discussions revealed a diverse range of intended outcomes of the various deliberative forums, as well as some unexpected outcomes.

Participants commonly felt that the mini-publics discussed in their groups had been designed with the aim of informing local council/local authority strategies, such as their climate/sustainability strategies. More generally, they had been created to provide evidence and information on public views about policy options to help guide the work of local councils in their climate and sustainability agenda. Others suggested there was a desire to open-up the policy making process and improve transparency and communication with the public. However, in one case, it was suggested that a climate assembly was conducted to create an impression of action – perhaps a reflection of pressure from activist groups who had called for citizens' assemblies on climate change. Some felt that mini-publics had been utilised to increase the legitimacy of adopted policy solutions.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS: PUBLIC POLICY & POLITICAL IMPACTS

In summary, key themes around policy/political impacts of formalised mini-publics included:

- To inform local council/local authority strategies.
- To provide evidence and information on public views about policy options to help guide the work of local councils in their climate and sustainability agenda.
- To open-up the policy making process and improve transparency and communication with the public.
- To create an impression of action.
- To increase the legitimacy of adopted policy solutions.

Participants noted that community-led people's assemblies were initiated to inform the public about climate issues, with a hope that participants might then put pressure on local councils to go further. Indeed, some noted that the assemblies were initiated because of concern that previous public engagement on climate issues had been inadequate; or they were created with social inclusion concerns in mind. Some thought that people's assemblies were more inclusive, since anyone who wanted to take part could. One group suggested that the people's assemblies were led by informal alliances of people 'with an interest in changing the world'.

Some of the deliberative forums led by the community or civil society organisations were not intended to put pressure on the local council but were instead designed to generate community-led responses to climate problems and actions, such as developing groups of volunteers to take part in community clean-ups or flood resilience planning. Others were created in an effort to learn from the community itself about how to respond to issues affecting them, like flooding. In two cases, it was suggested that deliberative forums were created to change the way knowledge is produced, to ensure community knowledge was given a central place in the development of solutions.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS: PUBLIC POLICY & POLITICAL IMPACTS

In summary, key themes around policy/political impacts of community or civil society led deliberative forums included:

- To inform the public about climate issues.
- To create pressure on local councils to go further.
- To create more effective public engagement and improve inclusivity.
- To create forums for those committed to action.
- To generate community-led responses and learn from the community itself about how to respond to issues affecting it.
- To give community knowledge a more central place in the development of solutions and elevate the role of diverse forms of knowledge.

Actual policy/political impacts

Participants then moved on from discussing intended to actual impacts. In one case it was felt that the consequence of a citizens' assembly was that it provided a mandate against business as usual, and thus had led to real policy changes, such as the building of allotments for community food growing and changes to planning regulations. Others were more sceptical about concrete policy impacts and felt the main contribution of mini-publics had been to generate public debate about the issues they covered. One group commented on the lack of impact of the UK Climate Assembly, claiming that few of the 70 policy recommendations had been implemented to date.

In some cases, impacts went beyond those anticipated. In one example, the process had led to stronger working relationships between local stakeholders and the Council, with new initiatives arising in the aftermath of the assembly: such as, in one case, the development of a Community Energy Fund, and in another, a successful joint bid for funding which had led to the creation of an 'eco-hub', providing information and signposting to the wider public about how they could access support to reduce household carbon emissions.

Others commented on less tangible but still important impacts such as community building and mobilisation. In one case the process was thought to have given the assembly participants confidence, leading to some of them standing as town councillors. Another impact in one case had been the resultant increase in public communication and visibility of climate change issues, with the

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS: PUBLIC POLICY & POLITICAL IMPACTS

council required to respond publicly to a citizens' assembly's recommendations and vote on them.

A particular challenge for bottom-up people's assemblies was the lack of anywhere to 'take the outcomes of the assemblies'. Without any formal linkage to public bodies such as local authorities or other decision-making bodies, their policy impacts could be limited. The same group noted the conflict between 'loose' forms of deliberative democracy (such as people's assemblies) and formal mini-publics. They further raised the possibility of more creative and experimental forms of citizens' assembly that could break away from 'traditionalist solutions'.

In summary, actual policy/political impacts from mini-publics included the following (some of these also applied to community-led people's assemblies):

- The creation of a mandate against carrying on with 'business as usual'.
- Strengthening relationships between local authority and local stakeholder groups.
- Spin off projects and initiatives following these assemblies.
- Helping mobilise communities and improving community building.
- Increasing the confidence and further political engagement of assembly participants.
- Increasing public communication on climate issues and the improving the public visibility of climate issues.

At the same time:

- There were divided experiences in terms of concrete policy impacts: some were more impactful than others.
- Grassroots community assemblies lacked a formal linkage to a public body or policy process, hindering their policy impact.
- There was a desire for more experimental and creative forms of mini-public or deliberative public assembly.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS: PUBLIC POLICY & POLITICAL IMPACTS

Factors affecting political/policy impact and design recommendations

Groups were asked about the factors either promoting or inhibiting the political or policy impacts in the deliberate forums they were discussing. This extended to a discussion of design considerations for future deliberative forums.

Key inhibitors of impact highlighted by participants included a lack of political will or commitment to change and a lack of involvement of politicians in the design of deliberative forums. In some cases, the lack of policy impacts related to an assembly's recommendations falling outside of the mandate of those they sought to influence (e.g. the local authority), i.e. participants recommending things that these bodies had little control over, perhaps because they were related to national policy. A suggestion made by some was for more involvement of politicians in the design of mini-publics, to increase buy-in for the process. Some commented on the need to keep radical groups at arms' length, in order to maintain their perceived legitimacy. It was also noted that mini-publics were expensive, which may limit the extent of their usage and impact.

Key enablers of impact for local authority-led mini publics included a lack of pre-existing policy plans on climate action, which presented an opportunity for formal mini-publics, who could use this as an 'opportunity for authorship' of such plans. Some groups noted that the impact of mini-publics initiated by local authorities was enhanced when they were tied to broad policy agendas of the council, such as health, transport and economics agendas, as well as environmental ones. At the same time, when mini-public agendas were very diffuse, and participants had a large say over the agenda, it was suggested that policy impact may be more limited. Others noted that when recommendations were acted on, this built trust, which in turn facilitated impact.

With community-led assemblies, there was a reluctance on the part of public authorities to take up recommendations because the assemblies had not been officially sanctioned, creating an obstacle to impact. It was also noted that although community-led assemblies may lack a formal mandate, they did possess lobbying power. Yet a lack of participation of 'influential people' such as key council employees, or potentially councillors, also limited the policy impacts of these forums. The challenges as well as benefits of involving such people was acknowledged; whilst more involvement was desirable to achieve policy impact, it was considered important that equality of participation was maintained, with an implication that council employees' or councillors' presence may alter power

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS: PUBLIC POLICY & POLITICAL IMPACTS

dynamics.

Further limits to the impacts of community-led assemblies related to a feeling of 'talking to ourselves' and being in an 'echo chamber'. There was a consequent desire to involve a wider range of participants, including those without strong views on climate issues or other issues considered by the assemblies. Group members raised the question of how to get 'good representation' and to 'involve those that don't care'.

In summary, key enablers of and inhibitors to political/policy impact included:

Enablers:
- Assembly recommendations filling a void to help generate ideas or priorities when climate strategies not yet written or finalised.
- Finding synergies between climate related recommendations made by mini-publics and broader council priorities (e.g. economy, health, transport) – this increases the likelihood of recommendations being followed.
- Achieving the appropriate balance of involvement from key actors like politicians and activist groups.

Inhibitors:
- For community-led assemblies, lack of involvement of those with influence to make policy change.
- For community-led assemblies, lack of diversity in viewpoints of those taking part.
- Very open/diffuse or community-led agendas sometimes making less impact.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS: SOCIAL IMPACTS

Groups were next asked to consider social impacts of the two types of assembly they had chosen to discuss. Social impacts were recapped, including: changes in attitudes and behaviours of the wider public and/or participants, changes to civil society organisations' policies and practices (e.g. business, third sector & other stakeholders), and influence on public debate. Again, participants were directed towards specific readings and resources from their information packs.

Participants were asked: Considering your two different types of deliberative forum, as well as specific examples for each:

Q1: To what extent are these designed and intended to have social impact (compared to other potential intended impacts)? How do the two types compare?
Q2: What kinds of social impacts have they had, or not? What indicators do we have? How do the two types compare?
Q3: What are the main obstacles to social impact? What factors might help overcome these obstacles, and facilitate social impact? How do the two types compare?
Q4: List three to four of the most important design considerations for those running deliberative forums to maximize social impacts.

Summary of key themes from the discussion of social impacts

Intended and actual social impacts

In many of the assemblies discussed, there was an expectation and an ambition that social impacts would be achieved. In some cases, especially local NGO or community-led assemblies, there was an explicit aim to empower local people to be able to take action themselves. Building community connections, sharing knowledge, increasing empathy through listening to others, and including those with opposing viewpoints, were all anticipated outcomes in one NGO-led local assembly. In one local authority assembly, impact groups had been created at the outset to ensure assembly recommendations could be taken forward, and social impact had been an aspiration from the outset. Several groups also suggested that there was an aim to influence public debate. One group commented on the desire to create attitudinal change in civil society, as well as a 'learning disposition'.

In terms of actual social impacts, this was not a dominant theme in the group

discussions, but some groups did touch on it. In one case, an unintended consequence of one of the local authority assemblies was that it had led to the development of further assemblies.

Reflecting on one of the national assemblies, participants felt that whilst some social impacts had been achieved, these hadn't yet reached a critical mass. This reflected other comments that citizens' assemblies only reach a small proportion of the population and that broader awareness of them is often limited.

In summary, the anticipated and actual social impacts included:

- Empowering people to take action, including by building community connections (anticipated & actual).
- Sharing knowledge and understanding; building empathy (anticipated).
- Influencing public debate (anticipated).
- Creating attitudinal change and a learning disposition (anticipated).
- Inspiring further citizens' assemblies (actual).

Factors affecting social impact/design recommendations

Key enablers of social impact suggested by participants included using varied means of communication with wider publics – including social media campaigns, which would 'keep the themes of the assembly in view'. The idea of having a motivated, committed and charismatic individual connected with an assembly was noted by some to improve wider social engagement with it. In one case, it was felt that young mini public participants' voices carried more weight in terms of affecting wider public opinion, and that it was critical that assembly members were seen to be like 'ordinary' people. Another simply noted the importance of transparently and effectively reporting and communicating assembly recommendations to generate conversations about the issues in the wider public arena. This is something which could help build trust in the process, which was considered critical to achieving social impact. It could also help alleviate the problem of low awareness of mini-publics and people's assemblies amongst non-participants.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS: SOCIAL IMPACTS

The importance of membership and selection also came up. One group noted the importance of including ordinary people and citizens on advisory groups of assemblies and not just academics and experts, as this would give them more public credibility. Within assemblies more generally, it was considered especially important to include representatives of communities directly affected by the specific issues being debated by an assembly. It was noted that resource limitations hampered the inclusion of all those who might want to be included. One group noted the importance of including people 'not included in representative democracy', especially if assemblies as forms of deliberative democracy are seen to be complementary to representative democracy. This presumably might include those not eligible to vote (e.g. perhaps because of citizenship issues), or those who do not regularly engage in voting (perhaps due to political disengagement or disaffection), or those who do not engage in any way with party politics.

Others highlighted the need to avoid paternalistic relationships, in the post-assembly phase, between those who commission the assembly (such as a local authority) and the assembly participants and their communities. This message was reinforced by another group who felt that taking forward recommendations and actions was something that required everybody's input – and not something councils could do alone. Relatedly, in one local authority-led assembly, it was suggested that a collaborative rather than an adversarial mindset by action groups (with respect to the local authority) had helped generate more social impact. Another group commented on the culturally dominant individualistic rather than collective mindset as an impediment to social impact. The idea of state vs individual action, they suggested, was unhelpful and reflected a lack of skills to come together to engage in collective action. In one case, it was suggested that improved social connections were fostered when people were willing to 'share their life stories', something they felt was more likely to happen in NGO or civil society-led assemblies which had more flexible formats than formal mini-publics led by public bodies.

Some commented on the need for continuing resources in the post-assembly period and it was noted that financial issues and staff turnover also inhibited impacts (this was a theme also picked up under discussions of institutionalisation, as discussed below). One group suggested the need for investment in strategy planning and power mapping exercises to help establish ways forward to action the recommendations of assemblies. At the same time, it was suggested that there should be clarity for participants about whether the

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS: SOCIAL IMPACTS

aim is to exchange ideas and generate debate, to generate actions, or impact policy. Therefore, management of expectations was considered critical to the success of citizens' assemblies, as well as sufficient resourcing. Some commented on the need to make assemblies fun and creative in format, so that people would want to give up their free time to come along. Imagining the future of a town, rather than focusing on problems, was suggested as a way to make assemblies more engaging.

In summary, key design recommendations to improve social impacts included:

- Invest time and effort in communications strategies: use varied means, amplify the voices of younger participants, ensure participants are seen to be 'ordinary', i.e. like regular citizens or members of the public. This may help build trust in the process as well as improving general awareness to help build wider public conversations.
- Ensure membership of assemblies include those communities directly or disproportionately affected by the issues considered – this could also include these people acting as expert witnesses.
- Ensure advisory bodies include regular members of the public (i.e. not just subject specialists).
- Make efforts to reach those who are not regularly involved in representative politics (e.g. non-voters or those not eligible to vote); this may include using creative formats of engagement to make participating in assemblies seem appealing and fun.
- Find ways to strengthen links in the post-assembly phase between the assembly and relevant stakeholder groups and within civil society to help mobilise collective action.
- Invest in post-assembly action planning to maximise the likelihood of recommendations being actioned.
- Manage expectations about the desired outcomes of the assembly.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS: SOCIAL IMPACTS

DAY 2: INSTITUTIONALISING MINI-PUBLICS

Principles for future engagement

KEY TOPICS, DEBATES AND QUESTIONS

As with Day 1, ahead of the small group work, several topics, definitions and debates were introduced by the workshop convenors to provide relevant background information and context for the subsequent deliberations.

Mini-public institutionalisation: Definition

Participants were introduced to the concept of institutionalising mini-publics. It was noted that rather than deliberative engagement with publics, stakeholders or membership being merely 'ad hoc', this could be done more routinely.

This was likely to involve 'embedding', 'institutionalising' or 'integrating' deliberative engagement – making it a 'regular part of democratic governance' (OECD 2021), which could involve:

- Connecting/linking mini-publics to public decision-making bodies (parliaments, local councils, planning authorities etc).
- Groups of citizens (representative of wider populations) being involved in deliberations at a range of stages of the policy process – agenda setting, policy recommendations, monitoring of implementation, etc.

The benefits of institutionalisation, it was suggested could include:

- Making usage of mini-public deliberation less dependent on political will and less likely to be used for political/instrumental ends.
- More likelihood of achieving impact than one off processes.
- Trust-building; involving more people due to the ongoing nature of deliberation.
- Less expense than ad hoc, one-off assemblies convened for specific topics.
- Institutionalising deliberation, it was suggested, could be apt for topics like climate change which are ever evolving and multi-dimensional, where ongoing rather than one off engagement is needed.

KEY TOPICS, DEBATES AND QUESTIONS

Models of institutionalisation

Participants were next introduced to a variety of models of institutionalisation of mini-publics outlined by the OECD (OECD, 2021), as depicted in Figure 5. For reasons of time, the workshop focused on models 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 & 7, marked with stars, although further details on all the models are available in the OECD report. Description and examples are provided in the text below. Table 3 further below (OECD, 2021) summarises the different features of these models, including their linkages to different parts of the political or policy process, their mandates, who initiates them, level of government, and implementing countries.

Figure 5: Eight models of institutionalising deliberative democracy (source: OECD, 2021, p11)

- **Model 1: Combining a permanent citizens' assembly with ad-hoc citizens' panels.** For example, Ostbelgein, where two citizens' deliberative bodies have been institutionalised: a permanent Citizens' Council, comprising 24 citizens selected by lot, who convene citizens' assemblies/panels on specific topics of their choosing, also comprising citizens selected by lot. The collective recommendations of these bodies are discussed with elected members and the overseeing minister who must 'indicate whether and how the recommendations will be implemented by parliamentary or governmental measures—with rejections requiring specific justification'. Furthermore, the Citizens' Council then monitors the response to and implementation of their recommendations. A similar model operates in Paris (see OECD 2021, p14-17).

- **Model 2: Connecting representative public deliberation to parliamentary committees.** For example, the Brussels Region of Belgium, where the regional parliament has established deliberative committees (comprised of a stratified sample of 45 citizens selected by lot, plus 15 MPs from across the parties) that work together to discuss policy issues. There can be up to 3 per year, initiated either by parliamentarians or by citizens (1000 signatures must be obtained). Committee members deliberate, vote, and then provide recommendations to Parliament. Parliament is required to respond to all the recommendations within 6 months at a reconvened meeting of the deliberative committee. A similar model operates in New South Wales, Australia (see OECD 2021, p20-21).

- **Model 4: Standing citizens' advisory panels.** For example, in Toronto, Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area Region, standing panels of groups of citizens (28-32) selected by lot were held between 2015-2020, covering numerous issues over a long time-span (approx. 2 years in most cases). Numerous meetings of these panels (approx. 12-16) were held over this period, providing ongoing input into issues relating to planning and transportation, to inform Toronto City Planning Division and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) transport authority. These contrast with one off citizens' assemblies which typically focus on single issues, often held over a period of just weeks or a few months.

- **Model 5: Sequenced representative deliberative processes throughout the policy cycle.** For example, in Bogota, Colombia. An 'Itinerant Citizens' Assembly' (ICA) was created, which entailed a series of deliberative bodies or assemblies ('chapters') connected to the City Council. Each chapter was comprised of a different group of citizens selected by civic lottery. The first chapter (110 members) would establish broad objectives, which would be taken to the next chapter (60 members, 18 of which were also in the first assembly) who would create a series of detailed recommendations. The collective recommendations were taken to Bogota City Council via a public meeting, and meetings with individual councillors. These recommendations were then used to inform Bogota's Urban Plan. A third chapter then evaluated the plan.

Model 6: Requiring representative public deliberation before certain types of public decisions. For example, in France a law was introduced in 2011 requiring that any changes in laws relating to bioethics must be preceded by public debates, deliberations and consultations. Various forms of

consultation are used, including more traditional methods such as online submissions and surveys, as well as deliberative processes involving representative groups of citizens.

- **Model 7: Giving people the right to demand a representative deliberative process.** For example, in Vorarlberg, Austria, citizens have the right to demand a citizens' deliberative council, if a petition of 1000 or more signatures is obtained. The deliberative councils last typically 2 days, with 15 citizens (selected by lot) meeting to deliberate the issue(s). These deliberations are characterised by 'dynamic facilitation', where 'the facilitator encourages members to speak their minds without having to follow a strict agenda or process' (OCED 2021: 27). Recommendations produced are then discussed in a broader citizens' café, open to anyone who wishes to participate. The citizens' collective recommendations are then presented to the public body, with a small group of members assigned to follow up with the regional government to consider implementation of the recommendations.

Table 3: Characteristics of Eight Models of Institutionalised Deliberative Democracy (OECD, 2021, p11)

Institutionalisation model	Linked to	Mandate	Who initiates	Level of government	Countries
1. Combining a permanent citizens' assembly with one-off citizens' panels	A legislative body	• Agenda setting • Initiating citizens' panels • Monitoring implementation of recommendations • Asking written questions	Embedded into law/ongoing	Local, regional/state	Belgium, France
2. Connecting representative public deliberation to parliamentary committees	A legislative body on a working level	• Providing recommendations • Voting on recommendations	Citizens MPs	Regional/state	Australia, Belgium
3. Combining deliberative and direct democracy	A referendum/ballot measure	• Drafting a collective statement of key facts for the voters pamphlet	Public authority	State	United States
4. Standing citizens' advisory panels	An executive body on a working level	• Providing ongoing citizen input on a specific issue	Public authority	Local, regional/state	Canada
5. Sequenced representative deliberative processes throughout the policy cycle	A legislative body	• Different and evolving mandate for each assembly in the sequence (proposing objectives, developing recommendations, evaluation)	Public authority	Local	Colombia
6. Giving people the right to demand a representative deliberative process	A legislative body	• Providing recommendations	Citizens Public authority	Regional/state	Austria
7. Requiring representative public deliberation before certain types of public decisions	Type of decision	• Providing recommendations	Legal requirement	National	France
8. Embedding representative deliberative processes in local strategic planning	Planning stage of the policy cycle	• Providing recommendations	Legal requirement	Regional/state	Australia

Note: The data is descriptive based on the existing examples of these models.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS: COMPARING MODELS OF INSTITUTIONALISATION

Groups were next asked to consider some of the specific models of institutionalisation outlined by the OECD (as above), with reference to relevant resources, examples and case studies provided:

- Individual group members were asked to choose one model each, and read up on its mechanisms and illustrative examples.
- Individual group members then reported back to the whole group on key mechanisms and illustrative examples for the chosen models.
- As a group, they then discussed the pros and cons for each model, specifically for achieving policy and social impact. They were asked: What are their potential strengths? What are their potential weaknesses?

Key strengths and challenges or weaknesses highlighted by the groups for each model included the following:

Model 1: Combining a permanent citizens' assembly with one-off citizens' panels, e.g. Ostbelgein & Paris

Strengths:
- The permanence and regularity of the process was considered a strength, giving the model more 'clout'.
- Agenda setting powers were also considered an advantage.
- The rotation of members was considered to be a positive and important element.
- Elected politicians are kept accountable by a citizens' council who monitor the implementation of their recommendations by elected representatives.

Challenges/weaknesses:
- At the same time, it was noted that the permanence of the body could lead to pressure groups attempting to 'flood the schedule' with their issues.
- Some felt that the model did not engage political parties well enough.
- Others felt unclear whether the model provided enough feedback by decision-makers.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS: COMPARING MODELS OF INSTITUTIONALISATION

Model 2: Connecting representative public deliberation to parliamentary committees, e.g. Brussels Region of Belgium, New South Wales, Australia

Strengths:
- Seen to promote inclusivity – i.e. involves both politicians and citizens.
- The high degree of institutionalisation – i.e. connected to regular representative political processes (i.e. parliamentary committees) – was seen as advantage.
- A good way of connecting citizens with parliamentary decision-makers.
- A clear process and timeline for political decision-makers to respond.

Challenges/weaknesses:
- Agenda pre-determined, which may be restrictive.
- Issues typically considered were quite technical and narrow, meaning citizens may not be particularly interested in engaging.

Model 4: Standing citizens' advisory panels, e.g. Toronto and Greater Hamilton, Canada

Strengths:
- Longevity of the panels could provide continuity.
- Leading to improved democratic participation and knowledge of panel members, given the longevity of the process.

Challenges/weaknesses:
- Longevity of the panels could prove challenging in case of personnel change.
- Requires a high degree of buy in from local leaders and managers – should these leaders or managers change, the process could be at risk.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS: COMPARING MODELS OF INSTITUTIONALISATION

Model 5: Sequenced representative deliberative processes throughout the policy cycle, e.g. Bogota, Columbia

Strengths:
- Helpful for discussing complex issues or where there is uncertainty and where issues evolve over time.
- Involves a large number of everyday people (rotation in chapters means many thousands are involved in decision-making).
- Iterative process spans policy process (including agenda-setting, prioritisation, evaluation).
- Enables recursive dialogue between citizens and decision-makers.

Challenges/weaknesses:
- Length and complexity of process means that a high degree of political will and commitment would be required.
- Given the large number of citizens involved over many hours of deliberation, the process could be costly if members are remunerated.

Model 6: Giving people the right to demand a representative deliberative process, e.g. Vorarlberg, Austria

Strengths:
- Progression from citizen council meetings to citizens' cafes allow for greater feedback and public deliberation with greater numbers of people.
- Bottom-up nature of process considered a strength, giving citizens power to demand that certain policy issues are addressed.

Challenges/weaknesses:
- The 'dynamic facilitation element' means that the process used in the citizens' council meetings may feel rather unstructured.
- The citizen cafe element could be challenging to manage – need for effective moderation of citizen cafe deliberations including methods for ensuring inclusivity.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS: COMPARING MODELS OF INSTITUTIONALISATION

Model 7: Requiring representative public deliberation before certain types of public decisions, e.g. French law on bioethics

Strengths:
- Was considered 'methodologically interesting' as the process involves gathering a broad range of data for deliberation – including online consultations, deliberative meetings, etc.
- It was considered quite a 'traditional set up', like a citizens' assembly, integrating deliberation with evidence well, compared to some of the other models which were not considered as 'sensitive to some of the complexities of issues'.
- The legal and constitutional element was considered a positive, making this a strong form of institutionalisation.

Challenges/weaknesses:
- Need for clarification about which methods of consultation and deliberation are used, and how they are combined.
- Gaining public involvement may be challenging, especially if the issues considered are relatively technical or specialist.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS: MAKING THE CASE FOR INSTITUTIONALISATION

Participants were then provided with a scenario, in which they were asked to imagine that their group needed to make a case for the institutionalisation of mini publics or other forms of deliberative public engagement. They were asked the following questions:

- Whom would you need to convince? What are the key arguments you would draw on? What are the key advantages of institutionalising mini-publics/public deliberation?
- What are the key counterarguments you might face? From whom? How would you address these?

Some of the key themes that emerged from the group discussions were as follows:

- A need to convince the public, with busy lives. A need to persuade them that giving up their time will be worthwhile.
- A need to convince politicians (local and national) as some are reluctant to cede power: recognition that some politicians may be reluctant, seeing themselves as the representatives and best placed to make policy, whilst others may see their role as a mediator for the public, and welcome public deliberation to shape policy. Some may be reluctant to add another veto point that may be seen as another layer of bureaucracy. Involving politicians early on may be one way to help build their support (there is also some support for this idea in academic research literature, see Hendricks 2017).
- Civil servants or public officials could be key to initiating and supporting institutionalisation of deliberation – it was noted that these people are often more open to this than councillors or elected members.
- Others suggested focusing on 'low hanging fruit' (rather than focusing on national government) where other institutions could become a focal point for supporting public deliberation, such as museums, libraries, healthcare bodies, universities, or potentially even private sector bodies.
- Costs and time involved in organising mini-publics would be off-putting, especially for councils, given tight budgets. Thus, there is a need to persuade people of the benefits, using persuasive examples of cases where public deliberation had led to better decision-making. Some stressed the role of self-organised deliberative events which would be less costly.
- Groups emphasised the importance of engaging the media effectively and the potential role of influencers and political allies.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON THE CAPACITY OF MINI-PUBLICS TO HELP ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE

In order to draw some conclusions and provide space for reflection, participants were finally asked, in a plenary session, to express views about the role of mini-public deliberation in addressing climate change. Specifically, they were asked:

- What kind of emotions do mini-publics mobilize (in participants, organizers, onlookers)?
- What is your own emotional journey with mini-publics? Have your emotions changed over time?
- Do you have hope that mini-publics can play a role in addressing climate change or adapting to it? If so, what is the root of that hope?

This session was not formally written up or thematised, but the session provoked a wide-ranging discussion and allowed participants to reflect on their learning and debates from the previous two days. The session was an opportunity for everyone to come together as a whole and consider, overall, the contribution that mini-public deliberation or community deliberation more broadly could have, or was already playing, in tackling climate change challenges. The session led to many participants sharing their personal experiences and journeys with public deliberation and expressing a range of emotions: from anxiety, fear and hope, to expressions of personal agency and feelings about the importance of community and collaboration.

GUEST LECTURE AND POSTGRADUATE MASTERCLASS

The workshop was followed by an illuminating lecture from one of the foremost academic experts in mini-public deliberation, including questions of mini-public institutionalisation, Professor Mark E Warren, University of British Columbia, Canada. Mark's lecture was entitled 'When, Where, and Why Might Elected Political Elites Reach for Democratic Innovations'? Mark's biography can be found here: Mark Warren - Department of Political Science.

This was followed by an engaging postgraduate masterclass on 'Democratic deliberation and Representation', with facilitation and presentations from Professor Mark E. Warren and Professor Pierangelo Isernia, University of Siena, Italy: ISERNIA PIERANGELO | Professor page.

Slides and papers from these talks can be made available upon request.

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The workshop addressed two broad questions: first, whether and how public deliberation may help address the environmental crisis; and secondly, the role of citizens' deliberative forums in revitalising the representative political system. There was a large focus on various types of formally constituted mini-public, i.e. deliberative bodies made up of representative groups of citizens selected by lot, as well as more informal deliberative assemblies, including those initiated from grassroots community organisations, groups of interested individuals, and stakeholder groups working together. Bringing together those with direct experience of initiating, running and evaluating these processes with academics, political representatives and policy professionals yielded valuable insights into these questions. We delved into these questions in a structured way, by considering two key issues: impacts and institutionalisation.

Impacts

A consideration of *assembly impacts* helped us think about the potential effects of public deliberation in addressing the environmental crisis as well as other challenges facing governments and societies. Specifically, *political or public policy impacts* were considered (e.g. changes to policy, legislation, regulations or official guidance, effects on the political agenda, or on the way political processes are conducted), as well as *social impacts* (e.g. changes to behaviours, attitudes of the wider public and/or participants, changes to civil society organisations' policies and practices, influencing public debate).

Some of the key political or policy impacts raised by participants included: the development of a social mandate that 'business as usual' was not an option; stronger relationships between local authority and other local stakeholder groups; spin off projects and initiatives following these assemblies, including community-led or partnership projects; improving community building and mobilisation; increased confidence and political engagement of assembly participants; and finally, increasing public communication on climate issues and the more public visibility of climate issues.

Yet some assemblies were more impactful than others; for instance, many grassroots community assemblies lacked a formal linkage to a public body or policy process, hindering their policy impact. Furthermore, many formalised mini-publics lacked a clear linkage to a policy process, or resources were too limited to act upon recommendations, meaning impacts were often weak.

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Policy impact was enabled in the examples discussed in several ways. When local policy strategies were still to be written, assembly recommendations could be fruitfully integrated. Therefore, the timing of a deliberative process to be compatible with the cycle of policy making processes was critical. At a local authority level, policy impact was also facilitated when the assembly recommendations were relevant to broader council priorities (e.g. recommendations from a climate assembly may also be relevant to economic, planning, transport or health goals and strategies). Achieving the appropriate balance of involvement from key actors like politicians and activist groups was also important: too much or too little involvement of different actors at different stages may compromise the process or affect others' responses to it. Finally, ensuring adequate resources for the post-assembly phase was considered critical to help ensure recommendations could be acted upon.

Participants highlighted several social impacts of public deliberative forums, some of which were anticipated and others actual. These included: their ability to empower people to take action; building community connections; sharing knowledge and understanding; building empathy; influencing public debate; creating attitudinal change and a learning disposition; and inspiring further citizens' assemblies. The spin-off projects highlighted by several participants, that had occurred in the aftermath of a deliberative process, revealed that public deliberative forums can have unanticipated consequences. Therefore, when considering their potential impacts, a focus on policy impacts alone may be too narrow a frame of reference – thinking more broadly about their role in community building, social change and social innovation is also warranted.

In order to build social impact, workshop participants made several recommendations, including: investing time and effort in communications strategies, including ensuring the processes are seen to be based upon the experiences of 'ordinary' people; working hard to build trust in the process as well as improving general awareness to help build wider public conversations; involving those communities or people most directly affected by the issues; ensuring citizen representation on advisory groups; targeting those who are most disengaged from the political process; and using creative formats of engagement to make participating in assemblies seem appealing and fun. Participants also stressed the importance of strengthening links in the post-assembly phase between the assembly and relevant stakeholder groups and within civil society to help mobilise collective action, and investing in post-assembly action planning to maximise the likelihood of recommendations being actioned.

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Institutionalisation

In order to develop understanding about how citizens' deliberative forums might help revitalise the disconnect experienced by many citizens under the system of representative democracy, we focused on issues of institutionalisation. In wide-ranging discussions, we considered a variety of ways that mini-publics, or indeed other types of deliberative forum, might be better integrated into existing systems of representative politics to address some of their current limitations. Groups reflected on various models of institutionalisation, discussing their strengths, weaknesses and potential uses, as well as more general principles to contemplate when considering the integration of deliberative public forums within systems of representative politics.

The models were diverse, but some key themes came through repeatedly when considering these different models. Longer running and more permanent models were viewed as more productive, as they were more likely to be taken seriously and were seen as more impactful, helping build a deliberative culture. Yet the time and cost of this was recognised, as well as the need for political will, and the perceived risks of pressure groups attempting to shape the agenda. It was also noted that longer running processes were susceptible to being derailed when key personnel or leadership changed.

It was suggested that we may need to think beyond the obvious – i.e. beyond deliberative forums initiated by national and local governments, and consider how deliberative processes could be integrated into and supported by a diverse range of institutions across the public, profit and non-profit sectors. It was also noted that civil servants and local public officials must not be overlooked, alongside elected representatives, as these actors often play a critical role in implementing and institutionalising mini-publics and other deliberative processes. Engaging wide-ranging members of the public as well as those with divergent perspectives was considered critical, including those who may be inclined to self-select out of such processes. Using a creative and engaging range of formats for deliberative events could help with this process.

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Linking with the Aims of REDIRECT

Revisiting one of the core aims of REDIRECT – shedding light on strategies for redirection – our workshop has yielded several insights. First, it can be seen that mini-publics are increasingly used across Europe and beyond by national governments and other public bodies, mainly to provide them with insights into public views about specified policy issues they are grappling with. Increasing use is also made of mini-publics by local governments – for instance climate assemblies have been widely used in recent years by local authorities across the UK.

Yet despite pockets of enthusiasm amongst elected representatives at either a national or local level, there remains scepticism amongst many politicians about this method of engaging citizens. If these institutions are to be more widely used, there should be greater efforts to inform elected representatives about the nature of these institutions, to engage them in a wider dialogue about their potential uses, and to find ways of involving them, including from the early stages. Politicians could be more involved in the design of such processes (Hendriks 2017), can be included as observers of the processes (Gastil et al. 2012; Hendriks 2016), and in some cases have also been involved as participants (such as Citizens' Assemblies in Ireland and British Columbia, Canada). Organisers should also build in opportunities to allow elected representatives to take part in discussions with participants about their recommendations. There are a growing number of examples of mini-publics that include processes whereby political representatives must provide a formal response to mini-public recommendations within a certain time period (e.g. the Ostbelgein and Brussels Region models in Belgium), or where citizens scrutinise the implementation of these (e.g. Ostbelgein, Bogota, Vorarlberg).

Our workshop also revealed insights into how civil society organisations – what might be labelled using REDIRECT terminology as 'democracy fixer organisations' – are currently initiating and leading on innovative ways of engaging members of the public in dialogues about a variety of important issues facing citizens in their localities or more broadly at a national level. Workshop participants highlighted examples of cases where people's assemblies were initiated to pressurise public authorities, local governments or national government to do more on issues like climate change, as well as other issues, such as poverty, social justice, transport or food. They were also used to raise awareness amongst the public, and sometimes led to the creation of collective, community initiatives, political actions or alliances that would help to tackle

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some of these issues. At the same time, whilst the independent nature of these community-led or NGO-led forums had many benefits, a lack of connection to formalised political processes and a lack of engagement from those in positions of influence, often meant their direct policy impact was limited. Being clear with participants about the likely scope and nature of impacts of their participation was therefore considered important, and perhaps acceptance that different varieties of deliberative forum play different kinds of roles in revitalising democratic engagement.

Overall, we hope that bringing together a diverse group of practitioners, activists and academics in an environment of sharing, learning and discussion will have helped push forward understanding about the role, limitations and ways forward for utilising mini-publics and other forms of deliberative public forums in 're-directing' or 're-connecting' democratic participation. Paying close attention to issues of impact (social and political) as well as integration within existing systems of representative democracy are to key to these aims.

APPENDIX A: WORKSHOP AGENDA

WORKSHOP DAY 1: Monday 19th May

The impact of deliberative public engagement on climate: Lessons from past experiences

12.00-12.45: Registration, Networking, and Buffet Lunch

12.45-14.00: Presentation of the workshop and introductions

14:00-14:20: Whole group discussion on public deliberation and climate change

14.20 -14.30: *Tea & Coffee break*

14.30 -15.10: Group discussion 1: Introduction and choice of mini-public types

15.10-15.40: Group discussion 2: Public Policy or Political Impacts

15.40-16:10: Group discussion 3: Social Impacts

16.10 -16.20: *Tea & Coffee break*

16.20-17:00: Feedback from group discussion 2 and 3: Public Policy and Social impact

17:00 End of Day 1

18:30: *Dinner*

APPENDIX A: WORKSHOP AGENDA

WORKSHOP DAY 2: Tuesday 20th May

Institutionalising deliberative public engagement on climate: Principles for the future

9.00 - 9.30: *Registration, networking and coffee*

9.30 – 9:50: Recap from Day 1 + Group discussion 4: Introductions and ice-breaker

9:50 — 10:05: Introduction to Day 2

10.05 – 10.20 Group discussion 5: Making the case for institutionalisation

10.20-10.50 Group discussion 6: Comparing models of institutionalisation

10:50-11.00: *Tea & Coffee break*

11.00 – 11:30 Feedback from group discussion 5 and 6: Institutionalisation

11:30-12:00: Whole group discussion: Are you hopeful in the capacity of deliberative public engagement to help address climate change?

The Workshop was followed by lunch and a public lecture, sponsored by the SPSPA Department

12.00 - 13.00: *Buffet Lunch*

13.00-14.00: Politics Public Lecture by Professor Mark E Warren, 'When, Where, and Why Might Elected Political Elites Reach for Democratic Innovations?, followed by Q/A.

14.00 – 14.15: *Tea & Coffee break*

14.15 - 16.00 Workshop/Postgraduate Masterclass on Democratic deliberation and Representation, with Professor Mark E. Warren and Professor Pierangelo Isernia.

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANTS

Thank you to all of our participants who gave two days of their time to engage in varied and productive discussions, helped by taking notes and moderating group discussions, and to all who presented at the event.

Sarah Allan, freelance consultant and leading specialist in the design and delivery of deliberative public engagement in the UK. Formerly Director of Climate Programmes, and Director of Capacity Building and Standards, at public participation charity *Involve*. Member of the Welsh Government's Innovating Democracy Advisory Group.

Lachlan Ayles, Head of Policy, Learning and Evaluation at Community Organisers Ltd, a national charity that trains and supports people and organisations in the principles and practices of community organising. Also core team member of the Humanity Project, a network of twenty locally rooted community organisations developing a programme of popular assemblies.

Stewart Barr, Professor of Geography at the University of Exeter and is an environmental social scientist specialising in behavioural change and public engagement with environmental issues.

Nicky Britten, former Professor of Applied Healthcare Research at Exeter Medical School in 2020, where she led the patient and public involvement team, former member of the Exeter Living Lab. Exeter climate café facilitator.

Dario Castiglione, Associate Professor in Political Theory, main areas of research comprising democratic theory and the history of early modern political philosophy.

John Erik Fossum, Professor of political science at the ARENA Centre for European Studies at the University of Oslo, Norway. A research focus on citizenship, democracy, federalism and constitutionalism, with particular emphasis on Europe

Rick Harmes, academic researcher and former public servant. His main research interests are public value, constitutionalism, political design, localism, and devolution.

Raphaëlle Haywood, Senior Lecturer in Physics and Astronomy and Assistant Director of the Global Systems Institute (GSI) at the University of Exeter. Leading the GSI's series of community assemblies and helps run regular assemblies in her neighbourhood with Exeter Community Assembly.

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANTS

Lise Herman is a Senior Lecturer in Politics at the University of Exeter, with research interests in the role of partisanship in the crises and renewal of representative democracy.

Ekaterina (Katya) Kolpinskaya, Senior Lecturer at the University of Exeter, Cornwall and Academic Fellow with the UK Parliament. Her research focuses on political representation, religion and politics, and legislative studies, especially in Britain.

Oliver James, Professor of Political Science, focusing on topics in public policy including citizen-state relations, policy evaluation, environmental policy and politics, digital technology, and public service provision and governance (including public participation).

Sabina Leonelli, Chair of Philosophy and History of Science and Technology at the Technical University of Munich, Research Director of the Ethical Data Initiative (https://ethicaldatainitiative.org/), and Co-Director of the Public Science Lab (https://publicsciencelab.wordpress.com/). Her research concerns the role of technology and data in knowledge production, and the institutionalisation of Open Science, particularly in the life and environmental sciences.

Tom Lord, Director at the Sortition Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation that exists to work towards empowered citizens' assemblies being the way of making significant decisions in our society.

Anna Lorentzon, Social scientist in the Environment Agency, working on a wide range of topics including water governance, risk perceptions and behavioural insights.

Clare Maudling, Honorary Research Fellow with the University of Exeter, with a research focus on urban development, housing, and the history of planning in the UK.

Jamie McCauley, Research Fellow as part of the RENEW: Renewing biodiversity through a people-in-nature approach a NERC Funded collaboration between University of Exeter and the National Trust.

Alice Moseley, Associate Professor in Public Policy, University of Exeter, researching and teaching on democratic innovations and public engagement.

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANTS

Thomas Richardson, newly elected County Councillor for the Green Party in Exeter, representing the St Sidwell's & St James division. Former BA International Relations student at the University of Exeter.

Stefano Rimini, President and founder of Pianeta.org, a nonprofit organization based on the values of social and environmental justice, and EU Climate Pact ambassador. Former social policy expert for UNICEF and for the European Parliament, also advising the Italian government and the European Committee of Region.

Andrew Schaap, Associate Professor in Political Theory, University of Exeter, with research interests in issues surrounding reconciliation, indigenous politics, immigration and civility through the lens of agonistic democratic theory.

Lewis Sleeman, founding member of Exeter Community Assembly, a community organisation which aims to help local people organise assemblies to increase community resilience, reduce polarisation, discuss what matters to them, increase their sense of agency by supporting each other to take collective action to improve their lives.

Maurice Spurway, Coordinator of Exeter Community Assembly.

Michelle Twena, Research Fellow at the National Trust/University of Exeter, evaluating the impacts of the People's Plan for Nature, a UK citizens' assembly instigated by the National Trust, RSPB and WWF to create an action plan for natural renewal.

Luca Verzichelli, Professor of Political Science at the University of Siena. Former member of the executive of ECPR and Coimbra Group of European Universities. Coordinator of REDIRECT. His main interests are in the fields of political elites and representative institutions

Melissa Wang, Senior Scientist & Science-Policy-Finance Lead at Greenpeace Research Laboratories, University of Exeter. Her current focus is on the UN Global Plastics Treaty, and the UN 'IPCC/IPBES-equivalent' for chemical, waste and pollution prevention.

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANTS

Mark E. Warren is Professor of Political Theory at the Department of Political Science University of British Columbia. He is the holder of the Merilees Chair for the Study of Democracy, and former director of the Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions in the Faculty of Arts. He directs Participedia (www.participedia.net), which uses a web-based platform to collect data about democratic innovation and participatory governance around the world.

Felix Wilson, Lecturer in Accounting at the University of Exeter, exploring the drivers of public support via Environmental Citizenship.

APPENDIX C: RESOURCES & WEB LINKS

Reports and Weblinks

Use of deliberative democracy & participatory processes as a means of reinvigorating democracy, within a representative democracy framework

Milne, A. (2024). 3 min read! Can we design participative processes to boost trust in democracy? - Carnegie UK. This short piece provides important context for thinking about why Is vital to consider seriously the question of impacts of deliberative democracy processes before undertaking them. Here is a summary of the Carnegie report Engaging Democracy: Programme Insight Summary - Carnegie UK.

OECD. 2020. Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave. https://doi.org/10.1787/339306da-en. Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions | OECD.

OECD. 2021. Eight Ways to Institutionalise Deliberative Democracy. Eight Ways to Institutionalise Deliberative Democracy | OCED.

OECD. 2021. Evaluation Guidelines for Representative Deliberative Processes. Evaluation Guidelines for Representative Deliberative Processes | OECD.

The role of deliberation and political action on climate change

KNOCA - Knowledge Network On Climate Assemblies. A European network for sharing best practice on the design and implementation of climate assemblies.

Demski, Capstick & Hessellund Beanland. 2024. Impact Evaluation Framework for Climate Assemblies. KNOCA. 675ff37b91b3f53c964415ad_Updated_IEF_Dec_2024.pdf. See also: Impact Evaluation Framework.

Interview with Chris Stark, former Chair of the UK Climate Change Committee, and current Director of British Energy, about climate deliberation and the UK National Citizens' Assembly: Why understanding what people think is crucial to the next phase of climate policy — Interview with Chris Stark | By Jake Ainscough | FDSD

Green Alliance Policy Insight (July 2019). Power to the People: Shaping UK Climate policy through deliberative democracy. power_to_the_people.pdf

Allan, S. (Involve) Public engagement on climate: a practical guide | Involve

APPENDIX C: RESOURCES & WEB LINKS

Climate Outreach/Ashden/Involve/Climate Citizens Research Group Towards a UK public engagement strategy on climate change - Climate Outreach

Westlake, S & Willis, R 2023. Climate Citizens report: Sustaining the political mandate for climate action - Climate Barometer. Climate Citizens report: Sustaining the political mandate for climate action - Climate Barometer

Citizens Assemblies on Climate & Environmental Issues

KNOCA Resources on Climate Assemblies

Participedia: Participedia

Involve:
Publications | Involve
Innovations in local climate assemblies and juries in the UK | Involve
Public engagement on climate: a practical guide | Involve
Supporting local authorities to engage the public on climate: outcomes and next steps | Involve
Inclusive Climate Action: A Toolkit for Effective Public Engagement in Decision-Making | Involve

APPENDIX D: ACADEMIC LITERATURE

Public deliberation & engagement on climate (including issues of integration & impact)

Ainscough, J. & Willis, R. (2024). 'Embedding deliberation: guiding the use of deliberative mini-publics in climate policy-making', *Climate Policy,* DOI: 10.1080/14693062.2024.2303337

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Chilvers, J., & Stephanides, P. (2023). Mapping participation for democratic innovations: An experiment in evaluating a citizens' panel on home energy decarbonisation.

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Hendriks CM (2016) 'Coupling Citizens and Elites in Deliberative Systems: The Role of Institutional Design'. *European Journal of Political Research* 55 (1): 43–60.

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Moseley, A., Sandover, R. & Devine-Wright, P. (2025). 'Integrating citizens' assemblies into local climate governance: Lessons from a UK Case Study'. *Environmental Science & Policy.* 169 (2025) 104052.

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Mini-publics/deliberative democracy (including issues of institutionalisation)

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Caluwaerts D and Reuchamps M (2015) 'Strengthening democracy through bottom-up deliberation: An assessment of the internal legitimacy of the G1000 project'. *Acta Politica* 50(2), 151–170.

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APPENDIX E: LIST OF CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES

EUROPEAN CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES

Source: KNOCA and the associated websites/reports which are linked.

Place & Name	Commissioner	Output
The Austrian Citizens' Climate Assembly	The Federal Ministry for Climate Action, on behalf of the Austrian Parliament, following a petition in June 2020.	Report: The Citizens' Recommendations - makes 93 recommendations: - 10 general recommendations - Remaining were associated with the five key themes
Denmark's Climate Assembly | Borgerting på klimaområdet	Ministry of Climate, Energy and Utilities.	117 recommendations included in the report published following the Assembly.
Finland's Citizens' Jury on Climate Actions	Ministry of the Environment and the Climate Policy Round Table.	A statement issued by the Jury members. A final report written by academics.
French Citizens' Convention on the Climate | La Convention Citoyenne pour Le Climat	The French President, through the Economic, Social and Environmental Council.	149 measures proposed in the report.
Germany's Citizens' Assembly on Climate | Bürgerrat Klima	BürgerBegehren Klimaschutz (BBK, Citizens' Climate Protection Initiative) with Scientists for Future, Germany. Patron is the former German President Prof. Dr. Köhler.	A press conference was held which summarised the recommendations.
Ireland's Citizens' Assembly	The coalition government.	A report outlined the 13 recommendations.
Ireland's Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss	The coalition government; agreed by the Houses of the Oireachtas.	A report which produced 19 topics areas, 73 high-level recommendations and 86 sectoral specific actions and priorities.

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EUROPEAN CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES

Source: KNOCA and the associated websites/reports which are linked.

National People's Panel on Sustainable Consumption | Nasjonalt folkepanel om bærekraftig forbruk	The Norwegian Ministry for Digitalization and Public Governance, on behalf of the Norwegian Government.	Recommendations: National People's Panel on Sustainable Consumption of Goods
Luxembourg Climate Citizens' Council | Klima-Biergerrot	Ministry of State.	A report which outlined 56 recommendations which was handed to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Environment.
The Norwegian Future Panel | Framtidspanelet	WWF, ReddBarna, Kirkens Nødhjelp, Caritas Norge, Framtiden i våre hender, Landsrådet for Norges Barne, and Langsikt.	The Future Panel - A Voice from the People.
Polish Citizens' Assembly on Energy Poverty	The Shipyard Foundation (Fundacja Stocznia) with the Copernicus Science Center (Centrum Nauki Kopernik).	A report which outlined more than 100 recommendations.
Swedish Citizens' Assembly on Climate | Medborgarråd om klimatet	Fairtrans - including multiple partners.	22 recommendations which centred on achieving the Paris Agreement and Sweden's carbon budget.
The Netherlands' Citizens' Assembly on Climate | National Burgerberaad Klimaat	The Ministries of Climate and Green Growth of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, on behalf of the Dutch Government.	- Advice to be issued to the cabinet - Results of the consultation to be announced
The Spanish Citizens' Climate Assembly	The Council of Ministers.	A report outlining 172 recommendations - Citizens' Climate Assembly: A safer and fairer Spain facing climate change. How do we make it happen?

APPENDIX E: LIST OF CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES

EUROPEAN CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES

Source: KNOCA and the associated websites/reports which are linked.

Climate Assembly UK (CAUK)	Six Select Committees of the House of Commons - Business Energy and Industrial Strategy; Environmental Audit; Housing; Communities and Local Government; Science and Technology; Transport; and Treasury.	Report: The path to net zero.
Jersey's Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change	The Minister for Environment, in line with the Carbon Neutral Strategy 2020, approved by the States Assembly.	A report which was presented to the States Assembly by the Minister for the Environment.
People's Assembly for Nature UK	WWF, the RSPB and National Trust.	The People's Plan for Nature: Report on outcomes of a RAPID democracy process.
Scotland's Climate Assembly	The Scottish Government.	Full Report - outlines 16 goals and 81 recommendations.

APPENDIX E: LIST OF CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES

UK CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES

Sources: KNOCA and the associated websites/reports which are linked.
Note: Citizens' Climate Assemblies associated with only county/district-level, major cities, combined authorities/areas and London Borough Councils.

Place & Name	Commissioner	Output
Aberdeenshire Climate & Fairness Panel	Environmental Justice Commission	A report which outlines recommendations. Presented to the Aberdeenshire City Council.
Adur & Worthing Climate Assembly	Adur & Worthing Councils	A report which outlines 18 recommendations. Formally presented to the council.
Barnet Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change & Biodiversity	Barnet Council	A report which outlined the 20 key recommendations. Influencing Barnet Council climate policy.
Bath & North East Somerset Council | Citizens' Panel on Travel in Bath and North East	Bath & North East Somerset Council	A report which outlines four main recommendations.
Birmingham: A Citizens' Panel on Home Energy Decarbonisation	Lancaster University and the Climate Change Committee	A report which outlines findings and recommendations.
Blackpool Climate Assembly	Blackpool Council	A webpage by the organising group TPXImpact which outlines its recommendations.
Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly	A consortium of CSOs and housing associations.	A report which outlines the 5 recommendations that received 80% support. Presented to the chief executives of the 4 commissioning Housing Associations.

Appendix E: List of Climate Assemblies

UK CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES

Sources: KNOCA and the associated websites/reports which are linked.
Note: Citizens' Climate Assemblies associated with only county/district-level, major cities, combined authorities/areas and London Borough Councils.

Brent Climate Assembly	Brent Council	Participedia outlines the report's recommendations. Influenced Brent's Climate & Ecological Emergency Statement.
Brighton & Hove Climate Assembly	Brighton & Hove City Council	A report which outlines 10 recommendations. Influencing the Carbon Neutral 2030 programme.
Camden Climate Assembly	Camden Council	A report which outlines its recommendations. Informed the Camden Climate Action Plan 2020-2025.
Croydon Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change	Croydon Council	A report which outlines findings and recommendations. Influenced the work of the Croydon Climate Crisis Commission.
Defra's public engagement process on climate change (regional workshops & Citizens' Summit, London, 2007/8)	Defra (part of the Climate Change Bill)	A report which outlines findings.
Devon's Climate Assembly	Devon Climate Emergency	A report which made 14 recommendations. Influencing the Devon Carbon Plan

APPENDIX E: LIST OF CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES

UK CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES

Sources: KNOCA and the associated websites/reports which are linked.
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Glasgow Citizens' Assembly	Glasgow City Council	A report which outlines the 15 recommendations.
Greater Cambridge Citizens' Assembly	Greater Cambridge Partnership	A report which outlines findings and recommendations. A response was issued from the Greater Cambridge Partnership Executive Board.
Hackney Citizens' Climate Jury	Hackney Council	A report which outlines its recommendations.
Herefordshire Citizens' Climate Assembly	Herefordshire City Council	A publication which outlines 35 recommendations. Influenced numerous projects taken-up by the Council.
Kingston Citizens' Assembly on Air Quality	Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames	A report which outlines its findings and recommendations.
Lambeth's Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change	Lambeth Council	A report which outlines its recommendations.
Lancaster's Climate Change People Jury	Lancaster City Council	A report which outlines its recommendations. The council committed to deliberate on the recommendations.
Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury	Leeds Climate Commission	A report which outlines its recommendations and findings.

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UK CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES

Sources: KNOCA and the associated websites/reports which are linked.
Note: Citizens' Climate Assemblies associated with only county/district-level, major cities, combined authorities/areas and London Borough Councils.

Leicester's Climate Assembly	Leicester City Council	A report which outlines its findings and recommendations. Influenced the council's Action Plan.
Manchester's Community Assembly on Climate Change	Envirolution, Manchester Climate Change Agency and In Our Nature	A publication which outlines its findings and recommendations. Presented to Manchester City Council and was taken to COP26.
Newham Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change	Newham Council	A report which outlines its recommendations. Influenced Newham's Climate Emergency Action Plan.
Northern Housing Consortium - Tenants' Climate Jury	Northern Housing Consortium	A report which outlines its findings and recommendations.
North of Tyne Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change	North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA)	A report was published which outlines findings and recommendations. Influenced the NTCA's climate policies.
Nottingham Climate Assembly	Nottingham Climate Assembly – a group of local people, not associated with Nottingham City Council.	N/A

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UK CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES

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Oxford's Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change	Oxford City Council	A report which outlines findings and recommendations. Significant influence on the Council's climate policies - see here.
Preston People's Climate Jury	Preston City Council	A report which outlines findings and recommendations.
Southampton Citizens' Climate Assembly	Southampton City Council & University of Southampton	A report which outlines 10 recommendations. Expected to influence the Local Transport Plan. Positive impact on participants.
South Wales Valleys Climate & Fairness Panel	Environmental Justice Commission	A report which outlines its recommendations.
Southwark Climate Change Citizens' Jury	Southwark Council	A report which outlines its recommendations.
Thurrock Climate & Fairness Panel	Environmental Justice Commission	A report which outlines its recommendations.
Wandsworth Citizens' Assembly on Air Quality	Wandsworth Council	A report which outlines its recommendations.
Warwick District People's Climate Change Inquiry	Warwick District Council	A report which outlines 36 recommendations. Influenced the Climate Change Action Plan 2021.

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UK CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES

Sources: KNOCA and the associated websites/reports which are linked.
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Westminster Citizens' Climate Assembly	Westminster Council	A report which outlines its recommendations. Influenced Westminster Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan.
Wolverhampton - Citizens' Assembly	City of Wolverhampton Council	A report which outlines findings and principles for tackling climate change.

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