

Recent developments of climate assemblies in the UK and Europe

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Overview

The need for climate assemblies

The logic of climate assemblies

Climate assemblies in Europe

Climate assembly lessons and future directions

Public Engagement & Climate Governance

- Public as spectators in CC debates
- Certain groups underrepresented on climate issues
- Increase public understanding of the problems caused by CC
- Stronger public consent for the policies required to address CC
- Can enable more ambitious policy making
- Stimulate more climate-sensitive behaviour change amongst the public
- Legitimate and just decisions



Problems with Political Participation

1. Demographically skewed
2. Uninformed
3. Closed-minded



Limitations of Representative Democracy in Climate Governance

- Electoral incentives
- Short-term political cycles
- Media narratives
- Lobbying
- Climate delay discourses





Defining Climate Assemblies

- Type of citizens' assembly
- Focus on an aspect of climate governance
- Representative or diverse sample of citizens
- Barriers to participation lowered
- Balanced information
- Facilitated discussion
- Recommendations
- Institutional Link

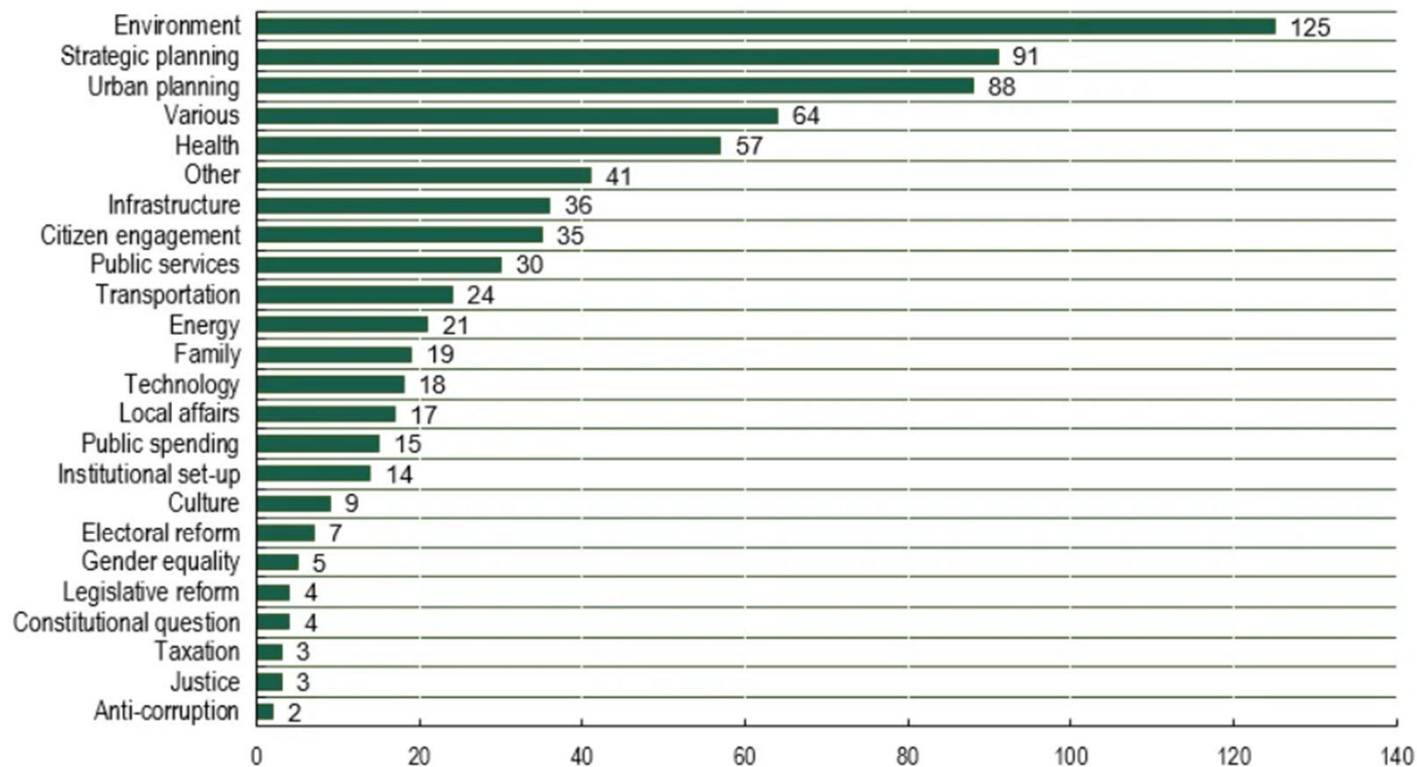
The Logic of Climate Assemblies

- Inclusion
- Openminded
- Deliberation
- Learning
- Opinion change
- Recommendations



Figure: Deliberation is being used to solve long term issues, in particular environmental topics

Number of times a policy issue has been addressed through a representative deliberative process



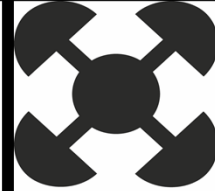
Note: n=733; Various include all the permanent processes as they regularly address different policy issues. Other include agriculture; consumer protection; migration; water management; youth.

Source: OECD Deliberative Democracy Database (2023).



Climate Assembly UK

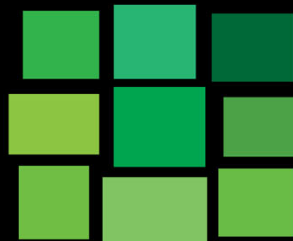
THE PATH TO NET ZERO



Global Assembly



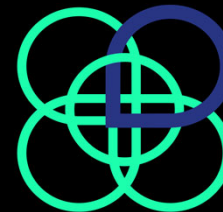
An Tionól Saoránach



The Citizens' Assembly



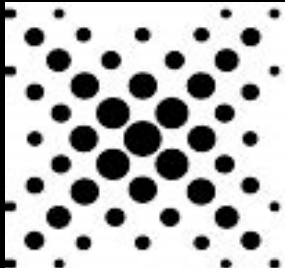
BÜRGERRAT



ASAMBLEA CIUDADANA PARA EL CLIMA



Bürgerat Klima #lasstunshandeln



Scotland's Climate Assembly
Seanadh Gnàth-shìde na h-Alba

Klima-Bürgerrot



Climate Assembly Diffusion

- Climate on the agenda
- Decline in trust in government
- The 'successes' of the Irish CAs
- Social movements e.g. Extinction Rebellion
- Public engagement practitioners
- Proximity of municipalities & nation states
- Aim to influence the public



Comparing European Climate Assemblies: Similarities

- Familiar CA format
- Mitigation dominates over adaptation
- Broad Scope
- One-off/ ad hoc



Achievements of Climate Assemblies

- Diverse groups assembled
- Inclusive and respectful deliberation achieved
- Knowledge on climate change and decarbonisation increases
- Assembly members think net zero is more achievable
- Recommendations more ambitious than current policy



Comparing European Climate Assemblies: Variation

- Remit (agent & breadth)
- Evidence & information
- Process design & facilitation
- Duration
- Budget
- Governance (civil servants, parliament, practitioners, AMs, experts, stakeholders)
- Publicity
- Institutional integration
- Policy take-up



Brussels Permanent Climate Assembly

- Started in February 2023
- 65-100 Assembly Members
- Annual rotation
- Each panel addresses a sub-theme of Brussels' climate policy
- Agenda chosen by previous assembly
- Topics to date: habitat and food
- Commission that monitors response to recommendations



Climate Assembly Lessons & Future Directions?

1. Citizens' assembly model works on climate
2. Climate assembly model is transferable across many contexts
3. Diffusion to other parts of the globe
4. More transnational climate assemblies
5. Challenge of scope and time
6. More focus on adaptation and systems change
7. Democratise climate assemblies
8. Broader public engagement
9. Integrate with other climate engagement routes
10. Improved communication
11. Institutionalised/ embedded climate assemblies
12. Concern this is a trend that dissipates



Resources

- Evaluation of Climate Assembly UK:
<https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/get-involved2/climate-assembly-uk/evaluation-of-climate-assembly-uk.pdf>
- 'The Scope of Climate Assemblies: Lessons from the Climate Assembly UK', *Sustainability* 13, no. 20: 11272 (2021). Open access:
<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/13/20/11272>
- 'The Impact of Climate Assemblies on Formal and Informal Public Spheres: The Case of Climate Assembly UK', in *The Impact of Democratic Innovations*, Colchester: ECPR Press, pp. 139-160. (2023) open access:
https://pure.unamur.be/ws/portalfiles/portal/91415928/The_Impacts_of_Democratic_Innovations_PDF_Online.pdf#page=155
- Scotland's Climate Assembly Research Report:
<https://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781804353073>
- Global Assembly On The Climate And Ecological Crisis Evaluation Report:
https://researchsystem.canberra.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/82182314/Global_Assembly_Evaluation_Report.pdf
- Forthcoming 2024/25: *Climate Assemblies: New Civic Institutions for a Climate-changed World*, De Gruyter.

