

The roles of deliberative mini-publics in policy response to climate change

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Deliberative mini-publics

- The term introduced by Archon Fung (2003)
 - Survey Article: Recipes for Public Spheres: Eight Institutional Design Choices and Their Consequences. *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 11(3): 338–367.
- *Citizens' Juries* and *Planning Cells* first formats (early 1970s)
 - Involving citizens in technically complex issues
- More recent ones include *Deliberative Polls* (1990s), *Citizens' Assemblies* (2000s)
- Proliferation of mini-publics during recent years, especially to deal with climate issues

Key design features of deliberative mini-publics

- *Shared* features
 - random selection of participants (often combined with stratification)
 - interaction with experts and witnesses
 - moderated (small-group) deliberations on a policy issue
- *Variation* in
 - number of participants
 - duration of deliberation
 - outcomes of deliberation may be a written statements or vote results

The benefits and drawbacks of deliberative mini-publics

- Several studies on the impact of mini-publics on participants (for a review, e.g. Setälä and Smith 2018)
 - Learning, correction of misperceptions, perspective-taking, empathy and so on
- Open questions regarding the effects of mini-publics on a) policymaking b) public at large
- Mixed scholarly evaluations of mini-publics' impact on democracy
 - Ranging from enthusiasm (e.g. Fishkin) to deep criticism (Lafont)

The role of deliberative mini-publics in representative systems

- Mini-publics usually *initiated* by governments on an *ad hoc* basis
- Mini-publics have usually an *advisory* role
 - Entails a risk that policymakers 'cherry-pick' the recommendations
- Could mini-publics make *binding* decisions?
 - Mini-publics can be representative in a descriptive sense but they do not involve processes of authorization and accountability
 - The lack of electoral accountability
 - allows unconstrained deliberation
 - but could decisions made by mini-publics be legitimate?

Why are deliberative mini-publics used to shape climate policies?

1. Deliberative mini-publics help tackle complexity of climate policies

- by providing opportunities for learning and thorough reflection on policy alternatives

2. Mini-publics help make judgments on the fairness of climate policies

- by weighing losses and gains across different segments of society and across time

Deliberative mini-publics on climate policies

3. Mini-publics can increase the feasibility of climate policies

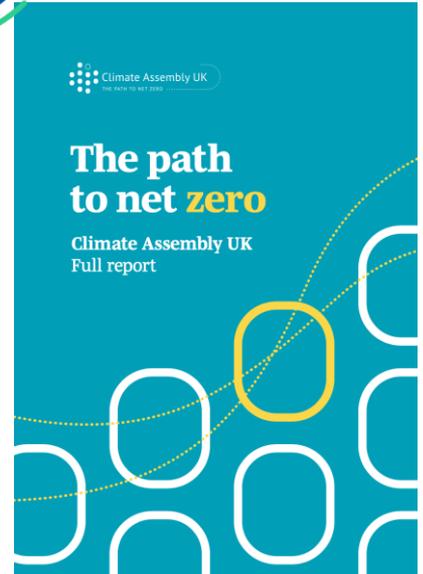
➤ by pooling citizens' experiential knowledge

4. Mini-publics help take perspectives of all those affected by policies (e.g. future generations)

➤ by helping consideration of viewpoints of those who are not present in deliberation

Deliberative mini-publics on climate policies

- Plenty of recent examples of deliberative mini-publics on climate policies organized on an *ad hoc* basis
 - Initiated by governments at different levels
 - Nation-wide deliberations e.g. In UK, France, Ireland, Finland
- Institutionalization of deliberative mini-publics on climate policies
 - Climate laws in Denmark and in Scotland



Citizens' Jury on Climate Actions in Finland

- *Citizens' Jury* on measures of Medium-Term Climate Policy Plan (Kaisu)
 - Commissioned by the Finnish Ministry of Environment and the Climate Policy Round Table
 - Organized in Finland in Spring 2021 by researchers from University of Turku
 - Tasked to evaluate the fairness and efficacy of 14 measures in the areas of traffic, housing and food
 - Included 33 participants selected through random sampling and stratification (age, gender, place of living, level of education)
 - 2,5 days of deliberation conducted online

Citizens' Jury on Climate Actions



Participants' experiences



94%

The assignment of the Jury was clear.



73%

The subject was difficult.



88%

A wide range of opinions were represented in the Jury.



91%

Citizens' Juries should be used in political decision-making.



91%

The Jury managed to deliberate justice from different perspectives.



91%

Participants' views are well represented in the Jury's statement.



54%

Enough time was reserved for the work of the Jury.



57%

The statement of the Jury will have an impact on decision-making.

The Citizens' Assembly on Climate in France

- The Citizens' Assembly on Climate
 - Initiated by President Macron (in response to the Yellow Vest movement)
 - 150 citizens deliberated for 7 weekends (+1 unofficial weekend after the parliamentary proceedings) in 2020-21
 - Made a large number of suggestions (149)
- In the end, only handful of proposals were adopted (Courant 2021)
 - three proposals were rejected by the president
 - more than half of proposals (53%) were rejected by the parliament, 35 % were modified and 10% were adopted in the climate law

The Citizens' Assembly on Climate in France

- President Macron had promised that the proposals would be dealt with 'unfiltered'
 - What does this mean? Governmental action, parliamentary procedure or a referendum?
- Frustration among participants; the legitimacy of the government undermined (Courant 2021)
 - Also mobilization: a petition to 'save the convention' (over 500,000 signatures)

The role of deliberative mini-publics in policymaking

- Are there better ways using mini-publics in climate policy-making?
 - **Institutionalization** of use of mini-publics
 - To avoid *ad hoc* use and allow for systematic impact
 - **Venues for communication and feedback**
 - To avoid 'cherry-picking'
 - Mini-publics involving policymakers directly
 - Ongoing communication between policymakers and mini-publics
 - Opportunities for mini-publics to scrutinize policies *ex post*
 - Empowerment of mini-publics (e.g. delaying powers)???

Concluding remarks

- Mini-publics have a great *potential* in dealing with the complexities of climate policies
- Yet this potential has not been fully achieved in current ways of using mini-publics
- More attention should be paid to roles of mini-publics in policy-making and interaction with policymakers

- **Thank you!**