

KNOCA

Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies

KNOCA BRIEFING NO.2

HOW CAN CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES BE INTEGRATED INTO THE POLICY PROCESS?

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KNOCA is a European network that aims to provide resources and inspire those who commission, design, advocate and scrutinise climate assemblies to ensure the highest standards of practice. The network hosts events and produces a range of practical resources, alongside other knowledge development activities. We welcome individuals and organisations with experience or interest in either commissioning, running or analysing these processes and their outputs in Europe. Please reach out to us at info@knoca.eu to share, discuss and inform best practice and new developments in climate assembly design, delivery and analysis.

1. Key insights

- The work of climate assemblies is typically not timed in relation to the development of specific policies and their remit is usually broadly scoped. These factors risk reducing the relevance of assemblies' output to policy makers and increasing the chance of cherry-picking recommendations.
- Climate assemblies can be tightly or loosely coupled to decision-making institutions. A tight link can lead to policy impact but potentially undermine independence, and vice versa.
- Climate assemblies mandated by broad political coalitions generally have a higher chance of direct policy impact than those initiated by smaller factions.
- Inclusion of political representatives as assembly members or within the organisation of the assembly can improve the link to decision making. However, this needs to be carefully managed so as not to undermine an assembly's independence, and thus credibility of the process.
- Climate assemblies have been consultative, with their degree of influence varying. This mirrors broader practice of citizens' assemblies. However, there are a few examples where climate assemblies have been empowered to take final decisions.
- The attitude of commissioners towards citizen participation has a significant bearing on the integration of climate assemblies into the policy process and policy cycle.
- Legally binding commitments on the part of public bodies to respond to the citizens' recommendations can generate clear expectations that there will be action in response to assembly outputs, and reduce the potential for civic disaffection.

2. Recommendations

- Where possible, climate assemblies should be initiated by a broad political coalition that engages both Parliament and Government to ensure political ownership and opportunities for impact on the policy process. This was the case for the Irish Citizens' Assembly 2016-2018.
- The political remit, commitment and follow-up process should be clear to ensure meaningful citizen engagement and to avoid further enhancing civic disaffection with politics. The French Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat is an example where tensions have emerged over the lack of clarity of the commissioner's original commitment to respond.
- Time and resources need to be spent *before* climate assemblies are organised on building capacity and support for the process amongst the civil servants and politicians who are expected to respond. Political actors should be encouraged to understand how climate assemblies can supplement and strengthen representative democracy.
- Climate assemblies should be organised independently of policy actors that commission the process, with an independent secretariat, delivery organisation and steering group in which members of the assembly are represented. The Irish model has also been adopted in Scotland, although other assemblies offer potential governance options.

- Climate assemblies should be organised with an eye to the policy cycle making sure that the output of the assemblies play a constructive role in the broader political processes.
- Further research is needed to better understand the attitudes of politicians, civil servants and other political actors towards climate assemblies.
- Further research is needed to understand how climate assemblies can be integrated more effectively at different points in the policy cycle.

3. The challenge

Climate assemblies can have different purposes and exist in different institutional and political contexts. In this paper, the focus is on the most common approach: assemblies established to provide inputs for policymaking from ordinary citizens. Consequently, it is crucial to consider how the assemblies are, and could be, integrated into the policy system and the policy cycle. The policy system here is understood as the formal institutions and practices of representative democracy, including parliament, government and the administration¹. Policy cycle refers to the different stages of policy-making from problem definition, decision to review². Understanding the manner and extent of integration requires attention to the following:

- Who commissions the assemblies and their influence within the policy system.
- Who receives the input of the assemblies, how do they respond and what do they commit to do.
- What role parliament, government and civil servants play in the design, the delivery and the follow-up to the assemblies.
- The timing and context of the assemblies.
- The tasks of the assemblies and how they relate to ongoing political processes.

These considerations are important, among other things, because they affect the level of trust in the process, independence and legitimacy of the process, empowerment and motivation of the citizens, relevance and political uptake of the output, accountability, etc.

This research briefing focuses on the current knowledge and experience with integrating climate assemblies into the policy system and into policy cycles. It aims to take forward our understanding of barriers, opportunities and good practices related to how and when policymakers should commission climate assemblies, how public authorities can be better prepared to plan, organise, and deliver a climate assembly, how they should engage with them, and how they should respond to their outputs.

¹ Due to limited space, the paper does not consider the role of stakeholders and civil society, which are often considered part of the policy system.

² The integration into the policy cycle both relates to the task and output of the assemblies, which might be to define problems, provide advice for decision-making, review decisions etc. but also to whether and how the assemblies are connected to the development of specific and planned climate policies.

The remainder of this briefing is structured as follows. In section four, the current knowledge on how deliberative mini-publics and other deliberative processes are integrated into the policy system and policy cycle is reviewed. Deliberative mini-publics are randomly selected bodies in which ordinary citizens learn, deliberate and come to decisions. Climate assemblies are one example of a deliberative mini-public. The review identifies a number of design and contextual factors that influence the relation between deliberative processes and policy processes. In section five, the integration of existing climate assemblies into the policy system and policy cycle at national level is explored, drawing on the factors identified in the preceding section. This exploration is based on interviews with relevant civil servants and practitioners as well as desk research. In section six, suggestions for future activities supporting and strengthening our knowledge and practices on the integration of climate assemblies into the policy system and into policy cycles are provided.

4. State of current knowledge

Because climate assemblies are still novel and under development, research on how they are integrated into the policy system and policy cycle is limited. Consequently, this section presents current knowledge from research on the integration of the broader family of deliberative mini-publics, of which climate assemblies are one example, and deliberative processes more generally at different political levels. The section is divided into two parts dealing with design factors and contextual factors, respectively.

4.1 Design factors

Key design factors have an effect on issues such as the role of Parliament, Government and civil servants, the timing and task of the process and the follow-up on the results of the process. These factors can be affected by both policymakers, practitioners and other stakeholders.

4.1.1 Inherent design tensions

The design of deliberative mini-publics often contains inherent tensions, which must be considered and balanced in making different design choices.

First, mini-publics can be more tightly or loosely coupled with the policy system. Coupling is understood as the way in which the mini-public is linked to public institutions and their policy processes. A tight coupling to the policy process can be problematic to the extent that the mini-public loses its independence and is used by policymakers to achieve their own goals and legitimise their own positions, thereby potentially compromising the legitimacy of the process. On the other hand, a loose coupling can be problematic to the extent that policymakers are not engaged in the process and lack a feeling of political ownership of it, thereby hampering the political uptake of the output of the process (Hendricks, 2016: 45-46, Setälä, 2017: 853).

Second, and relatedly, tensions can emerge between the reflexivity and responsiveness of mini-publics. Reflexivity here refers to the way in which a mini-public is designed to contribute to better policy outputs; responsiveness to the extent to which the mini-public is a space within which citizens set the agenda. Reflexivity is related to considerations of output legitimacy and addresses a technical requirement for the effectiveness of decision-making that arises within the context of

complexity and increased demands of coordination in contemporary society. Responsiveness addresses a normative requirement for the input and procedural legitimacy of decision-making and the extent to which the interests of citizens shape the process. Mini-publics can contribute to reflexivity by bringing ordinary citizens into policymaking, thereby reconfiguring the relationship between state and different stakeholders in ways that improve the adaptability and epistemic basis of policy making on different issues. In this case, it might be preferable that the process of the mini-public is less autonomous and structured more 'top down' – directed by the agenda of the public authority. On the other hand, mini-publics can be more responsive to the interests of ordinary citizens by providing opportunities for participants to develop their own preferences and analysis. To improve responsiveness, a mini-public is likely to be designed in a more autonomous and bottom-up manner, with extensive citizen control over elements of the process, such as mandate definition, selection of experts, recommendation writing, etc. Reflexivity and responsiveness are not necessarily mutually exclusive but can be in tension (Bau, 2019: 285).

The balancing of these tensions is present in the following design factors to varying degrees.

4.1.2 Procedures of initiating and agenda-setting

Deliberative mini-publics can be initiated in multiple ways by different actors, for different reasons, at different times. They can be initiated for normative or instrumental reasons by elected representatives, governments, or private organizations, either on their own initiative or in response to external pressure. Elected representatives can initiate a mini-public in different ways, e.g. via legislation, parliamentary committees or political parties.

Most mini-publics are initiated on an ad hoc basis, but in a few examples, mini-publics have been institutionalized into democratic systems. An example is the Danish Consensus Conferences, which were conducted regularly by an independent governmental body over a period of more than 20 years. Naturally, the processes initiated by policymakers are more tightly coupled with the policy system (Thompson, 2019: 261-264; Setälä, 2017: 853).

Evidence on the role and influence of the commissioner on deliberative processes is equivocal. Some suggest that elected representatives are more likely to initiate deliberative processes, which are more consultative and non-binding and typically more reflexive in character. Others suggest that even when elected representatives initiate a deliberative mini-public, they typically make sure not to engage too much in the process in order to limit their commitment to responding to its outcomes. Therefore, coupling with specific policy processes is often relatively loose. Finally, some suggest that Governments should not initiate mini-publics because of the risks associated with tight coupling such as co-optation (Thompson, 2019: 261-262; Setälä, 2017: 853).

As most mini-publics are established ad hoc, their relation to the policy cycle varies. The policy cycle is typically broken down into 1) problem definition 2) option formation 3) decision 4) implementation, and 5) review. In principle, deliberative mini-publics can be integrated at any point in the policy cycle (Setälä, 2017: 853; Bua, 2012). In practice, they tend to be used for problem definition and options formation, with some focused on particular decisions. One of the criticisms of deliberative mini-publics is that they are not always carefully designed so that they integrate with where policy sits in the cycle, and consequently, often fail to provide policy makers with the type of input that is useful and relevant - hence the lack of systematic impact. Ensuing that agendas

of mini-publics and needs of policy makers align is challenging, whatever the extent to which the agenda is being directed by public authorities or participants.

4.1.3 Procedures of the deliberative process

Once initiated, a deliberative mini-public can be loosely or tightly coupled with the policy system in terms of the level to which elected representatives, ministers and civil servants are engaged.

The benefit of involving elected representatives is that it may encourage deliberation among these actors and a sense of ownership of the process and its outputs. On the other hand, there is a risk that elected representatives influence and steer the process in their own interest (Setälä, 2017: 854). Mini-publics vary in their approach to elected representatives and/or ministers taking part in governance arrangements or presenting to citizens. In some cases, they have not been invited to even observe for fear of influence. The Irish Convention on the Constitution is a relatively rare example of where elected representatives were directly involved in the process as members. The rationale was that direct participation would increase their commitment to the process. This raises the risk of politicians dominating the discussions and imposing their views on the citizens. However, according to some observations of the Irish Convention, this was not the case (Setälä, 2017: 855).

Civil servants can be involved in the process of a mini-public in various ways. There are examples of civil servants designing and taking part in the facilitation of deliberative processes but this is not so common because of concerns about independence and relevant skills. Civil servants can be seconded to coordinate processes (e.g., as the secretariat as happened in Ireland and Scotland), playing important roles in connecting citizens and politicians and other actors engaged in the process. Civil servants sometimes connect stakeholders across organizational boundaries in order to bring them into dialogue about the events or results of the mini-public. No matter which role the civil servants play, they constantly face tensions between their responsibilities toward the deliberative process and their responsibility toward the representative democratic institutions in which they work. Research on the effect of this tension is sparse (Blijleven et. al, 2019).

4.1.4 Transmission mechanisms and responsiveness

When establishing a deliberative mini-public, there are multiple ways of transmitting its results into the policy system depending on who the receiver is and how they have committed to respond. Overall, the mechanisms through which this transmission happens can be placed on a continuum between purely consultative and fully empowered with a great deal of hybrids in between combining elements from both ends.

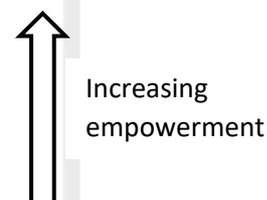
Empowered mechanisms ensure that the results of a process have direct influence on the development of legally binding policies. This avoids “cherry picking”, where policymakers choose to adopt the recommendations that fit into their own agenda. Arguably the most empowered assemblies have been those in Poland, where municipal mayors have agreed prior to the process to implement the decisions of citizens’ assemblies when they achieve over 80 percent support within the assembly (Setälä & Smith, 2018). Such empowerment raises questions of legitimacy, as one could ask why a small subset of citizens should have privileged access to decision-making or how they could be held accountable (Bau, 2019: 287-289). A different approach to empowerment was

taken with the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly, where the government committed to put the recommendations of the assembly into a legally binding referendum (Setälä & Smith, 2018). Here the assembly was given agenda-setting power, but the final decision rests with the broader citizenry.

On the other hand, consultative mechanisms do not ensure that the results of a deliberative process are put into action, but they can be used to provide valuable inputs for policymakers for effective decision-making. However, this increases the risk of the outputs being cherry-picked to fit policymakers' agendas, resulting in a sense that the results of the process are ignored or only partly addressed, especially if public authorities fail to explain their decisions. Public frustration and disaffection will be enhanced if there is a belief that decisions on the issues tackled by the deliberative process had already been taken. One way to mitigate this frustration may be to limit the number of recommendations (Font et. al, 2018: 620). Another solution is for policymakers to commit to responding to the results, and commit to providing justifications where they do not plan to implement them (Bau, 2019: 289-291). These commitments could be either legally binding or informal, and take different forms. For example, government or parliament could commit to responding to, or considering the results without further specifications, or within a given time frame. Parliament could establish a dedicated committee or enable an existing committee to consider the results and respond. This response can be organized as a parliamentary debate or a dialogue between elected representatives and the members of the deliberative process behind closed doors or in public. Members of the deliberative process itself can be enabled to follow up and give feedback on the government's or parliamentary response to an assembly's outputs (Setälä, 2017: 854-856; Setälä, 2021: 7).

Taken together, the continuum between empowered and consultative mechanisms can be conceptualized as ranging from unfiltered implementation of an assembly's proposals to no formal commitment to respond, as summarised below:

- direct implementation of proposal
- conditional implementation
- legally binding commitment to respond
- explicit but informal commitment to respond
- neither formal nor explicit commitment to respond



4.2 Contextual factors

Besides the above design factors (that are usually a subject of negotiation), the integration of climate assemblies and other deliberative mini-publics into the policy system and policy cycle is also influenced by the political, administrative and legal context of the respective process. These factors are considered in the following.

4.2.1 Perceptions of deliberative processes

A central condition for whether and how mini-publics and other deliberative processes are integrated into the policy system is the attitude toward such processes among policymakers.

Despite the recent interest in these processes, their role is still fairly marginal in democratic polities, and there is no established consensus on whether and how they should be used. Proponents argue that mini-publics enhance democratic legitimacy of the political decision-making process, as they provide considered judgments based on relevant information and a variety of perspectives. While radical voices exist that argue that deliberative mini-publics should replace institutions of representative democracy, most contend that they should be supplementary bodies. On the other hand, critics are worried that mini-publics might decrease the legitimacy of political decision-making because of their lack of accountability and authorization (Setälä & Smith, 2018; Newman et. al, 2004: 207-210).

Among politicians, stakeholders and citizens, there are various views on which role mini-publics should play in decision-making. Among other things, they differ in their perception of the capacity of citizens, the legitimacy of citizen participation in decision-making, the need for citizen participation and the current state of democracy. Some believe that it is more legitimate that elected representatives make decisions and that they are more capable than ordinary citizens. Others believe that citizen consultation is important but only with certain citizens possessing a particular expertise. And others do not believe that elected representatives are any more capable than ordinary citizens, and that citizens have a valuable role in decision-making, even if they do not take the ultimate decision. Finally, some believe that representative democracy is in crisis and that we need to experiment with new democratic procedures such as deliberative mini-publics (Niessen, 2019: 488-492; Dean, 2019: 176-178).

These views affect the willingness of policymakers to initiate and engage in deliberative processes (Hoppe, 2011). Considering what might drive policymakers to engage in participatory processes, Torfing and Ansell (2017: 13-16) point to the desire to build trust and collective ownership, avoid technocracy (i.e. that policymaking is solely responsive to expert knowledge), and solve societal problems. Barriers to policymakers embracing deliberative processes include their self-perception that it is their responsibility to govern and that they have the relevant capacities and skills, ideology, competition for votes and media attention, and scarcity of time and resources. Relatedly, Thompson (2019: 258) notes that party ideology is important to whether elected representatives support deliberative processes, and that green and left-leaning parties generally hold more supportive views of deliberative processes than more conservative or right-leaning parties. She also raises the question of whether there is a need for elected representatives to reimagine their role within the system of representative democracy as a prerequisite for reimagining the role of the citizens (Thompson, 2019: 264).

These views affect how established deliberative processes are run. For example, there is some evidence that the belief that citizens should not be involved in decision-making, among other things because they are less capable than policymakers, produce several constraints on the process. These constraints might constitute a lack of response from public authorities to deliberative processes, lack of tangible outcomes, lack of transparency, constraints on the room for debate and resistance to change that all affect the extent to which the agendas of deliberative processes align with the needs of policy makers and where the policy cycle sits (Newman et. al, 2004: 213-217; Font et. al, 2018: 631).

4.2.2 *Experience with participation*

Another contextual factor that influences the integration of mini-publics and other deliberative process into the policy system is policymakers' experiences with such processes. For example, bad or even no experiences with conventional types of citizen engagement might make it difficult for policymakers to envision more productive forms of participation (Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015: 202-203). Where they are supportive of engagement, however, they might not have the necessary experience or resources to effectively organise such processes (Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015: 242). On the other hand, experience with deliberative processes might build networks and a path dependency in the organisation of these processes and their integration into the policy system, with policy makers placing greater trust in them, as they have become more familiar and gain practical knowledge (Pogrebinschi & Ryan, 2018). For this reason, Nabatchi and Leighninger (2015: 287) suggest building stronger participation infrastructures that take into account legal, governmental, civic, electoral and educational elements. On the other hand, studies of broader forms of participation indicate that neither the number of participatory processes run by public authorities, nor the presence of organised participation, necessarily has an influence on the fate of proposals, i.e. whether they are rejected, partly or fully implemented (Font et. al, 2018: 627).

5. Exploration of existing climate assemblies

Drawing on the above design and contextual factors, the following section provides an exploration of the forms of policy integration of five climate assemblies at national level: The Irish Citizen's Assembly 2016-2018 (ICA), La Convention Citoyenne pour le Climate (CCC), Climate Assembly UK (CAUK), Scotland's Climate Assembly (SCA), and the Danish Climate Assembly (DCA). The exploration is based on semi-structured interviews with relevant civil servants and facilitators from each of the countries as well as desk research and document analysis. More detailed descriptions of each assembly appear in the Appendix and can also be found on the KNOCA website³.

5.1 *Procedures of initiating and agenda-setting*

Climate assemblies have varied in the ways in which they have been initiated and by whom, and what this means to the assemblies. The aforementioned national climate assemblies have been initiated by government (CCC), parliament (ICA, SCA and DCA) and specific parliamentary committees (CAUK), which has affected the political support each assembly has experienced. In France, the fact that the president announced the assembly and that he would bring its recommendation to the appropriate level "unfiltered" raised the profile of the Convention but created a tension with parliamentarians who perceived it as a threat to their prerogatives and legislative role. In Scotland and Ireland on the other hand, the assembly met with cross-party support in parliament, which meant that the assemblies were never fundamentally politically contested. While CAUK received warm words of support from government ministers, its commissioning by parliamentary committees meant that they felt under no pressure to respond formally. Moreover, the difference in commissioners affected the ways in which the assemblies were initiated, which in turn affected the design of the assemblies. The ICA and SCA were initiated by means of legally binding Resolutions or Acts passed in Parliament that specified parts of the

³ See <https://knoca.eu/previous-climate-assemblies/>

assemblies' design including their transmission mechanisms, whereas the other assemblies were initiated by political agreements (DCA and CAUK) or governmental decisions (CCC) that did not mention the design of the assemblies. These latter examples did not formalize a commitment to respond to the assemblies.

Regarding the timing of the assemblies and their integration into the policy cycle, they were all established ad hoc and fed into specific policies to varying degrees. The DCA and SCA were expected to provide inputs for national climate change plans, but neither were able to do so, as they were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, both the SCA and CAUK were initiated with an eye for COP26 in Glasgow, whereas neither the ICA nor the CCC were planned in relation to any particular point in the climate policy cycle.

The tasks of each of these national climate assemblies were relatively similar; they were all asked to consider climate change mitigation, and (apart from the ICA) how given emission goals should be reached. These tasks are considered compatible with the option forming and decision stages of the policy cycle. However, in generating a range of proposals across broad areas of climate policy that sit at different points in the policy cycle, it is not clear that these tasks align with where each of the areas of policy lie within the administrative system, creating challenges for integration.

5.2 Procedures of the deliberative process

The organisation and delivery of each climate assembly varies. The body responsible for the delivery of the ICA and SCA were independent secretariats staffed by seconded civil servants; the CCC was governed an independent governance committee composed of a variety of appointed actors from different sectors, including two seconded government officials; and the CAUK and DCA were directed by parliamentary and governmental officials, respectively, working closely with independent delivery organisations. This meant that the assemblies were coupled to the political systems in different ways. While the independent secretariats had no formal reporting structure back into governmental departments, as seconded civil servants, they still had informal connections into the policy system and insights into the timelines of policy cycles and how to play into political processes. A more informal relationship existed for CAUK and DCA. The French approach differs significantly, with the Governance Committee playing a much more political role.

The extent to which parliamentarians and ministers were engaged in the processes of the assemblies varies, ranging from no engagement to formalized engagement. In the ICA, there was no engagement with the political system during the process in order to ensure its independence, whereas the SCA included a Stewarding Group with, among others, delegated Members of Parliament who were in principle always updated and knew what the secretariat was doing. Politicians were engaged in different ways across the assemblies via presentations, observation, meetings and seminars.

5.3 Transmission mechanisms and responsiveness

Recalling the continuum of transition mechanisms ranging from empowered to consultative, set out in section 4.1.4, these national climate assemblies can be placed as follows:

- Legally binding commitment to respond: ICA and SCA

- Explicit but informal commitment to respond: CCC and DCA
- Neither formal nor explicit commitment to respond: CAUK

In the formal Resolution and Act establishing the ICA and SCA, respectively, it was stated that the respective governments were committed to respond to their assembly's recommendations. The SCA presented 81 recommendations in a report on 21 June 2021 to the Scottish Government, which needs to formally respond within six months (The Citizens' Assembly, 2018a; The National Archives, 2019). In the Irish case, Parliament established a committee that considered and reported on the ICA's recommendations. The committee's report was passed to the Government and influenced the content of the national climate action plan. Comparison with the earlier Irish Convention on the Constitution 2012-2014 which had a similar formal commitment, indicates that this formal parliamentary consideration of recommendations can increase the impact of an assembly. That is, a clear connection can be seen between the work of the ICA and the views of Parliament and Government policy. In comparison, the recommendations of the Irish Convention were generally only considered by relevant civil servants who prepared a response based on existing government policy resulting in minor impact (see Appendix for more details).

In France, the president announced that he would bring the recommendations of the CCC "unfiltered" to the appropriate level, i.e. either to a referendum, a vote in Parliament or direct implementation (Giraudet et. al, 2021). However, this commitment was not legally binding and in the end it was not respected by the president, which was heavily criticized. Nevertheless, the recommendations did inspire aspects of the French Climate Bill to some degree (Morrow, 2021). In contrast, in Denmark, a ministerial concept note explains that the follow-up on the DCA's recommendations depends on their character and that the Parliamentary Committee on Climate Change intends to consider the recommendations and write a response (Klima, Energi- og Forsyningsministeriet, 2020). At the time of writing, the DCA is still running so it is not clear how this will play out. Both in France and Denmark, the transmission mechanisms have been unclear, generating confusion about the mandate of these assemblies and critique of the processes (Guillot, 2021; Lykkeberg, 2020).

In the UK, the parliamentary committees initiating CAUK made no commitment to respond collectively. It was up to each committee to decide whether and how they would respond. Moreover, government was not committed to respond, as the assembly was initiated by the committees.

In general, the assemblies have produced a large number of recommendations, ranging from 50 to 150, that are relevant to a variety of different policy areas, government departments and parliamentary committees. This suggests that a variety of different modes of transmission into the representative democratic institutions may be needed. The broad remits of the assemblies and lack of specification of the type and number of recommendations from the outset has generated challenges for integration.

5.4 Contextual factors

Significant differences exist in national political, administrative, and legal systems that impact on climate assemblies. In order to understand these differences and their effects on the climate assemblies in depth it would require a larger comparative analysis, which exceeds the limits of this paper. However, three important factors can be highlighted to get a sense of the role that context plays.

First, the countries vary between parliamentary and presidential political systems, which affected the way in which these national climate assemblies have been commissioned and the extent of support they have received from across different institutions. In France for example, the parliament is a fairly weak legislature that does not have complete control over its own agenda and rarely proposes laws, which may well have generated some of the scepticism and hostility among parliamentarians toward the assembly (Kerrouche, 2006). This could indicate the need to convince parliamentarians that deliberative processes are not competitive but supplementary in order to strengthen a culture of citizen participation. In Denmark, Ireland and Scotland on the other hand, the political system is characterized by parliamentarism, which to some extent encourages political collaboration, as the executive branch is accountable to the legislature. This may well have been a contributing factor as to why the climate assemblies achieved cross-party support in these countries.

Second, there is a difference in experience and familiarity with citizen's assemblies across the countries, which might have affected the quality of the process and the level of trust in it. Even though this is difficult to assess based on the presently accessible data, the principle of citizen's assemblies is more well established in Ireland, Scotland and the UK, which means the process is more familiar to both civil servants and politicians. On the other hand, citizen's assemblies were unprecedented at national level in France, and Denmark, although both countries have experience of other deliberative processes.

Third, some of the climate assemblies were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic whereas others were not. For example, the DCA and SCA were postponed so were not integrated into the policy cycle as first envisioned. Moreover, the last sessions of the CCC and CAUK as well as the entire SCA and first phase of DCA were run online, which affected the format of the process. This might have affected political engagement in the processes both because the pandemic disrupted the political agenda but also because fewer policymakers had the chance to attend and observed the assemblies face to face, which would have left a greater impression.

6. Discussion

The existing national climate assemblies vary significantly in their design and the political contexts in which they are established (see Appendix for a summary of each). Consequently, it is difficult to determine generalizable causes and effects characterising the integration of climate assemblies into the policy system and policy cycles. However, some preliminary indications and patterns do emerge.

First, the way climate assemblies are commissioned and by whom affects the clarity of an assembly's remit as well as the commitment and response to an assembly's recommendations. For example, in cases of Ireland and Scotland, the assemblies were commissioned by broad political coalitions in the parliament through resolutions proposed by government. In describing the design, remit and transmission mechanism, these resolutions clarified the process and tasks for policymakers, organizers, and citizens. It was clear to whom the recommendations were addressed and what to expect (or not to expect) in response from the outset. In instances where this is not the case, such as in Denmark, the remit and political ownership of the process can become an object of continuous debate, or the process can create political tensions and expectations to the political commitment that are too high, as in France.

Second, climate assemblies are rarely timed in relation to specific political processes or points in the policy cycle. This means that the proposals they generate do not seem to be generally well integrated into current climate policy making. The type of outputs that national climate assemblies have tended to generate (to date) are suited to the option formation and decision stages of the cycle. However, more data is needed on policymakers' perspectives on the integration of the proposals of the climate assemblies into the relevant stages of policy cycles to assess whether integration in general is weak or strong. Moreover, the low variation across the cases in terms of their remit makes it difficult to assess at which stage in the policy cycle climate assemblies are most constructive or impactful and the large number and range of recommendations make integration challenging. Further research is needed to explore the task and remit of climate assemblies as well as their integration into the policy cycle.

Third, the impact of climate assemblies on policy making may be increased if parliament is involved in the process from the beginning to the end, and if there is a requirement for collective parliamentary response to the recommendations. The Irish Citizens' Assembly shows that establishing a parliamentary committee to consider and respond to the recommendations can create increased consideration and deliberation among decision-makers and a clear connection between the assembly and policymaking. A government-led response may not necessarily take the recommendations into consideration on their own terms, but from the perspective of existing policy commitments.

Fourth, a broad remit and large number of recommendations covering a variety of policy areas is likely to increase the risk of cherry picking. Policy makers may naturally hold on to the recommendations relevant to their own area. Additionally, politicians are busy and are likely to perceive the output of assemblies as an unmanageable number of recommendations. Moreover, broad remits make it unclear whether the assemblies are meant to be more reflexive or responsive. Consequently, there is need for further research into scoping the remit and output of climate assemblies and their effects.

Fifth, climate assemblies need to balance independence and political ownership of the process. In all cases, the independence of the process seems to have been ensured by the establishment of an independent secretariat or the use of independent charities or foundations. However, this comes at the cost of a lack of direct involvement of policymakers thus creating a loose coupling to the political system potentially reducing buy-in and impact. Familiarity with the concept of citizens' assemblies (for example in Ireland) appears to improve political commitment, transmission, and follow-up. However, further research is needed in order to assess what effect the differences in the organisation of the assemblies have, including the roles of civil servants and politicians.

7. Future network activities

The above exploration of how climate assemblies are integrated into policy systems and policy cycles shows a great diversity, resulting from their novelty and the extent to which this mode of citizen engagement is still under development. In order to support good practices and strengthen our knowledge of the different design and contextual factors and their effects, the following activities are suggested to take place within KNOCA.

- Development of guidelines for commissioners on how to initiate and set an agenda for a climate assembly

- Development of guidelines for policy makers and commissioners on how climate assemblies can contribute to different stages in the policy cycle
- Development of guidelines for commissioners on how to organise and govern a climate assembly
- Training for, and by, civil servants on how to deliver a climate assembly and strike a balance between independence and political ownership
- Further research and KNOCA events on the legitimacy, role, and value of climate assemblies and how to gain political buy-in and commitment
- Further research and KNOCA events on the implications of different formats and outputs from climate assemblies for policy uptake.
- Experimentation with different tasks and remits of climate assemblies
- Further research and KNOCA events on the role of civil servants and politicians during the climate assembly process
- Further research and KNOCA events on the effect of transmission mechanisms on impact, legitimacy and trust in the political system

8. Research methods

The research brief is based on a systematic literature review, documentary, and website analysis of climate assemblies and interviews with relevant civil servants and facilitators. The literature review draws on searches in research databases using key words such as “mini-public”, “policy”, “democratic innovation”, “citizens assembly”, “climate” etc. as well as snowballing through bibliographies. The documentary and website analysis are based on google searches on the titles of the assemblies as well as snowballing. Finally, five semi-structured interviews have been conducted in the period of April 30th – May 17th, 2021, with relevant civil servants and facilitators who have played key roles in the organization and delivery of the five existing climate assemblies mentioned in the above.

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Appendix

The Irish Citizens' Assembly 2016-2018

Procedures of initiating and agenda-setting

The Irish Citizens' Assembly (ICA) was formally initiated in 2016 by Parliament. The Irish Government put forward a proposal to establish an assembly dealing with four issues: Abortion, older people, fixed term parliament and the manner in which referendums are held. However, during the discussion of the proposal in Parliament, the Green Party requested an amendment to include climate change, which was agreed. Thus, the ICA was established by means of a resolution with cross-party support.

The resolution specified the design of the ICA to some degree, specifying the issues it should deal with, the number of members, the governance structure, the procedures, and the transmission mechanism (The Citizens' Assembly, 2018a). It asked the citizens to provide recommendations on how the State could make Ireland a leader in climate change and thereby feed into the option formation or decision stages of the policy cycle.

In terms of timing, the ICA was not planned in relation to any particular point in the climate policy cycle. The inclusion of the climate issue was a result of the Green Party's pressure and hope that an assembly would add to the weight of public discourse and political pressure on the issue of climate change. Evaluating the agenda of the ICA, however, the chair of the assembly recommended to Parliament that "further thought should be given to the types of issues which are conducive to discussion" in a citizens' assembly and that "the views of experts, including experts in the area of the proposed topic, should be sought in determining if it would be in the public interest that the topic be considered in a deliberative democracy process and how it might be framed to be clear" (The Citizens' Assembly, 2018b).

Procedures of the deliberative process

After the resolution had passed and the Government had appointed a chair of the ICA and established a secretariat composed by five civil servants seconded from different government departments, there was no involvement or engagement with the political system in order to ensure the independence of the process. The secretariat who worked directly to the chair did not have any direct reporting structure back into government departments. A steering group of 10 members of the assembly provided input in the ongoing governance of the process.

Transmission mechanisms and responsiveness

The resolution establishing the ICA stated that Parliament would refer the assembly's report on the issue of abortion for consideration to a committee of both Houses of Parliament that would bring its conclusions to the houses for debate. It did not state how it would consider the recommendations on the other issues, only that they should be addressed to Parliament. Furthermore, it stated that Government would provide Parliament with a response on each of the assembly's recommendations and indicate the envisaged timeframe for the holding of any related referendum in case the recommendations were accepted (The Citizens' Assembly, 2018a). In the

end, Parliament replicated the response process for the recommendations on abortion. Thus, a parliamentary committee was established after agreement between the governing parties which considered the recommendations of the assembly. The committee held extensive consultation with interest groups before producing a report with cross-party support. Its report was largely consistent with the recommendations of the assembly, although the agricultural lobby was able to remove the proposals that would have affected its practices. The parliamentary response was likely a result of extensive lobbying from the environmental community who had followed the parliamentary process for the recommendations on abortion closely and wanted it to be replicated. Furthermore, there was a lot of media attention on the citizens' recommendation on climate change. After the parliamentary process, Government took the committee's report as the basis of their national climate action plan, which both referred to the citizens' assembly and the committee's report (Government of Ireland, 2019). In other words, there was a clear connection from the work of the citizens informing the views of Parliament and Government policy. In connection to this, it is worth noticing that only the recommendations considered by Parliament, i.e. the ones concerning abortion and climate change, had a clear and significant impact, whereas the recommendations considered by Government, i.e. the ones concerning older people, fixed term parliament and the manner in which referendums are held, did not.

Besides comparing the response to the different recommendations of the ICA internally, it is also possible to compare responses between citizens' assemblies in Ireland. In the Convention on the Constitution 2012-2014, the transmission mechanism was similar to the one of the ICA, however it did not include the establishment of a parliamentary committee (The Convention of the Constitution, 2012). Thus, only Government was committed to respond, which meant that the recommendations were considered by relevant civil servants who prepared a response based on existing government policy. Even though 33 parliamentarians were directly involved as members of the assembly and thereby in its recommendations, they were not directly involved in the next steps following up on the recommendations. Comparing the Convention and the ICA, it seems that involving Parliament in responding to the citizens' recommendations creates a mechanism to push the recommendations and increase impact.

The chair recommended in her evaluation that imposing "a time limit for, and, stipulating the format of, the process which will follow receipt of a report and recommendation from a deliberative democracy process should be considered by the Oireachtas. This would make it more encouraging for a potential Chairperson or potential members to participate in the process, in that it would give some assurance in relation to the fate of the recommendation" (The Citizens' Assembly, 2018b).

Contextual factors

Ireland is one of the few countries in which a climate assembly is not the first citizens' assembly that has been run. Therefore, there were already a level of path dependency connected to the assembly and there were already staff in the Prime Minister's office who were experienced with these types of processes. However, this does not necessarily mean that there is a widespread and robust culture for citizen participation in Ireland. There were also multiple skeptical voices questioning the ICA in the public sphere before, during and after the process.

La Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat (France)

Procedures of initiating and agenda-setting

The Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat (CCC) was announced in 2019 by President Emmanuel Macron, and formally initiated by a letter from the Prime Minister to the head of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (Giraudet et. al, 2021). On the one hand, the presidential initiation gave the process significant attention and profile. On the other hand, it created tensions between the Government and Parliament. This was partly because Macron committing to bring the recommendations of the citizens further “unfiltered” and partly because the citizens were asked to come up with legal, regulatory and referendum proposals that should “define structuring measures to manage, in a spirit of social justice, to cut France’s greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030 compared to 1990” (Giraudet et. al, 2021). In other words, it was supposed to feed into the decision stage of the policy cycle, which was seen by parliamentarians as a threat to their prerogatives and legislative role, as they feared to be forced to pass the proposals of the citizens without amendments.

The CCC was not timed in relation to any particular point in the climate policy cycle. Instead, the Government decided to do business as usual during the process, which among other things meant that some of the citizens’ proposals had already been tackled in a law passed just before the end of the CCC.

Procedures of the deliberative process

During the CCC different policymakers were involved in various ways. Two government officials were seconded to the governance committee that was responsible for preparing and implementing the CCC. The committee was appointed by Economic, Social and Environmental Council and was composed by 17 people including citizens from the assembly and experts in climate, participatory democracy and economics. It was independent and attentive to the tension between letting the Government know exactly what happened in the convention, accessing all information and data without influencing the work of the citizens. Therefore, although the Government was largely kept away from the process, the President, Minister of Ecology and the Director of the Ministry of Ecology were invited and took part in each of their meetings in the convention and regular meetings with parliamentarians were organized in order to engage them in the process. Experts and outside interests were also directly involved in authoring proposals with members, raising questions about the legitimacy of the process.

Transmission mechanisms and responsiveness

In the above-mentioned letter from the Prime Minister to the head of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council, it said that the president would commit to bring the recommendations of the CCC “unfiltered” to the appropriate level, i.e. either to a referendum, a vote in Parliament or direct implementation (Giraudet et. al, 2021). However, this commitment was not legally binding, and as it turned out, Macron did not respect it, turning down three of the CCC’s proposals when they were presented. Later on, he met with the citizens of the convention in a tense and heated debate where he announced a potential referendum (Duboua-Lorsch, 2020). In the end, however, the follow-up of the CCC resulted in Government proposing a climate bill for debate in Parliament

that included around 40 percent of the CCC's proposals, some of which had been modified (Phalnikar, 2021). This follow-up process and response was heavily criticized not least by the CCC's participants (Guillot, 2021).

Contextual factors

The CCC should be seen in context of the Yellow Vests movement that shook policymakers in France and animated them to think of ways to address the popular dissatisfaction. Thus, advisors in the Government came up with the idea to establish a citizens' convention on climate and succeeded in convincing the Minister of Ecology and the President to do so, however, as previously discussed, many parliamentarians did not welcome the CCC, which was unprecedented in France. This is likely related to the fact that the French Parliament is a fairly weak legislature that does not have complete control over its own agenda and rarely proposes laws (Kerrouche, 2006). Therefore, there might be a need for convincing parliamentarians that deliberative processes are not competitive but supplementary to Parliament in order to strengthen a culture of citizen participation. For the same reason, future processes might benefit from being based on official rules or legislature passed by Parliament.

Climate Assembly UK

Procedures of initiating and agenda-setting

The Climate Assembly UK (CAUK) was initiated in 2019 by six Select Committees of the House of Commons in order to understand public preferences on how the UK should tackle climate change. The assembly was suggested to the committees by parliamentary officials who coordinated the efforts to fund it.

In July 2019, UK Government committed to a target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This legislation inspired CAUK's task, to answer the question: "How do we get to net zero by 2050?" The different committees also submitted questions on their own subject matters that they wanted the assembly to consider.

The primary role of CAUK was to inform the 6 commissioning select committees in their function of effectively scrutinizing government. There was no formal nor explicit commitment for the government to pick up on the proposals as part of its decision making.

Procedures of the deliberative process

CAUK was delivered by a participation charity, Involve, to ensure its independence and a small team of parliamentary officials to promote political buy-in. The officials worked part time on the assembly and were split between the roles of communication, public engagement, stakeholder management and political management. They liaised between the committees and the independent charity to ensure the political relevance of the assembly's agenda. During the process, the officials wanted to protect both the independence of the assembly and the parliamentarians from the accusation that they were interfering with the process. Hence, the Parliamentarians were kept at

arm's length. Officials did encourage parliamentarians to attend the sessions and observe the assembly in person, in order to gain political buy-in and trust in the process. However, they were not allowed to talk to the assembly members beyond the sponsoring chair welcoming and thanking citizens for their efforts. The balance between independence and political ownership was challenging to strike, and the officials would have liked more engagement of the committees with more regular briefings as well as more parliamentarians to attend.

Transmission mechanisms and responsiveness

The committees made no formal commitment to respond collectively. It was up to each committee to decide how they would respond. Government was not committed to respond, as CAUK was initiated by the committees. The assembly report was launched in September 2020, in the House of Commons followed by a debate attended by the minister responsible for climate policy. On the day of the launch, the lead commissioning committee, the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee (BEIS), announced an inquiry that would track the recommendations and the Government's response to them. The BEIS inquiry published its results in July 2021 and the Government responded in September 2021. The other 5 commissioning Select Committees have used the recommendations differently. For example, the transport select committee conducted an inquiry on two recommendations looking at how to implement them. Moreover, the parliamentary officials sought government buy-in, organizing briefings with more than 400 civil servants across Government as well as with external stakeholders. However, they did not receive the degree of Government interest and support that they had hoped for.

Contextual factors

Given the novelty of citizens' assemblies, the value of this form of participatory democracy is not fully embedded into the UK policymaking process. A previous citizens' assembly in 2018 on health and social care commissioned by two parliamentary committees meant that the concept was familiar to some parliamentarians and they knew that it could be a useful aid to policymaking, getting a sense of where an informed public opinion might lie. The parliamentary team of the CAUK were not involved in the 2018 assembly but learned from their colleagues who commissioned it. In terms of political ownership, the reception of CAUK's recommendations were affected by a general election which led to changes in the composition of the committees that commissioned the assembly. This probably led to a lower level of engagement from the committees with the work of the assembly. Additionally, the process was affected by the high political profile of both Brexit and COVID-19, which meant that it dropped down the political agenda.

Scotland's Climate Assembly

Procedures of initiating and agenda-setting

Scotland's Climate Assembly (SCA) was formally initiated in 2019 by the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Government put forward a proposal to amend the Scottish Climate Change Act 2009, and during the parliamentary discussions, the Green Party suggested integrating a citizens' assembly on climate in the amendment, which met with cross-party support.

The Act specified SCA's function, governance structure and transmission mechanism, and asked the assembly to "consider how to prevent or minimise, or remedy or mitigate the effects of, climate change [and] make recommendations on measures proposed to achieve the emissions reduction targets" (Scotland's Climate Change Act, 2019).

SCA was designed to feed into the Government's climate change plan, however, the assembly was postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. SCA met online in delivered its recommendations in the aftermath of the May 2021 Scottish Parliament elections in May 2021 and could therefore influence the Climate Change Committee's Carbon Budget, COP26 in Glasgow and the new parliamentary cycle.

Procedures of the deliberative process

The SCA was run by an independent secretariat whose independence was ensured in a memorandum of understanding between the Government and the secretariat (Climate Assembly Scotland, 2021). It is mostly staffed by seconded civil servants from Government departments who have knowledge of policymaking from the inside (at the time of writing, the Secretariat is still in operation). Hence, they know the timelines of the policy cycle and are aware both to make sure that policymakers know about the assembly and its recommendations and that the assembly plays into the process of making the next program of Government at key points.

It was important to the Secretariat that the assembly was both independent and integrated into the political system. Consequently, the political parties could each delegate a representative to the SCA's stewarding group whose role it was to advise the secretariat. Three out of the five parties in the Scottish Parliament delegated Members of Parliament to the stewarding group. This meant that the parties were, in principle, always updated and knew what the secretariat was doing. Furthermore, the invitation letters for the members of the SCA were signed by the leaders of the political parties and not just the First Minister alone, reducing the perception that the assembly was party political. Finally, the political leaders had each recorded a 90 second clip for the final meeting of the assembly thanking its members for their work; this was the first time that the members heard directly from the politicians. With regards to Government, the secretariat had a meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change early in the process where she expressed satisfaction with the assembly being independent. Her approach was to commit to the process and support it but not to get involved.

Transmission mechanisms and responsiveness

The Climate Change Act 2019 establishing the SCA states that the assembly's recommendation must be laid before Parliament and responded to by the Scottish Ministers within six months of receiving them, but they are not required to accept them (The National Archives, 2019). The SCA report was issued on 21 June 2021; at the time of writing the Scottish Government had not responded.

There is an extensive program planned to engage politicians across the Scottish Parliament so that they are aware of the SCA, where it has come from and why it is different from other types of consultation (the ones that voted for the Climate Change Act will not necessarily be the ones receiving the recommendations because of the general election in May 2021). The aim is to enable

Parliament to hold the Government to account in a way that is informed by the assembly's recommendations.

Contextual factors

Within the Scottish Government, there is a vocal commitment to public engagement in policymaking especially in relation to climate policy. The political rhetoric is that the green transition will only be successful if decisions are made with the public. Hence, the Government has a public engagement strategy that states that the Government will co-create policy with the people. The Green Party, a significant presence within parliament, and pledges annual citizens' assemblies both locally and nationally. This is also backed by the Scottish National Party, the party of Government, who pledge in its election manifesto that it will run annual citizens' assemblies (SNP, 2021). Moreover, the staff of the SCA secretariat has experience with participatory management and public engagement including The Big Climate Conversation in Scotland in 2019. When they knew they were going to work on the SCA, they spent time observing the CAUK, talked to the parliamentary team at Westminster about their experiences and learned from the organizers of the Citizens' Assembly on the Future of Scotland (the first Assembly organized in Scotland) as well as organizers of assemblies in Poland and Belgium. Consequently, Scotland's Climate Assembly was able to build on earlier practice and a degree of political enthusiasm for citizens' assemblies.

The Danish Climate Assembly

Procedures of initiating and agenda-setting

The Danish Climate Assembly (DCA) was formally initiated by Parliament in 2019 in a cross-party agreement leading up to the Danish Climate Change Act. The agreement neither specified the remit nor the design of the assembly.

Later in 2020, the Ministry of Climate published a concept note in which the design was specified, including, the issues it should deal with, the governance structure, the methodology, the timeline and the follow-up process. The task of the DCA is to discuss dilemmas related to the green transition that are near to the citizens and to give recommendations for the climate action plans (at the time of writing, the DCA is still running). These should consider public finance, cost efficiency, employment, sustainable business development and Danish competitiveness (Klima, Energi- og Forsyningsministeriet, 2020). Consequently, the DCA was designed to feed into the option formation stage of the policy cycle. However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the DCA was delayed while the climate action plans were not, which means that the DCA will not be able to provide inputs as originally planned.

Procedures of the deliberative process

An independent foundation, The Danish Board of Technology Foundation, is delivering the DCA in cooperation with the Ministry of Climate that acts as secretariat. They have weekly meetings in which the government officials are careful about ensuring neutrality and keeping an arm's length. Moreover, the DCA has a planning group composed by citizens and one representative from the independent foundation and the ministry, respectively. The Ministry of Climate attended the

assembly's first meeting and the citizens have had two meetings with the parliamentary committee on climate change to present their considerations and recommendations to date.

Transmission mechanisms and responsiveness

Following the above-mentioned concept note, the DCA's recommendations have been transmitted to politicians via meetings with the parliamentary committee on climate change. Further follow-up is under preparation by the Government, but it is unknown what shape this might take. One option is that the minister will give a written response. Furthermore, it is the intention of the parliamentary committee on climate change to consider the recommendations and write a response (Klima, Energi- og Forsyningsministeriet, 2020). However, none of these mechanisms are legally binding, which has been heavily criticized in Danish media (Lykkeberg, 2020).

Contextual factors

At the time of writing, only the first phase of the DCA has been concluded. The second phase will start in the Fall 2021 and the concrete design has not been agreed yet. Media attention to the first phase and the (limited) policy response is growing, and thus the transmission mechanisms and responsiveness of policymakers are subject to public debate and, in a way, still under development and negotiation.

