

# Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis Evaluation Report

June 2023

# Foreword

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## Funding Declaration

Nicole Curato, Azucena Morán and Hannah Werner received a small grant from the European Climate Foundation through the Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies to fund the translation and transcription of some interviews used in this report.

## Ethics declaration

This research was approved by the University of Canberra's Human Research Ethics Committee (202210374) and is bound by a data sharing agreement between the organisers of the Global Assembly and the research team. The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

## Companion piece

Read the 'Report of the 2021 Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis' produced by the core delivery team. This report summarises the rationale, methodology and outcomes of the Global Assembly. See: <https://globalassembly.org/report>

In just a decade, the idea of a global citizens' assembly went from a conjecture on the part of a few theorists (including me) to practical realisation in the Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis (Global Assembly). In attempting such a vast and ambitious endeavour, things will never be exactly right when done for the first time. It is impossible to anticipate all the challenges that will arise. If we think only of global institutions, in retrospect the institutional design of the League of Nations was not up to the challenges it faced; but those who crafted the United Nations in 1945 could learn from both the strengths and weaknesses of the League in designing a better (but still imperfect) set of institutions. This need to learn is why systematic, clear-eyed evaluation of the first iteration of any institutional innovation is so important, and that is exactly what this Report provides.

This Evaluation Report does an exemplary job in its remarkably thorough examination of both the strengths and shortcomings of the Global Assembly, staring the difficulties straight in the face. As such, it performs a valuable service to the 'community of practice' that will take the idea of global citizen deliberation forward. The authors address concerns which will be invaluable in designing future global assemblies on climate change or other issues, including challenges for some participants such as understanding their task to be learning rather than deliberation, a digital (and economic) divide, the use of English as the 'global exchange language', and living in precarious settings such as war zones and areas of high criminality. The authors also speak to the lack of visibility of genuine challenges to mainstream sustainability discourses in the Global Assembly's proceedings, and to inequalities in the structure and operation of the Global Assembly that in some ways reflect an unequal world. As we look to the future, some of these problems will be tractable, others harder to eliminate.

But before dwelling too much on any shortcomings, we should bear in mind that we need not assess an innovative institution like the Global Assembly only through reference to some hypothetical ideal of equality, justice, democracy, and impact – but also through comparison with the available limited alternatives for citizen participation in global governance, all of which are highly problematic. Compared to (say) the haphazard and largely inconsequential citizen consultations organised by the UN for the process that yielded the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, or the valuable but demographically unrepresentative activities of global civil society (also dominated by NGOs based in the Global North), the Global Assembly has a lot going for it.

Above all, it is important to recognise the Global Assembly as a historical landmark which demonstrates that lay citizens of the world can join together in productive and meaningful dialogue, that they can learn about and navigate a complex issue like climate change and can participate in an institution that can and should be a significant player in global governance. In this light, this Evaluation Report should play a vital role in informing aspirations for a more participatory and democratic global order.

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# Glossary of terms used in this report<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is a modified version of the glossary that originally appeared in *The Report of the 2021 Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis: Giving everyone a seat at the global governance table*. Available at: <https://globalassembly.org/report>

## **Assembly Member**

A participant of the Global Assembly selected by global civic lottery. Their role was to deliberate with their peers on the framing question and co-produce recommendations, primarily in the form of the People's Declaration for the Sustainable Future of Planet Earth. They represented only themselves but collectively approximated a descriptive sample of the global human population in terms of geography, income, age, gender, education, and attitudes about climate change.

## **Breakout Group**

A group of between four and six Assembly Members, accompanied by their Community Hosts and/or translators, shared a time window within which to engage in regular deliberations. Each group was supported by a regular Breakout Facilitator and Notetaker. The majority of deliberation sessions took place in the Breakout Group setting. Even during Plenary Sessions much of the time was spent in these Breakout Groups, although sometimes their composition was rearranged to promote cross-pollination of ideas and diversity of thought.

## **Citizens' assembly**

A group of citizens who come together to learn, deliberate, and make recommendations on a certain issue. These citizens are selected by civic lottery such that they form a descriptive sample of a given population by criteria such as age, income, geography, political views, etc. A citizens' assembly is a form of deliberative mini-public.

<b>Cluster</b>	A sub-group of Community Hosts and their Assembly Members grouped together for administrative purposes by virtue of a common language or longitude range. Each Cluster was administered by a Cluster Facilitator.
<b>Cluster Facilitator</b>	A civil society organisation and/or research centre and its staff/representatives who administered a Cluster. They provided a layer of managerial decentralisation, distributing leadership across the Global Assembly, as well as reducing the administrative burden on the Central Circle.
<b>Central Circle</b>	A group of 10 individuals representing the founding organisations of the Global Assembly responsible for its high-level strategy, development, and administration.
<b>Core Delivery Team</b>	A group of individuals consisting of members of the Central Circle and others who were responsible for the practical execution of the Global Assembly.

<b>Community Host</b>	A community organisation and its staff/representatives who were based near one of the points selected by the global location lottery. They performed the following roles: recruitment of potential Assembly Members for the Core Assembly, contextualization and translation of information materials, promotion of the Global Assembly, enabling the participation of Assembly Members (including transportation, internet connectivity and computer access, live translation during sessions or provision thereof, technical support, payment). While often present during deliberations, they served only as a conduit for Assembly Member participation and were instructed not to influence them in any way.
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<b>COP and COP26</b>	The term ‘COP’ refers to a ‘conference of the parties’ which is the governing body of an international convention; a written agreement between actors accountable to international law. These actors are often nation-states. Examples of conventions with a COP include the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. COP26 was the 26th annual COP of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It also marked the fifth COP since the 2015 Paris Agreement (devised at COP21).
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<b>Civic lottery</b>	The use of random selection to select participants, often resulting in a group that is demographically representative of a community.
<b>Deliberative mini-public</b>	A broad term for deliberative democracy processes in which a subset of a population engages in informed, reasoned and open deliberation on issues. A citizens' assembly is a type of deliberative mini-public.
<b>Discourses</b>	These refer to ways of seeing the world or a particular issue, in this case climate change. In this report, climate discourses in the environmental politics literature were used as a reference point to analyse the discourses that emerged in the discussion of Assembly Members and the Knowledge and Wisdom Committee.
<b>Docking</b>	Docking in the context of the Global Assembly describes the process of interfacing in a compatible way with existing institutional structures and especially, COP26.
<b>Editor</b>	An individual responsible for collating the outputs from Breakout Group discussions, in order for them to be evaluated by all Assembly Members at a later date.

<b>Facilitator</b>	The person tasked to lead, but not influence deliberations between Assembly Members and ensure that all voices and perspectives are heard and respected equally.
<b>Global Support Team</b>	A subset of the Core Delivery Team which was devoted to the practical implementation of the Core Assembly, primarily through the steering of the Hosting Circle and troubleshooting any real-time issues with attendance or participation.
<b>Knowledge and Wisdom Committee</b>	A nine-person advisory committee who are experts in their respective fields tasked to ensure that the learning journey of all Assembly Members was rooted in the best evidence available at that time.
<b>Majority/Minority World</b>	The term majority world is a category of analysis used to describe the territories also known as the 'Global South' or 'Developing World'. It highlights that economically wealthier and historically/geopolitically powerful countries constitute, in fact, the 'minority world' in terms of land and population. <sup>2</sup>
<b>Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)</b>	Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are non-binding commitments to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate impacts developed by individual countries or groups of countries (e.g., the European Union).

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<sup>2</sup> See Alam (2008)

**Notetaker**

The person responsible for documenting the written record of Assembly Members' deliberations. They were also responsible for preparing translated online learning materials for their Breakout Group before sessions and transferring key outputs to a format accessible to Editors after sessions. They also provided technical support to the Breakout Group and general assistance to Breakout Facilitators when required.

**Plenary Session**

A session of the Core Assembly in which all Assembly Members were present at the same time. These occurred on Saturdays at 12pm UTC, a time window calculated to be the most convenient across the diversity of participants' time zones.

**Sortition**

See civic lottery.

# Executive Summary

**The Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis was an unprecedented democratic innovation in global governance. It gave life to theoretical ideas about the importance of inclusive deliberation in generating collective judgment on intractable issues and connecting the outcomes of citizen deliberation to official channels of decision-making.**

The Global Assembly came at a time when global climate cooperation is experiencing deadlocks and suffering from a legitimacy deficit. As a civil society-led initiative, it sought to make an intervention in a crucial decade for global climate governance by bringing the voices of one hundred citizens from all over the world into an institutional space where they are largely absent.

What lessons can we learn from the world's first Global Assembly? To what extent can deliberative democracy's ideals of inclusive, respectful, informed, reasonable, and impactful discussion be realised on a global scale?

## **The Global Assembly in five headlines**

This report is structured around five headlines based on collaborative research by academics based in eleven universities and seven countries around the world. The headlines are as follows.

- 1 The Global Assembly was 'global' as far as it brought together Assembly Members from diverse backgrounds, from across the world. Diverse backgrounds, however, do not mean diverse discourses.
- 2 The Global Assembly facilitated collective learning on the climate and ecological crisis. More can be done to facilitate collective deliberation.
- 3 The Global Assembly built the foundations of a global community of practice that can design and implement future local and global assemblies. A clear governance structure needs to be put in place.
- 4 The Global Assembly sought to address the structural constraints of convening global citizen deliberation in a highly unequal world. Not all constraints can be overcome.
- 5 The Global Assembly established itself as a potential player in global climate governance, but it also spotlighted the challenges of influencing global climate governance on the institutional level.

# Key recommendations

Drawing on these findings we make several recommendations for future global assemblies on the themes of recruitment, learning and deliberation, governance, inequalities, and impact.

## Recruitment

- Utilise the practical and lived experiences of Community Hosts in recruiting Assembly Members to contextualise it to the varying environments around the world.
- Ensure the presence of Assembly Members from areas most affected by climate change.
- Find creative ways of representing climate discourses (such as the use of images) when recruiting Assembly Members with diverse views.
- Create a mechanism to democratise agenda-setting of the global assembly.

## Learning and deliberation

- Provide more opportunities for the Assembly Members to learn about the design and implementation of citizens' assemblies and develop skills in deliberation.
- Mainstream expressive forms of communication and co-design creative pedagogical tools to accommodate diverse learning needs.
- Involve facilitators in co-designing the process plan and putting in place sessions for collective learning among facilitators prior to the deliberations.
- Ensure consistent availability of experts in breakout groups who can respond to questions or be tasked to find the answers to Assembly Members' questions.

## Governance

- Reconfigure the Global Assembly's governance arrangements to clarify the distribution of responsibilities, lines of accountability and oversight mechanisms.
- Share the power of determining the governance structure with cluster facilitators, community hosts, and other partner organisations. Consider mirroring the composition of the central circle with the composition of Assembly Members.
- Put mechanisms for aftercare in place for Assembly Members, Community Hosts, and facilitators.

## Inequalities

- Foreground the perspective of the most disadvantaged participants when designing the process plan.
- Prioritise low tech solutions as they can be more inclusive than high tech options.
- Introduce more languages, standard criteria for translator selection, and the use of digital tools for real time translation.

## Impact

- Advance tailored interventions in global climate governance to increase impact.
- Move beyond the UNFCCC and COP as targets for impact to include other global institutions, including civil society groups.
- Empower local organisers to devise communication strategies suitable to their contexts.

# Introduction





# The Global Assembly on the Climate and Ecological Crisis was a pioneering civil society-led initiative. It was the world's first citizens' assembly that brought together 100 randomly selected citizens from around the world to deliberate on the topic: 'how can humanity address the climate and ecological crisis in a fair and effective way?'

For 68 hours over 11 weeks, Assembly Members listened to expert evidence, exchanged their views in facilitated small group deliberations and plenary sessions, and developed the People's Declaration for the Sustainable Future of Planet Earth that was first disseminated in COP26. It set an institutional precedent for bringing the voices of a randomly selected group of ordinary citizens to multilateral negotiations, a space where they are largely absent.

This report examines the extent to which the Global Assembly upheld principles of good practice in the process design, deliberative experience, and impact of 'representative deliberative processes' or deliberative mini-publics (see OECD 2021; Curato, Farrell et al 2021). Our aim is to prompt reflection on the possibilities of designing and implementing a citizens' assembly on the global level and to generate actionable insights for future global assemblies.

## 1.1 Evaluation approach

Our report takes a power-sensitive approach to evaluation (see Curato, Hammond and Min 2018). Building on Marta Strumińska-Kutra and Christian Scholl's analytical framework (2022), we focus our analysis on:

- **Situating the Global Assembly within the existing power structures of global governance.** The Global Assembly – or any citizens' assembly, for that matter – did not take place in a vacuum. It unfolded in contexts marked by material, digital, political, social, and discursive inequality. Our analysis begins with the premise that inequalities can never be fully bracketed out from citizen deliberation, even by the most thoughtfully designed forums. We agree with Arthur Lupia and Anne Norton's position that 'inequality is in the room even before the deliberators enter' (Lupia and Norton 2017: 69). Foregrounding this premise allows us to offer a critical account of how various actors experienced the Global Assembly depending on their context and relationship with pre-existing social hierarchies. In so doing, we open an honest discussion on what a global citizens' assembly can realistically achieve in the face of power.
- **The hierarchies created, replicated, and/or challenged between and among the community of practice that designed and implemented the Global Assembly and the Assembly Members who took part in the forum.** By 'community of practice,' we refer to the people who organised the Global Assembly, including members of the Central Circle, Cluster Facilitators, Community Hosts, translators, experts, and facilitators (see Glossary of terms). Our power-sensitive approach presupposes that all actors brought their own values, interests, and abilities in the Global Assembly. We investigate how these values, interests, and abilities challenged or created hierarchies in the Global

Assembly and consider the extent to which these hierarchies can be addressed. This is especially relevant as the Global Assembly was designed to have a ‘decentralised’ approach to governance, anchored on values of trust, empathy, and openness, among others (Global Assembly Team 2022: 33-34).

- **The diversity of our scholarly interests and political views on the role of citizens’ assemblies in global governance, which facilitated critical reflection.** As members of the evaluation team, we recognise that we are not purely disinterested actors. Some of us have actively advocated for the mainstreaming of citizens’ assemblies while others are critical of how such democratic innovations have been misused or of their political relevance beyond the minority world. Some of us have been involved in setting up or advocating global citizens’ assemblies on other topics, such as genome editing. All of us share a scholarly interest in how global governance can be democratised. The diversity of views of the evaluation team allowed us to see the Global Assembly from various empirical and normative angles which facilitated critical deliberation as we put the report together.

## 1.2 Methods

Our evaluation is based on:

- Forty-eight in-depth interviews with Assembly Members, Cluster Facilitators, Community Hosts, Breakout Group Facilitators, founding partners, members of the Central Circle, and advisers from the Knowledge and Wisdom Committee. We interviewed all Assembly Members and Community Hosts using their first language.
- Survey responses of Assembly Members before, during, and after the Global Assembly.
- Direct observation of breakout group deliberations and plenary sessions documented through fieldnotes.
- A sample of transcripts of breakout groups.
- Documentary analysis of the information booklet, minutes of meetings of the Knowledge and Wisdom Committee, and briefing documents given to Community Hosts, among others.
- Analysis of the content and delivery of expert testimonies available on YouTube.
- An analysis of 56 online English language media articles.
- An analysis of 53 social media posts (sample).

The explanation of our research methods is outlined in Appendix 1.

## 1.3 The evaluation team

The Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance (the Centre) at the University of Canberra is one of the Global Assembly's founding partners whose role is to provide scholarly input on the Global Assembly. Part of this role is leading the Global Assembly's evaluation, in collaboration with its global network of associates with expertise in deliberative democracy and environmental politics from the local to the global level.

The evaluation team is composed of researchers external to the Global Assembly, which means none of the researchers were directly involved in project design or decision-making. External, however, does not mean disconnected. Far from being 'parachute researchers' that evaluate a citizens' assembly from a distant standpoint, some members of the evaluation team were immersed in the everyday realities of the Global Assembly. Lead researcher Nicole Curato served as Chair of the Global Assembly's Global Governance and Participation Committee, which is an advisory group that provided input to the Central Circle on matters related to process design, impact, and fundraising, among others. Leading the evaluation of the Global Assembly is a continuation of her role in providing advice on ways forward based on evidence and critical analysis. Meanwhile, Lucas Veloso served as notetaker in a breakout group whose task was to document Assembly Members' viewpoints. Others observed the Global Assembly from a critical distance either by directly observing plenary and breakout group discussions, viewing the recording of the sessions, or analysing the transcripts. The combination of these roles allowed the evaluation team to understand the Global Assembly from various angles.

There were over thirty researchers, interns and interviewers involved in data gathering and analysis to complete this evaluation report. Members of the research team have experience evaluating citizens' assemblies,<sup>3</sup> studying facilitation,<sup>4</sup> identifying vulnerabilities in deliberative mini-publics,<sup>5</sup> observing deliberation in the majority world,<sup>6</sup> and studying environmental discourses and global climate governance.<sup>7</sup> The evaluation team spoke nine languages and was located in eleven universities in seven countries.

Apart from Curato named as lead author, the sequence of authorship is in alphabetical order.

## 1.4 Key insights

We structured the report around five headlines emerging from our analysis and concluded each chapter with proposed ways forward. The headlines are as follows.

**First, the Global Assembly was 'global' as far as it brought together Assembly Members from diverse backgrounds. Diverse backgrounds, however, do not mean diverse discourses.** In Chapter 3, we discuss how 'the global' was formed through a multi-stage civic lottery. Participant

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3 For example, see: Curato, Parry, van Dijk, Lisa (2022); Elstub, Farrell, Carrick, and Mockler (2021); Andrews, Elstub, McVean, and Sandie (2022); Elstub, Escobar, Hendersen, Thorne, Bland, and Bowes (2022); Kirby, Freier, Renn, Lietzmann, Oppold, Scheidemantel, and Döring, M. (2021).

4 See: von Schneidemesser, Oppold, and Stasiak (2023).

5 See: Veloso and Marques (2018).

6 See: Ross and Morán (2022).

7 See: Chalaye (2023); De Pryck (2021).

recruitment used a combination of algorithmic sortition which identified 100 points in the world map from which Assembly Members would be selected, followed by improvisations of Community Hosts on the ground to recruit respondents in those points.

We find that the ‘randomness’ of random selection is context-specific and that technical tools used for multi-stage civic lottery need to be grounded on local realities to address specific issues on social proximity. How can random selection take place in communities where everyone knows each other? What are the alternatives to the street intercept method<sup>8</sup> in societies with high crime rates? We unpack some of these questions in this chapter.

The different approaches in participant recruitment resulted in a Global Assembly diverse enough to ‘provide a snapshot of the human family’ – a phrase often used in the Global Assembly’s promotional videos. But diversity of personalities does not necessarily mean diversity of discourses. We analysed the discourses exchanged in small group deliberations and found that most statements from Assembly Members called for fairer and more urgent action on climate change but without challenging the foundations of current political and economic structures. We found that discourses that challenge the capitalist growth model were relatively absent, as were discourses that questioned the reality of climate change. We identify the possible reasons for this in this chapter, particularly the role of experts in shaping the parameters of deliberation.

**Second, the Global Assembly facilitated collective learning about the climate and ecological crisis, but more can be done to facilitate collective deliberation.** Chapter four discusses this key finding. In our interviews,

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8 Interacting and recruiting potential Assembly Members in public spaces.

we documented Assembly Members, Community Hosts, and facilitators describing the Global Assembly as a classroom, a training session, or a course. This, in itself, is not a cause of concern. After all, many Assembly Members joined the Global Assembly because they wanted to learn about climate change. A cause of concern, however, is the way power relations were established as Assembly Members interpreted the roles of people around them. Assembly Members saw facilitators as ‘teachers’ who collected responses from the group, while fellow Assembly Members were treated as classmates or friends who were co-recipients of knowledge instead of bearers of ideas or fellow interlocutors. Meanwhile, expert testimonies were viewed as the most important sources of knowledge. The format of pre-recorded testimonies provided little opportunity for Assembly Members to develop habits of engaging experts by seeking clarification, asking for information, and scrutinising expert evidence. These practices, we find, placed tension on the aim of creating a space for free and equal deliberation.

In this chapter, we also observe the uneven quality of translations which may have compromised Assembly Members’ capacity to give full expression of their views. We found that Assembly Members were most engaged when they conveyed their views through creative means, such as producing videos or songs that expressed their lived experiences on climate change.

**Third, the Global Assembly built the foundations of a global community of practice that can design and implement future local and global assemblies. A clear governance structure, however, needs to be in place.**

The Global Assembly was an unprecedented event, and so there were no templates from which role descriptions for each member of the ‘community of practice’ can be drawn. ‘Learning in practice’ served as one of the Global Assembly’s guiding values, which, in practice, also meant ‘building the plane while you’re flying it,’ as a member of the Central Circle put it.

In Chapter 5, we characterise the governance of the Global Assembly and examine how various members of the community of practice experienced the ‘decentralised delivery model.’ We analyse the internal governance of the Global Assembly using the metaphors of ‘front stage’ and ‘backstage’ of performance. While the deliberations unfolding over Zoom served as the ‘front stage’ of the Global Assembly, the ‘backstage’ involved practices and improvisations from a global community of practice to make the Global Assembly work. In this chapter, we document stories of heroic initiatives and great sacrifices – from a Community Host who brought a new shirt for the Assembly Member to make them feel confident facing a camera at a global event, to facilitators who studied the process plan which they treat as a ‘bible,’ to Cluster Facilitators who mobilised their personal networks to translate technical information on climate change to the local vernacular. These, we find, are not mundane achievements, but provide concrete foundations for developing a global community of practice who are confident in taking a more central role in the design and implementation of future global assemblies.

**Fourth, the Global Assembly spotlighted structural constraints in implementing citizens’ assemblies at the global level. Not all structural constraints can be overcome.** Chapter 6 identifies three structural constraints in the Global Assembly: the digital divide, English as the ‘global exchange language’, and time. This chapter identifies the different ways in which the design of the Global Assembly sought to overcome these constraints. Providing data allowance, pairing Assembly Members with community hosts and translators, and scheduling deliberations in the evening and over the weekends were some design features to overcome these constraints.

Our in-depth interviews reveal the extent to which these structural constraints can be overcome. Poor internet connectivity, power

interruptions, security risks in the evening, dependencies on English translators, and lack of discretionary time are concerns that are constitutive of Assembly Members’ everyday experiences, which cannot be overcome by design tweaks and improvisations. Identifying these constraints, we find, are useful in prompting reflection on how to design citizens’ assemblies from the perspective of most disadvantaged participants as well as opening a conversation on what the Global Assembly can reasonably achieve given structural constraints.

**Finally, the Global Assembly established itself as a potential player in global climate governance, but it also emphasised the challenges of influencing global governance at the institutional level.** We begin Chapter 7 by examining what we describe as ‘shifting goalposts’ of the Global Assembly’s impact agenda on its first year, which suggests the need to clarify the scale of its ambition. We then analysed the extent to which the Global Assembly advanced its theory of change. We find that the Global Assembly made significant first steps in establishing itself as an actor in the field of global climate governance, especially in generating attention to new forms of decision-making at the global level and inspiring Assembly Members to act on climate change. However, ‘docking’ the Global Assembly to COP26 also brought into sharp focus the challenges of gaining influence at the institutional level, especially in shaping international negotiations and policies.

## A note on language

All respondents in this report are anonymised. We use the pronoun ‘they’ for all respondents for the purpose of disidentification.

## 1.5 Limitations

There are two main limitations of this evaluation report. First, because of our power-sensitive approach, we focused on interviewing Assembly Members from disadvantaged backgrounds, which include Assembly Members who had fewer years of formal education, lived in areas with poor to no internet connection, conflict zones, and communities with high criminality, among others. This means we had less insight into the experience of Assembly Members from relatively privileged backgrounds. From this perspective, our report does not claim to put forward a generalizable experience of the Global Assembly but offers a particular perspective from disadvantaged groups.

Second, we conducted in-depth interviews months after the Global Assembly has concluded. This has two implications. First, some of the respondents we contacted did not respond to our invitation, possibly because their contact information changed, or their priorities have changed since they completed their obligations to the Global Assembly. Second, recollection of events and evaluation of experiences may vary. We address this limitation by designing our interview guide with memory cues that help our respondents craft a narrative about their experience. We also analysed interview responses based on consistent themes, such that the interview quotes we used in the evaluation are indicative of the sentiments expressed in the sample as a whole. Where that is not the case, we capture different opinions and nuances within the sample.

Third, the deliberation that took place among 100 citizens is only one part of a wider suite of activities of the Global Assembly. The Global Assembly also involved 'community assemblies', or self-organised assemblies dispersed around the world so people who were not selected to become Assembly Members could still get their voices heard, and the 'cultural wave' which

involved the global creative community to amplify the Global Assembly's message of creating a seat for everyone in the global governance table. These activities are not covered in our evaluation report given limitations on time and resources.

Despite these limitations, we hope to offer a fair and meaningful evaluation of the Global Assembly that reflects the complexity and tensions constitutive of this democratic experiment.

# Demographic and discursive diversity

## 2

The Global Assembly was 'global' as far as it brought together Assembly Members from demographically diverse backgrounds. Diverse backgrounds, however, does not mean diverse discourses.

'A snapshot of the human family.' This was how the community of practice portrayed the Global Assembly in various forums. Like climate assemblies that claim to bring together a microcosm of the wider society, the Global Assembly sought to bring together 100 people, selected through a multi-stage civic lottery, that mirrored the global population.

Inclusiveness is the principle underpinning this approach. The Global Assembly's vision is to give everyone a seat at the global governance table and having a fair shot at being selected to become an Assembly Member is one way to realise this aim.<sup>9</sup> The Global Assembly seeks to radically alter institutions of global governance dominated by politicians, technocrats, and business leaders by offering an alternative mechanism for decision-making that involves the diverse voices of ordinary citizens from around the world.

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<sup>9</sup> Organising and taking part in community assemblies is another way. See: Global Assembly Team 2022, p. 179.

This chapter investigates the extent to which the Global Assembly realised its vision of creating an inclusive forum for deliberation. We begin by examining how multi-stage civic lottery was experienced in communities from the majority world and find that Assembly Members, for the most part, had a positive view of civic lottery. Community Hosts, however, faced a variety of challenges in localising random selection methods, especially in contexts affected by the pandemic, urban crime, and violent conflict.

We then turn to an analysis of the demographic and discursive composition of the Global Assembly. We find that the Global Assembly, despite challenges in recruitment, was able to bring together a diverse composition of Assembly Members based on demographic characteristics. However, we find that diversity of backgrounds did not necessarily translate to diversity in discourses. We analysed deliberations during breakout groups and found that Assembly Members' statements called for fairer and more urgent action on climate change but generally assumed that climate change can be addressed within the parameters of existing political structures. Discourses that question the compatibility of the capitalist growth model with safe climate were relatively marginal, as well as discourses that deny the urgency of climate change as a problem. We examine the possible reasons for this distribution of discourses, including the role of experts in setting the parameters of deliberation. We conclude this chapter with proposed ways forward.

## 2.1 Assembling the 'snapshot of the human family'

Assembly Members were recruited to take part in the Global Assembly through a multi-stage civic lottery. The first stage determined the geographic locations from which Assembly Members would be recruited. To do this, a 'global location lottery' was conducted in July 2021. An algorithm was programmed to randomly select 100 points in the world weighted by each area's population, but each location was capped so countries with high populations are not overrepresented (Global Assembly Team 2022: 53). The algorithm and code used were uploaded online,<sup>10</sup> and a live sortition event was streamed on the Global Assembly's Facebook page.<sup>11</sup> Forty nine out of 193 UN recognised countries were selected in the location lottery (see Table 1). Territories most affected by the climate and ecological emergencies, such as the Bahamas, Puerto Rico, Haiti, and the Pacific islands, were not selected in the lottery (see Global Climate Risk Index 2021).

The second stage involved the recruitment of 'Community Hosts' in each of the selected points. There were various mechanisms involved in recruiting Community Hosts. There was an open call for applications, but members of the core delivery team and the wider community of practice also tapped on their professional networks and actively made 'cold calls' for possible partners. Once selected, Community Hosts recruited 4-6 people within a 200-kilometre radius of the point selected by the algorithm (see Global Assembly Team 2022: 67). A second sortition was then run within this pool of possible participants, consisting of 675 people, to select one

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<sup>10</sup> See <https://github.com/GlobalAssembly/global-select-app> [Accessed April 10, 2023]

<sup>11</sup> Archived video is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2z4WAznuDpg> [Accessed April 10, 2023]



**Table 1:** Points per country

Country	Points	% of global population	Country	Points	% of global population
China	18	18.2	Algeria	1	0.55
India	18	17.77	Poland	1	0.49
USA	5	4.26	Morocco	1	0.47
Indonesia	4	3.49	Venezuela	1	0.43
Brazil	3	2.76	Uzbekistan	1	0.43
Pakistan	3	2.69	Mozambique	1	0.41
Nigeria	3	2.64	Nepal	1	0.39
Bangladesh	2	2.20	Yemen	1	0.39
Russia	2	1.84	Madagascar	1	0.35
Ethiopia	1	1.51	Côte d'Ivoire	1	0.33
Philippines	2	1.41	Cameroon	1	0.33
Egypt	1	1.32	Syria	1	0.25
DRC	2	1.14	Zambia	1	0.24
Iran	1	1.09	Zimbabwe	1	0.23
Turkey	1	1.06	Ecuador	1	0.22
Germany	1	1.05	Chad	1	0.21
Thailand	1	0.90	Belgium	1	0.15
UK	1	0.86	Cuba	1	0.15
France	1	0.85	Dominican Republic	1	0.14
Italy	1	0.76	Azerbaijan	1	0.14
Myanmar	1	0.70	Sierra Leone	1	0.10
South Korea	1	0.66	Singapore	1	0.07
Spain	1	0.60	Palestinian Territories	1	0.07
Argentina	1	0.58			
Ukraine	1	0.56			
Sudan	1	0.55			

Table 1: Number of Assembly Member locations per country (population data source = Wittgenstein Center, 2020 figures)

Assembly Member from each point, collectively forming a demographically representative sample of the global population. The Global Assembly sought to mirror the world's demographic composition in terms of geography, gender, age, education and attitudes towards the climate and ecological crisis. The Report of the 2021 Global Assembly discussed the process of the multi-stage civic lottery in detail (see Global Assembly Team 2022: 48-56).

We asked Assembly Members to share their 'civic lottery story' in our in-depth interviews. All Assembly Members expressed positive emotions when they were notified that they were chosen. An Assembly Member from East Asia felt 'fortunate' for being selected, while an Assembly Member from Central Africa felt it was 'a blessing from God'. Some Assembly Members confessed that they initially hesitated to join because they did not speak English, but eventually agreed after assurances from Community Hosts that they would have access to translators. Several Assembly Members also mentioned the motivation of receiving financial compensation for their participation. All Assembly Members we interviewed were supportive of civic lotteries. 'I believe the random selection idea is fair because it gives inexperienced individuals the opportunity to learn about climate change,' said one Assembly Member from Western Asia.

The extent to which 'random selection' is random varies depending on the context. All Assembly Members confirmed that they were drawn from a pool of people from their community but how they came to be part of the pool of people from which participants would be drawn was context specific. We heard Assembly Members tell the backstory of their relationships with Community Hosts. Some of them knew their Community Hosts from language courses, while others worked with each other in civil society organisations. Others referred to their Community Hosts as 'friends.' This diverges from the Global Assembly's Participant Recruitment Protocol that required at least two degrees of separation between the Community Host and the Assembly Member.

Does the familiarity of Community Hosts with recruited Assembly Members raise a red flag? We see two possible interpretations.

On one hand, we can say this practice is less than ideal. Recruiting Assembly Members based on pre-existing networks privileges people with social capital from being selected or those with previous or ongoing relationships with NGOs and CSOs. This goes against the principle of fairness underpinning random selection. We asked one of the Global Assembly's founding partners who was responsible for selecting 100 points in the map via algorithmic sortition.<sup>12</sup> 'Perfection is the enemy of the good,' they said in our interview.

The Global Assembly was the first time civic lottery was implemented on the global level. Many Community Hosts were pressed for time and had little capacity to follow the principles of civic lottery to the letter. Ideally, Community Hosts would recruit door-to-door, especially in communities where credible lists of inhabitants are unavailable or organise a 'phone tree' where Community Hosts would recruit people with at least two degrees of separation from them.

Several Community Hosts we interviewed found it challenging to follow these protocols. Door knocking was not possible in many communities as recruitment took place at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown rules were in place. Others found it challenging to recruit in sparsely populated areas, communities with poor digital infrastructure or those experiencing urban violence or conflict. Other Community Hosts were based in areas that were far from the location selected by global location

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12 The provenance of the algorithm underpinning the sortition process is contested but this was not a focal point of our evaluation.

lottery, providing another obstacle to in-person recruitment.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, some community hosts used their personal networks to search for people with the demographic profile indicated by the Global Assembly to participate in the lottery. Some invited relatives of their friends or acquaintances. This is why we detected low social distance between several Community Hosts and Assembly Members.

Other Community Hosts shared their struggle to follow the 'scientific criteria' for recruitment. Some found it hard to convince elderly residents to participate or find participants who do not believe in climate change.<sup>14</sup> Community Hosts in authoritarian settings found it difficult to approach 'random people' for a political event taking place online, while another Community Host thought approaching people in the streets at random is dangerous in cities with high incidences of urban crime. As one Community Host from an urban city in Latin America put it:

*The initial idea was to find people you don't know, I mean, like people in the streets or something, but I said 'no, in my continent we can't do it, do it, I don't go to the street and say, "look, you wanna work for this?"' First for security... you never know if someone is a criminal or whatever. So, you have to find people who are in your life, like your sister or whatever, the father of the person who helps you in your house. Never from the streets. Never... Maybe in Europe you can do it, but here, no.*

This reflection, among others, signals the practical challenges Community Hosts faced on the ground as well as some of the underpinning imbalances

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13 Thank you to Indira Latorre for raising this point.

14 Community Hosts were tasked to recruit four people who think climate change is an emergency and two who do not.

of power within the Global Assembly (discussed in section 4 and 5), which may partly explain the zero degrees of separation between some Community Hosts and Assembly Members.

The second interpretation advances a more critical take on what ‘randomness’ means in the context of tight-knit communities.<sup>15</sup> The concept of civic lottery is often portrayed as a scientific process, therefore objective and depersonalised. In some contexts, however, such practices are simply impossible to implement. Communities with strong social bonds – the kind where acquaintances or work-related contacts are considered ‘friends’ – will inevitably recruit Assembly Members personally known to the Community Host. This poses a challenge, not to the communities, but to the way process designers conceptualise civic lottery. Is a good civic lottery a depersonalised civic lottery? What is a good enough distance between Community Hosts and Assembly Members?

The first and second interpretations will result in different judgments on ‘good enough’ practices of civic lotteries. For our purposes, the question that we find most relevant is: what kind of power relationship was formed between Community Hosts and Assembly Members that started with the process of civic lottery? The next chapter unpacks this question.

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15 We thank Eva Sow Ebion for this suggestion.

## 2.2 Diverse backgrounds, limited discourses

Despite challenges in recruiting Assembly Members, the Global Assembly achieved its target of creating a diverse pool of participants. Table 2 provides the demographic breakdown of Assembly Members, compared to the breakdown of the world population based on various sources.

Diversity in backgrounds, however, does not mean diversity of discourses during deliberations. We examined the arguments and considerations Assembly Members put forward in breakout groups as well as minutes of the Knowledge and Wisdom Committee. We coded the statements Assembly Members put forward during breakout group deliberations based on the categories of climate discourses in the scholarly literature on environmental politics and debates on climate change in the global public sphere (Stevenson and Dryzek, 2012; Bäckstrand and Lövbrand, 2019; Hulme, 2021; Dryzek 2022). We use this approach because we need a benchmark for discursive diversity. To be able to say there was or was not a diversity of discourses in the Global Assembly, we need to identify the scope of discourses that gained traction in the global public sphere and identify which discourses were present, absent, dominant, or marginal in the Global Assembly. The established scholarly literature on global environmental politics provides this benchmark.

We find that the most prevalent discourses in the Global Assembly relate to the discourses of ecological modernisation and mainstream sustainability. In the academic literature, both discourses find that tackling climate change and achieving environmental sustainability are compatible with pursuing ‘business as usual’ economic growth. The difference between ecological modernisation and mainstream sustainability is that the former

**Table 2:** Demographic composition of the Global Assembly

Gender	Target % based on UN Data	Selected Assembly Members
Female	49.6%	50.0%
Male	50.4%	49.0%
Other or non-binary	N/A	1.0%
<i>Note: registrants to be placed in selection pool randomly</i>		

Age	% of 15+ global population based on WC Data	Selected Assembly Members
Under 25 (minimum on country-by-country basis)	20.6%	20.0%
25-39	30.1%	31.0%
40-59	31.1%	32.0%
60+	18.1%	17.0%

Socio-economic proxy / Education Level	Target % based on WC Data	Selected Assembly Members
Never attended school	32.5%	32.0%
Left school aged less than 12	32.5%	32.0%
Left school aged 12 to 19	51.5%	47.0%
Left school aged 20 or over	16.0%	21.0%
Still in education	(depending on age place in a group above)	N/A

Climate Attitude: Do you think climate change is a global crisis?	Target % based on UNDP Data	Selected Assembly Members
Yes	58.9%	60.0%
No	33.1%	32.0%
I don't know	8.0%	8.0%

emphasises technological solutions to environmental problems, while the latter emphasises economic and regulatory policies. This statement by an Assembly Member in a breakout group is paradigmatic of this discourse.

*I hope there will be more new energy vehicles to reduce fuel consumption and reduce the impacts brought by the consumption of fuels. The government is already encouraging people to purchase new energy vehicles so I think the future will be brighter.*

In this statement, the Assembly Member emphasises the positive role of the administrative state ('the government') and technological solutions ('new energy vehicles') in addressing the climate emergency. Similar statements include Assembly Members' comments on the positive impacts of recycling and the shift to renewable energy, which implicitly sees the compatibility between economic growth and ecological sustainability. Given the prevalence of this perspective in mainstream policies on climate change including the UNFCCC, we find it unsurprising that these discourses were prominent in breakout group deliberations.

Discourses on climate justice were also present in breakout group deliberations. These discourses highlight the political aspects of the climate crisis, and prioritise principles of equity and justice, though without necessarily proposing fundamental changes to our social and political structures in tackling the climate crisis. In contrast to mainstream sustainability and ecological modernisation, climate justice discourses value human rights, fair distribution of climate compensation, grassroots initiatives, and local communities as sources of transformative solutions, instead of states and markets. There are various ways in which Assembly Members advanced climate justice discourses. Some criticised the excessive lifestyles of people from the minority world and emphasised the

role of marginalised groups fighting for climate justice. ‘Developed countries enjoy their rich lifestyle out of the manufacturing of goods and use of resources from developing countries,’ said one Assembly Member from Asia. Others identified the responsibility of rich countries towards poorer nations that are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. One Assembly Member from Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, called out governments that let foreign companies do as they please in less developed countries which resulted in environmental damage. We also heard Assembly Members calling out the lack of action from wealthy countries that have long been the biggest polluters. ‘The wealthiest countries bear the greatest responsibility to do something about our crisis,’ said one Assembly Member from North America.

While there was some level of diversity of discourses in breakout group deliberations, we also observed the absence of some discourses typically articulated in global climate governance and the global public sphere, as documented in the scholarly literature. Notably, there was limited discussion about climate change adaptation as compared to climate change mitigation, even though adaptation to the impacts of climate change is an extremely important consideration, especially for climate-vulnerable countries in the majority world. Discourses that advance deep critiques of capitalism and the political economy in which it is based were also absent. Such discourses are prominent not only in the academic literature but also among activist groups, which foreground socio-environmental inequalities that occur internationally and within nations. This could be a consequence of the framing of expert evidence that the Knowledge and Wisdom Committee has chosen (see Section 3.3), where alternative framings such as ‘degrowth’ were relegated in favour of prioritising action that can be done in the next five years. It is also notable that climate denialism did not feature in deliberations.

The environmental discourses that were heard during Assembly Members’ deliberations reflected discourses invoked in global climate governance and the UN system more broadly: the hope that we can reach climate goals without substantially transforming the world’s economic and financial systems. By stressing the need for a just transition, Assembly Members were acknowledging that business as usual is not an option. However, with the absence of climate denialism and degrowth, as well as limited discussion about climate change adaptation options, we observed less discursive diversity in Global Assembly deliberations than typically appears in wider public debate about climate change.

## **2.3 Influence of expert evidence?**

We reviewed the minutes of the Knowledge and Wisdom Committee’s meetings, the information booklet given to the Assembly Members, and expert testimonies participants watched, to examine the extent to which the curation of expert evidence conformed to principles of inclusiveness and deliberative quality or the extent to which Assembly Members considered a range of views and evidence that informed their deliberations.

The Knowledge and Wisdom Committee (Committee) was an advisory committee formed to provide input on: ‘the framing question that the Assembly deliberated on, the selection of experts and witnesses [and] the content and design of the information materials and learning phase’ (Global Assembly Team 2021: 37). The Committee was composed of experts from different fields of expertise and countries where their work is based. There were slightly more male than female members (see Table 3).

**Table 3:** Composition of the Knowledge and Wisdom Committee

Name	Role	Country	Gender
Dr Nafeez Ahmed	Founder and Executive Director of the System Shift Lab	UK	Male
Dr Mindahi Bastida Munoz	Founders of The Fountain, Sacred Economics & Indigenous Wisdom Keepers	Mexico	Male
Dr Stuart Capstick	Deputy Director of the Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformation (CAST), Cardiff University	UK	Male
Professor Purnamita Dasgupta	Theme Leader Ecosystem Services at the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), on leave from the Institute of Economic Growth	Nepal, India	Female
Professor Saleemul Huq	Director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD)	Bangladesh	Male
Dr Jyoti Ma	Founders of The Fountain, Sacred Economics & Indigenous Wisdom Keepers	USA	Female
Professor Michael N. Oti	Petroleum Geology, University of Port Harcourt	Nigeria	Male
Professor Julia Steinberger	Ecological Economics, University of Lausanne	Switzerland	Female
Professor Robert T. Watson, University of East Anglia (Chair)	University of East Anglia	UK	Male

While the demographic composition of the Committee demonstrated some level of diversity, we find that the Committee’s meetings were relatively homogenous in terms of discourses, compared to climate discourses categories in the environmental politics literature we mentioned earlier. There were certainly differences in perspectives in the Committee, especially in seeing issues from the vantage points of the minority and majority world. However, we observed that the Committee largely invoked discourses that advanced ‘ecological modernisation,’ or the view that climate change is an outcome of interrelated problems which should be managed through structures of polycentric governance and market price mechanisms. Despite the remit of the Global Assembly being framed in very broad terms around how to address the climate crisis ‘in a fair and effective way,’ the Committee’s attention was primarily *focused on how to mitigate* greenhouse gas emissions, *rather than how to adapt* to the adverse impacts of climate change in a fair and effective way. We also noted climate justice discourses, especially those that emphasised the role of civil society in international governance and call for North-South equity and generational justice. Our analysis suggests that the less prominent discourses in the Committee were the same discourses that were less prominent, if not missing, in Assembly Members’ breakout group deliberations, including the rejection of capitalism and state-centric sovereignty.

A possible reason for the ‘missing discourses’ relates to the decision of the Committee to focus the Global Assembly on what can be done now, i.e., in the next five years, instead of opening debates with a twenty-year horizon. The discourse of degrowth, therefore, is put aside in favour of topics like ‘reducing overconsumption.’ Assembly Members were given information to engage with economic questions, but in the context of resource redistribution mainly from the minority to the majority world. Our conjecture is that framing the Global Assembly in this manner may partly explain the ‘missing discourses’ on radical critiques of existing structures of political economy.

We observed some level of diversity in expert testimonies (see Table 4). We observed efforts to communicate complex scientific knowledge in an inclusive manner such as using the format of short videos that Assembly Members can watch asynchronously. Testimonies based on lived experiences were also presented as evidence, including the lived experiences of Assembly Members on climate change. There was gender balance between male and female experts (8 women, 10 men) as well as diversity in countries where the experts work. The historical roots of greenhouse gas emissions and species extinction were discussed, which foregrounded the legacies of colonisation and exploitation of fossil fuels and resources by rich countries in poorer countries. Indigenous perspectives were also amplified, as well as accounts that challenged anthropocentric views of climate change. The discussion on climate change was linked to other ecological problems such as biodiversity loss, land degradation, and air and water pollution. There was one opportunity for Assembly Members to ask questions from Sir Bob Watson of the Knowledge and Wisdom Committee and Prof Bonny Ibhawoh in a plenary session.

Finally, we evaluated the information booklet<sup>16</sup> and observed that the information used was mainly sourced from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessments and other UN institutions. Key ideas in the booklet align with climate discourses that advance solutions within existing structures of political economy. The booklet proposed some measures, which mainly involved complementing the GDP with ‘inclusive wealth’ (p. 17), redirecting investments from fossil fuel energy to low and no-carbon technologies, investing in public services, changing diets, and removing carbon from the

16 Available at: <https://globalassembly.org/resources/downloads/Final-information-booklet.pdf#asset:21704@1:url> [Accessed April 10, 2023]

**Table 4:** Expert testimonies

Name of expert	Role	Affiliation	Gender	Topic of testimony	Date of testimony
Farhana Yamin	Environmental Lawyer	SYSTEMIQ	Female	Justice, fairness, equity	19-Oct-21
Vaine Wichman	Politician	Cook Islands National Council of Women	Female	Effect of climate change on women's livelihood	20-Oct-21
Saad Alfarargi	UN Special Rapporteur on the right to development	United Nations	Male	Climate change and human rights	20-Oct-21
Jojo Mehta	Executive Director/ Founder	Stop Ecocide Foundation	Female	Criminalizing ecocide	21-Oct-21
Laura Muwangazi	Youth Climate Justice Activist	-	Female	COP26 expectations	23-Oct-21
Paul Ekins	Professor	UCL Institute for Sustainable Resources at University College London	Male	Fossil fuel subsidies	23-Oct-21
Christopher Asuquo Jackson	Geoscientist	PetroVision Energy	Male	Green energy and the economy	23-Oct-21
Joeri Rogelj	Director of Research	Grantham Institute, Imperial College	Male	Paris Agreement, carbon budget	23-Oct-21
Purnamita Dasgupta	Environmental Economist/ Professor	Institute of Economic Growth	Female	Citizens' voice in climate change negotiations	20-Nov-21
Hazel Healy	Journalist	New Internationalist	Female	Actions to be taken after COP26	20-Nov-21

Name of expert	Role	Affiliation	Gender	Topic of testimony	Date of testimony
Bob Watson	Professor	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services	Male	Failure of COP26	20-Nov-21
Saleemul Huq	Professor	International Centre for Climate Change and Development, Independent University Bangladesh	Male	Failure of COP26	20-Nov-21
James Dyke	Journalist, Associate Professor	Global Systems Institute at the University of Exeter	Male	Differences between People's Declaration and Glasgow Climate Pact	20-Nov-21
Anthony Lanat	Journalist	Freelance Journalist	Male	Agreements made at COP26 and their impacts	20-Nov-21
Faustin Vinungoma	Activist	Rwanda Climate Change and Development Network	Male	Differences between People's Declaration and Glasgow Climate Pact	20-Nov-21
Ipshita Chaturvedi	Environmental Lawyer	Environment and Natural Resources Law at Dentons Rodyk	Female	Nationally determined contributions (NDCs)	11-Dec-21
Julia Steinberger	Professor	University of Lausanne	Female	Efficient energy use	11-Dec-21
Stuart Capstick	Research Fellow	Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations at Cardiff University	Male		11-Dec-21

atmosphere through the restoration and conservation of ecosystems (p. 30, 34). The issue of fossil fuel divestment was highlighted, while the reliability of some negative emissions technologies was questioned. The booklet made a case for 'financial aid and technological assistance to poorer countries' to address inequalities in the majority and minority world. We did not observe major disagreements about the content of the booklet within the Knowledge and Wisdom Committee.

## 2.4 Ways forward

This chapter presented our first observation about the Global Assembly: that diversity in demographic backgrounds does not necessarily translate to diversity in discourses. We observed that the Global Assembly was successful in bringing together people from diverse demographic backgrounds, including Assembly Members, advisers in the Knowledge and Wisdom Committee, and expert speakers. However, we observed that discourses that interrogate capitalist structures and global political economy have been relatively marginal in the Global Assembly.

In this section, we put forward ways that may be considered when designing and implementing future Global Assemblies.

**First, a wider discussion on the acceptable parameters of random selection needs to be opened to Cluster Facilitators and Community Hosts.** The narratives we presented in Section 3.1. demonstrate that civic lotteries are as much a social activity as a scientific activity. The concept of 'random selection' means different things depending on the cultural context, and its practice is constrained not only by limits on time but limits on movement and safety, especially in authoritarian contexts or areas experiencing high levels of urban crime. Future global assemblies



may benefit from the collective wisdom of Community Hosts who have experienced recruiting Assembly Members for the first time and have ideas on what counts as a 'good enough' process of recruiting Assembly Members defined by their contexts. These experiences may be catalogued in an open-source document which may be useful for other organisations recruiting participants for future Global Assemblies or even local climate assemblies in their respective communities.

**Second, the criteria for the global location lottery may be reconsidered.**

In its current design, the global location lottery was based on population density, which is one of many possible criteria for ensuring fairness in selection. While using population density may broadly satisfy the 'all-affected' principle of inclusion in deliberation – i.e., everyone affected by a political decision should have a say in its making – it may be worth considering the 'most deeply affected' principle of inclusion – i.e., people who are 'most deeply affected' by the 'decision in question and the historical process and practices shaping the choices available' should have the most say in its making (see Afsahi 2022: 40). Ensuring the inclusion of communities in so-called 'climate hotspots' that suffer most from extreme weather events is worth considering.

**Third, the indicator used for diversity in discourses when recruiting participants warrants reconsideration.**

Seeking a mix of Assembly Members in terms of their belief on the climate crisis is based on particular assumptions about climate change discourses. It assumes that 'climate crisis' is a universally resonant term or one that can be easily translated to local vocabularies, without opening space for considering what constitutes it and with what impact in each context. It assumes that debates in communities are structured around people who think 'there is' versus 'there is no' climate crisis. In our interviews with Assembly Members (see next chapter), we find that many of them feel that they did know enough about

climate change, making it challenging for them to answer the recruitment question in a meaningful way. It is also possible to believe strongly that climate action is important while disagreeing with calling it a 'climate crisis.' Critics warn that the phrase 'climate crisis' might be interpreted as asserting that climate change is more important to address than any other global challenge, such as deepening economic inequality, or that declaring a 'crisis might be taken to imply that normal political processes should be suspended' (Hulme 2019).

There are ways forward. One is to decentre the way climate discourses are framed in some countries, where climate change is seen as a 'polarising issue' while this may not necessarily be the case in many societies around the world, particularly those most affected by climate change. This would for instance mean opening up recruiting indicators to other ways of giving meaning to climate change, e.g., through marginalised voices, religious engagements or artistic activities (Hulme, 2021).<sup>17</sup> Another is to use images instead of text to test for the salience of climate change (e.g., 'this image makes me feel climate change is important') that may be more effective in communicating across cultures (see O'Neill et al 2013).

**Fourth, a mechanism to critique established and dominant forms of knowledge may be established to empower participants to recognise, question and explore the variety of discourses that they come across (or those which are absent) in deliberation.** While it is important that Assembly Members had access to summaries of IPCC and IPBES reports, it is also worth recognising that these reports offer a particular point of view that does not capture the diversity of discourses on the climate and ecological crisis. After all, IPCC and IPBES reports are mainly technical and scientific assessments. Pre-deliberation information-sharing could be more centrally

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<sup>17</sup> Thank you to Yasmira Moner for this suggestion.

informed by analyses that acknowledge the deeply ethical, (geo)political, and cultural nature of climate change and by other knowledge systems presented in accessible forms, such as stories in local languages co-produced with citizens (Reidy, 2022).

**Finally, democratising agenda-setting may be considered in future global assemblies.** Despite the Global Assembly's broad remit, the information materials and the breakout group deliberations focused heavily on climate change mitigation, to the relative neglect of climate change adaptation. The adverse impacts of climate change are disproportionately experienced by vulnerable populations in the majority world, who are least responsible for global emissions and most in need of support with adaptation. The focus on climate change mitigation risks being interpreted as a skewing of the agenda by those whose lives and livelihoods are less directly and imminently at risk. Who gets to set the agenda for global assemblies is a question of power and one that can be answered by developing mechanisms for democratising agenda-setting. The precise ways agenda-setting can be democratised in a global scale warrants further investigation.

We hope these suggestions contribute to building more inclusive and discursively diverse Global Assemblies.

# Learning and Deliberation



## **The Global Assembly facilitated collective learning on the climate and ecological crisis. More can be done to facilitate collective deliberation.**

Facilitating collective learning is one of the Global Assembly's major achievements. Most Assembly Members accepted the invitation to join because of their desire to better understand the effects of climate change and biodiversity loss in their communities. The Global Assembly did not disappoint. Assembly Members' understanding of these issues became clearer over the course of their participation. They also felt more confident discussing these issues after the Global Assembly.

While facilitating collective learning was one of the Global Assembly's key achievements, more can be done to facilitate collective deliberation. In our interviews, many Assembly Members described the Global Assembly as a 'classroom,' where the facilitator is seen as a teacher, the experts as authoritative sources of information, and Community Hosts as tutors.

What accounts for the disconnect between high levels of collective learning with relatively lower levels of collective deliberation? How did Assembly members engage with differences of opinion? How did the design process and the curation of expert evidence shape the process of collective learning and deliberation? This section goes to the heart of these questions.

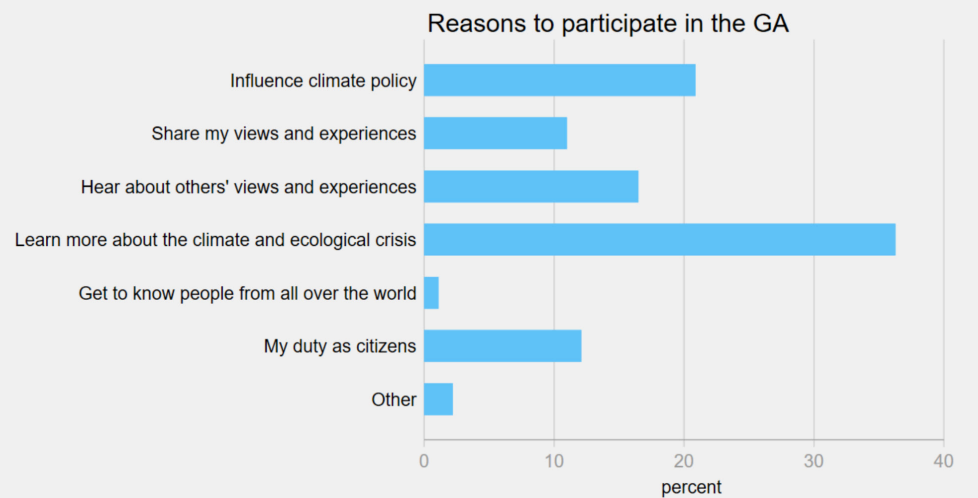
## **3.1 Experiencing collective learning**

Taking part in the Global Assembly is a demanding exercise. Unlike 'traditional' forms of citizen participation such as casting a ballot in the voting booth or attending an hour-long townhall meeting, the Global Assembly required participants to take part in deliberation over twelve weeks, on top of hours of preparation to read the information booklet and listen to expert testimonies (see Table 5; also Global Assembly Team 2022:44).

We asked Assembly Members in our interviews about their motivations for joining such a demanding process. To learn about climate change was a common response. As the figure below demonstrates (see Figure 2), most Assembly Members we interviewed had experienced severe effects of climate change, and many confessed that these issues are not widely discussed in their communities. Some did not link their direct experience and observation with the topics discussed during the assembly.

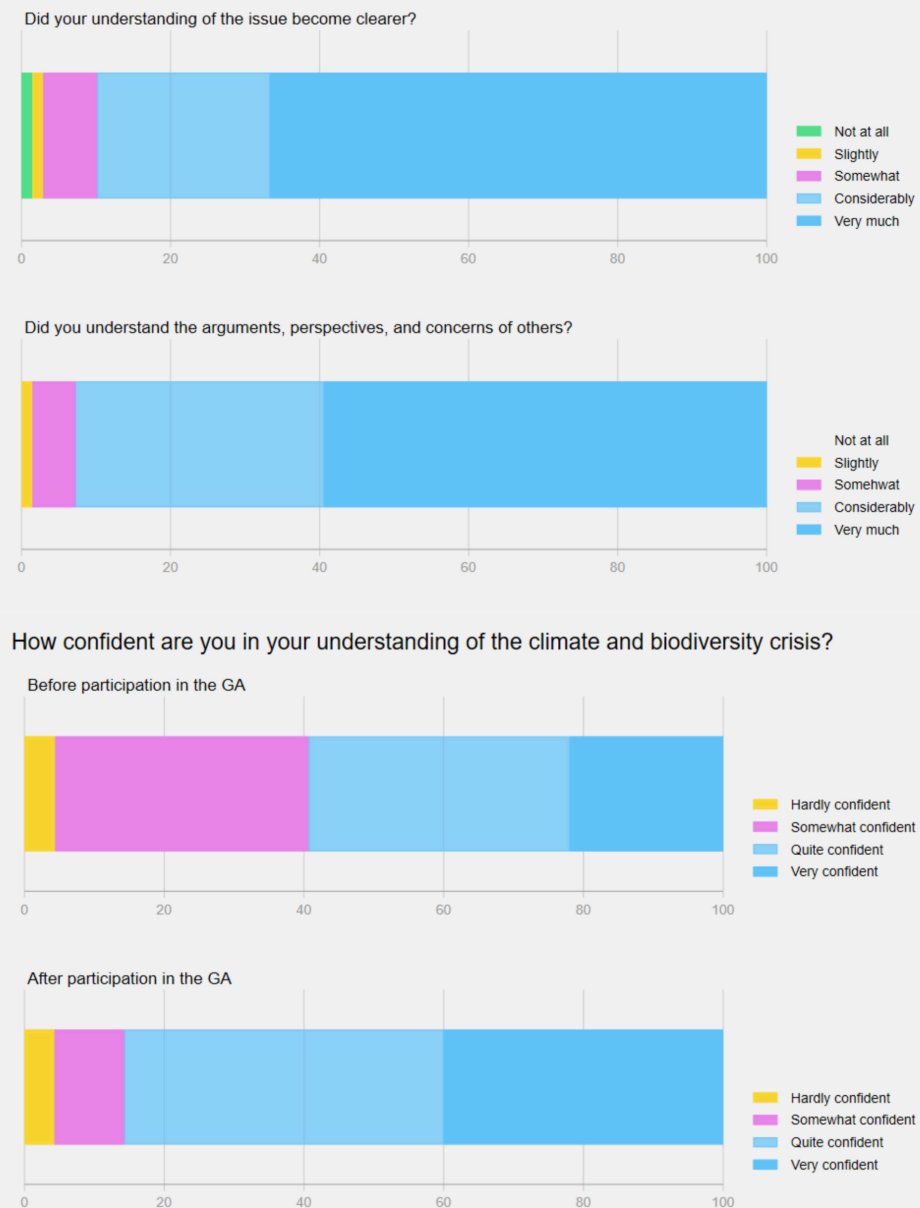
Indeed, the Global Assembly was successful in meeting Assembly Members' expectations. There is strong evidence from our interviews as well as post-deliberation surveys about Assembly Members' epistemic gains (see Figure 2). All Assembly Members we interviewed reported a feeling of personal growth and appreciated the opportunity to learn about a topic they considered sometimes 'remote' and disconnected from their everyday lives – despite many of them having firsthand contact with the consequences of the climate crisis, and clearly identifying the causes of floods, forest fires, and droughts. Assembly Members valued learning about the causes and effects of the climate and ecological crisis, which empowered them to make changes in their everyday lives.

**Figure 1:** Reasons to participate in the Global Assembly



The Assembly Members' motivation to learn is consistent with the way they interpreted their Global Assembly experience. A 'classroom,' a 'training session,' 'being in school' and 'a course' were some of the ways they characterised the Global Assembly. Some facilitators shared a similar interpretation and described breakout groups as the time for Assembly Members to 'engage with the material' from experts. Similarly, a Community Host pitched the Global Assembly to potential participants as taking part 'in a class in English with the best people' who want 'to share their knowledge with us.'

**Figure 2:** Learning in the Global Assembly



**Table 5:** Core Assembly Blocks. Source: Global Assembly Report (2022:122)

Core Assembly Blocks	Description
<b>Block 1 (7-13 October)</b> Understanding the situation	Learning phase. Exposure to data and concepts about the: climate and ecological crisis. Sharing life stories and personal perspectives; Agreement of deliberative principles.
<b>Block 2 (13-20 October)</b> Review of scenarios, pathways and principles	Continued learning, with a focus on governance and IPCC climate projections. Voting on the deliberative principles. Presentations of experts and witnesses.
<b>Block 3 (October 21-30)</b> Developing submissions to COP26	Co-creation of the “People’s Declaration for the Sustainable Future of Planet Earth” draft. Content and title approved by majority vote.
<b>Block 4 (1-20 November)</b> Participation and observation at COP26	Online observation of the COP26. Survey of questions for further discussion.
<b>Block 5 (4-18 December)</b> Reviewing commitments and future agenda-setting	Sharing and deliberation on COP26 highlights. Iterative review and amendment of the Declaration, approved at the final session by majority vote.

There are various reasons why some Assembly Members, Community Hosts, and facilitators perceived the Global Assembly as a classroom. Our conjecture is that since most people involved in the Global Assembly have not previously taken part in any long form of citizen deliberation, it is natural to consider the classroom as a reference point. Weekly meetings, studying information materials, taking down notes, responding to the facilitator’s questions, and speaking in turns are design features that approximate lived experiences in the classroom. Education as a form of political engagement is not necessarily a cause of concern, as participants did want to be a part of a learning activity.

A cause for concern, however, is the way power relations were established as Assembly Members interpreted the roles of people around them. A

citizens’ assembly promises to create conditions where norms of equal voice, scrutiny of evidence, and listening across difference can be enforced (Curato, Farrell et al 2021). It is argued that mini-publics should be designed and organised to support participants to critique the evidence provided (Roberts et al. 2020). In our interviews and direct observations of breakout sessions, we documented unequal relationships of power, based on the definition of roles participants assigned to each other and themselves. We found that:

- Assembly Members treated facilitators as ‘teachers’ who ‘collected responses’ from Assembly Members. One Assembly Member from Latin America, for example, was enthusiastic to share in our interview that their ‘teacher’ praised them and that what they said would be forwarded to those drafting the People’s Declaration. In our observation notes, we have recorded that facilitators seem to ‘go around the screen as if there was a graded recitation,’ where each participant was invited to answer a question, followed by affirmations or follow-up questions from the facilitator. Some breakout sessions we observed implemented a lecture format. Seeking to mitigate the participants’ lack of time to prepare for the deliberations, facilitators spent a good part of the sessions reading or asking the participants to read chapters from the information booklet and express their opinions afterwards. Consequently, facilitators were the figures to whom the Assembly Members turned to explain concepts or ask questions. Some facilitators, in turn, presented their own interpretations of expert evidence and, in some instances, their own values.
- Expert testimonies and the information booklet were treated as critical sources of information. For pragmatic purposes, the Global Assembly uploaded videos of expert testimonies that Assembly Members could

watch at their convenience. This is suitable for Assembly Members who had an unstable internet connection and therefore missed live expert testimonies. The downside, however, is that Assembly Members had limited opportunity to interact with experts and demystify technical knowledge. Add to that, most experts recorded their testimonies in a way that further distances them from Assembly Members. Experts had their office furniture, bookshelves, and university facades as visual background while most Assembly Members were often joining in from offices or other people's homes readied by Community Hosts, or from the intimacy of their kitchens, bedrooms or living rooms, shared with other family members, where they could not always ensure privacy, comfort, or silence around them. Two interviewees highlighted the case of one participant apparently joining from outside a home that looked 'precarious', where the weather seemed very 'windy and hot', which inspired 'sympathy' among fellow Assembly Members. These visual cues may seem insignificant, but they send subtle signals about visual indicators of the distance between experts and Assembly Members.

- Fellow Assembly Members were treated as classmates or friends who were co-recipients of knowledge. Assembly Members appreciated meeting people from around the world, learning about different cultures and hearing different languages. Many found it moving to hear different greetings at the start and end of plenary sessions. These, however, mostly highlight the social rather than epistemic value of meeting new people in the Global Assembly. In our observations, most Assembly Members still turn to experts and facilitators as sources of knowledge, rather than their fellow Assembly Members. This statement from an Assembly Member from central Africa exemplifies this observation: 'For me, I knew no one can tell me anything that I could accept whether it was my group-mates or friends. I only trusted the response and clarity that I will receive from the experts or our group facilitators.'

## 3.2 Experiencing collective deliberation

While the Global Assembly was successful in facilitating collective learning, we found that the affordances of a citizens' assembly to facilitate collective deliberation has yet to be maximised. We take a minimal definition of deliberation, which is mutual communication 'that involves weighing and reflecting on preferences, values and interests regarding matters of common concern' (Bächtiger, Dryzek, Mansbridge and Warren 2018). And by affordances, we mean the characteristics or design of a democratic innovation affords desirable behaviours like exchanging reasons, listening across difference, and weighing different claims.

Our direct observations in plenary and breakout sessions (see Table 1), as well as analysis of transcripts, reveal a few deliberative moments among Assembly Members. For example, we observed diverging opinions on the speed of phasing out coal and the geopolitical consequences of a green transition. Other Assembly Members also started thinking in connective and other-regarding terms. An Assembly Member from Western Asia, for example, realised that social justice and climate emergencies are connected issues. As they put it,

*whether oppression or injustice is happening on a specific land, such as Palestine, because of the occupation, or injustice and oppression are happening to all the people of the world in different places because of climate change.*

Assembly Members were most engaged when they were challenged to convey their thoughts through creative means. In one session, for example, some Assembly Members produced videos of how the climate and ecological

crisis affected their lives and their environment. Some of these videos involved non-verbal expressions including music and dance. These audio-visual materials had a powerful impact on small-group deliberations. Assembly Members assumed the role of content creators, instead of passive recipients of information. It also bridged geographical distances by connecting Assembly Members through emotionally appealing and visually striking imagery, which was a deviation from the logocentric demands of deliberation.

While there are diverging discourses exchanged in small group deliberations, we observed that for the most part, Assembly Members had limited exchanges of reasons and considerations. There are various reasons for this. First, as discussed in the previous section, the power relations emerging from role assignments constrained the prospects of equal voice. For example, Assembly Members who interpreted their role as students ended up treating the discussion as a recitation of facts given to them. One facilitator's observation exemplified this observation:

*It often happened that... I felt people were repeating the text [given to them]. They would say the same thing in different ways. What was written there, but in other words. Whenever you wanted to know what they thought or how they felt, it just didn't [work].*

Similarly, the portrayal of experts as 'true holders of knowledge' constrained possibilities for critical scrutiny of evidence. One of us documented this reflection in our observation notes:

*What was missing was a clear communication that expert input was not uncontroverted, and that experts invited represented certain views within the academy but could not possibly represent the sum of knowledge over the climate emergency. Moreover, nuance was missing over the inevitably political nature*

*of academic stands, its biases and methodological limitations, so that participants could grasp the input with a more critical sense.*

Meanwhile, there were instances where Assembly Members were interrogating expert evidence, but experts were not available to answer the questions. For example, one Assembly Member wanted to know why Vaine Wichman's testimony only talked about women artisans on her island, which, one could argue, indicated the value of further explaining the feminist view on climate change. It was not the facilitator's role to answer such questions, and so the discussion did not progress.

Meanwhile, seeing fellow Assembly Members as 'friends' instead of interlocutors emphasised norms of congeniality, which, for some Assembly Members, means being careful not to disagree or offend. We observed that Assembly Members mainly conformed to norms of respect, patience, and conflict avoidance while critique and contestation were relatively marginal practices. An Assembly Member from West Africa, for example, described their interactions with fellow Assembly Members as defined by 'harmony, understanding, and love' while an Assembly Member from Latin America reported that her breakout group was always 'nice' and 'everyone was happy.' In our interview, an Assembly Member from Southeast Asia intimated that they wanted to raise their concern about a Chinese-owned coal power plant on the island where they lived, but decided to hold back because they did not want to offend the feelings of a Chinese Assembly Member in their breakout group. These stories are consistent with John Boswell's (2021) autoethnographic account of a citizens' assembly, where he observed 'niceness' to be the default practice while disagreement was rarely expressed. We do not discount the importance of respectful and convivial conversations. But respectful and convivial conversations are not the same as deliberation. Instead, respectful and convivial exchanges are precursors to deliberation. They create enabling conditions for honest, candid, and

critical exchange of views, instead of serving as ends in themselves (Curato, Niemeyer, and Dryzek 2013).

In addition, as is the case with many climate assemblies, time constraints deterred Assembly Members from fleshing out the consequences of their recommendations (see Section 5.3). One of the most substantive topics of deliberation we observed related to the topic of ecocide, which became one of the core recommendations in the People's Declaration. In the breakout groups, we noted how the practical implications, as well as the effectiveness of this recommendation, were not closely examined. Instead, the justifications for this recommendation were connected to high-level principles such as fairness which would be difficult to disagree with. Viewed this way, it is unsurprising that the Assembly Members chose the most ambitious 'pathway' given that the trade-offs were not discussed in a substantive manner.

### **3.3 Ways forward**

Thus far, we have described the Global Assembly's successes in facilitating collective learning and identified challenges to collective deliberation.

We identified these challenges to prompt reflection on how future Global Assemblies can be designed to maximise the affordances of a deliberative body. Indeed, it is neither fair nor productive to expect a citizens' assembly to radically transform participants' role expectations and preconceived power relations. We recognise that all participants – Assembly Members, facilitators, translators, and Community Hosts – carry their biographical narratives, epistemologies, political histories, and cultural contexts with them in a deliberative forum, all of which shape their interpretation of the situation and collective behaviour.

While citizens' assemblies cannot fully design power out of the forum, there are design features that may maximise the affordances of a citizens' assembly as a deliberative body. We conclude this section with some points for reflection which may be useful when designing and implementing the next Global Assembly.

**First, promoting collective learning may be extended from learning about climate change to learning about deliberation.** Some citizens' juries have experimented with incorporating 'critical engagement' sessions as part of the programme to encourage jurors to scrutinise evidence and gain confidence in asking questions to experts (see Carson 2017; Roberts et al. 2020). Learning about deliberation may be grounded in different contexts. Information booklets or briefing materials may refer to practices of deliberation happening in Assembly Members' local communities to set expectations that Assembly Members are not only encouraged to be polite and patient but to also be curious, if not critical. Facilitation techniques encouraging Assembly Members to explicitly weigh trade-offs and interests also need emphasis.<sup>18</sup>

**Second, facilitating collective deliberation can build on the Global Assembly's early successes in getting Assembly Members engaged by sharing creative visual content.** The final plenary session was especially powerful, as some Assembly Members shared videos, poetry, songs, and montages to convey how the Global Assembly made an impact in their lives. The next Global Assembly may incorporate more expressive forms of communication to facilitate deliberation and reflection.

**Third, increased ownership, as well as putting in place collective learning processes for facilitators, can enable more meaningful interactions among**

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<sup>18</sup> Thank you to Silvia Cervellini for this suggestion.



# Governance

**participants in transnational deliberative settings.** Facilitators should be engaged in the co-design of the process plan and own the deliberative spaces they are asked to facilitate. Increased ownership and agency among facilitators will leverage their embodied knowledge and diverse expertise, which can lead the Global Assembly to adopt appropriate facilitation strategies for highly diverse and unequal settings. Appropriate exchanges and training among facilitators prior to a transnational deliberation should be put in place to enable them to collectively learn the multiplicity of knowledge, forms of communication, inequalities, deliberative traditions, and individual/communal types of political engagement present in a transnational setting.

**Finally, as in the case of other citizens' assemblies, the format of 'experts on tap, not on top' may be considered.** Requesting high-profile experts to be on standby to answer Assembly Members' questions may be an impractical option, but there may be creative workarounds. One possibility is to assign volunteer researchers to each breakout group. These volunteers need not be as 'high profile' as the experts on video, but they can serve as resource persons who can contextualise expert evidence within regional or community contexts<sup>19</sup> or look up answers to Assembly Members' questions using credible sources and thereby acting as 'technical friends' (Roberts et al. 2020). This also eases expectations from facilitators who, as will discuss in the next section, often felt the burden of mastering content instead of focusing on mastering how to facilitate multilingual deliberation. Closer links to science communication practitioners may also be established to reduce the reliance on experts who may not necessarily have the most accessible language when delivering their testimonies. This may include using styles of speech that are less reminiscent of a classroom but similar to influencers and content creators who can capture audiences' attention using simple language to convey complex ideas.

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<sup>19</sup> Thank you to Septrin Calamba for this point.



## **The Global Assembly built the foundations of a global community of practice that can design and implement future local and global assemblies. A clear governance structure, however, needs to be in place.**

The Global Assembly built the foundations of a global community of practice. This community came together through the Global Assembly's 'decentralised delivery model' and sustained through the community's commitment to enhance the design and implementation of the next Global Assembly.

In this section, we place the spotlight on the stories of the Central Circle, Cluster Facilitators, Community Hosts, and facilitators to understand their lived experiences of the 'decentralised delivery model.' We characterise the governance of the Global Assembly as one where the 'convening power' – the power to set agendas and generate resources – was rooted mostly among actors in the minority world while the realisation of the Global Assembly's vision was built by the labour and solidarity of collaborators from around the world.<sup>20</sup> Majority of facilitators (62%), notetakers (85%) and editors (60%) are from the majority world, which demonstrates how the Global Assembly was made possible by contributions from people outside

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<sup>20</sup> This is not unique to the Global Assembly but a common criticism to projects conceptualised in the minority world and implemented in the majority world. Thank you to Granaz Baloch for raising this point (see the Glossary for definition of majority and minority world)

Europe and North America. We document stories of heroic initiatives and great sacrifices in the 'backstage' of the Global Assembly, as well as gaps in governance that need to be addressed in future Global Assemblies. We conclude this chapter by charting possible pathways forward for the governance of the Global Assembly.

## **4.1 Building the foundations for future assemblies**

There were over a hundred organisations involved in the Global Assembly. From Deliberativa in Spain which ran pilot tests on multilingual online deliberation to Shimmer in China which served as a Cluster Facilitator, the Global Assembly tells a story of what it takes to amplify the voices of ordinary citizens in global climate governance.

The Report of the 2021 Global Assembly described the organisational structure as 'non-hierarchical' and inspired by principles of 'holacracy and distributed leadership' (Global Assembly Team 2022: 36). The key actors included:

- The Central Circle which took charge of the overall coordination of the Global Assembly and decision-making on the Global Assembly's vision, strategy, design and leading the implementation.
- Core Delivery Team who was in charge of logistics, finance, communications and editing work.
- Cluster Facilitators who recruited, coordinated, and provided support to community hosts based on language groups and geographical locations.
- Community Hosts or organisations based in or close to the points

selected by algorithmic sortition tasked to recruit potential Assembly Members, translate the information materials and expert evidence to local language and context and support the Assembly members to participate in the Assembly, for instance, by organising live translation, internet connectivity, transportation, among others. Partnering Assembly Members with Community Hosts is one of the critical design innovations of the Global Assembly, as this arrangement directly responds to barriers to participation that Assembly Members from disadvantaged backgrounds would normally encounter.

- Facilitators who convened breakout group discussions. Their role was to ensure all voices were respected and heard equally, manage the time, and ensure the group stays on task.

There were ten members of the Central Circle. Six were based in Europe, three in Africa, and one in Asia. In our interviews, each of them told stories of how they came to be attracted to the idea of a Global Assembly. Some were inspired by their contacts from global social movements, others observed the Citizens' Convention on Climate in France, and some were introduced to the group through professional networks. Most 'came from a citizens' participation background,' as one of our respondents from the Central Circle observed.

In their narratives, members of the Central Circle described themselves as the co-founders or among the lead actors of the Global Assembly. One described their role as 'stewards' who 'hold the vision' of the world's first citizens' assembly held at a global scale. Some members of the Central Circle recognised that privilege played a part in this story. One respondent, for example, recognised that seven of the ten members were white, and five of them were white men. Another member of the Central Circle, meanwhile, described the vision of the global assembly as a 'more grassroots and

bottom-up' initiative that is linked to the work they are already doing in the majority world, which involves the co-creation of policy and advocacy, and developing a 'global movement of organisations.'

Volunteering and devoting time to such an ambitious project required confidence and capacity for risk-taking, especially in the early days when Global Assembly had no secured funding. Viewed this way, one could argue that the convening power of the first Global Assembly was rooted in the minority world. We use the term 'convening power' to imply the capacity to set the agenda of the world's first Global Assembly (in this case, the climate and ecological crisis) and generate financial resources to make the Global Assembly happen. Funding was secured by individuals who have a track record and established relationships with funders supportive of this type of work.<sup>21</sup> For some members of the Central Circle, as well as media coverage in prominent English-speaking outlets,<sup>22</sup> the Global Assembly builds on the success of citizens' assemblies that had been run in Europe, while another member of the Central Circle emphasised the Global Assembly's evolution to incorporate various design features used in participatory processes around the world as the composition of the core delivery team expanded.

While the Global Assembly's convening power was rooted in the minority world, its realisation was anchored on the labour of collaborators from all over the world. 'Decentralisation' was the term used to describe the 'globally coordinated yet locally organised' practices of the Core Assembly (Global Assembly Team 2022: 59). What 'decentralisation' means, in

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<sup>21</sup> The composition of the evaluation team is no exception, as the research team is mostly composed of academics based in universities from the minority world that have resources to support this kind of work.

<sup>22</sup> For example see: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/oct/05/global-citizens-assembly-to-be-chosen-for-un-climate-talks>

practice, however, was fluid. One member of the Central Circle considered decentralisation as part of a ‘five-year plan of building a global community of organisations at the grassroots level.’ Another viewed it as a way of foregrounding cultural variety to counter the so-called ‘European saviour complex.’ For a Cluster Facilitator, decentralisation meant being involved in some but not all decisions, though the parameters of which decisions they have the power to make were not always clear. Meanwhile, a member of the core delivery team from the majority world felt that they were not empowered to do the work they were delegated to do because the Central Circle had the final say in decision-making.

Volunteers, collaborators, and institutional partners were recruited through social media and the Central Circle’s networks and then held various responsibilities as logistic and finance managers, Cluster Facilitators, Community Hosts, and breakout group facilitators. Building this network was still a critical achievement for it created the foundations for future Global Assemblies. The next sections discuss these in greater detail.

## **4.2 Opening up the space and building capacity and confidence among Cluster and Breakout Facilitators to take decision-making roles and shape the next phase of the Global Assembly**

First, we observed confidence among Cluster Facilitators to assert their roles in implementing and shaping the next phase of the Global Assembly.

There were nine Cluster Facilitators in the Global Assembly. Their clusters were assigned according to language (e.g., Anglophone cluster, Arabic cluster) or region (e.g., China cluster, Cluster 3 91+ °E covering Southeast Asia + South Korea). Their role was to coordinate the recruitment, onboarding, and support of Community Hosts.

Cluster facilitators recognised the central role they played in realising the Global Assembly’s vision. ‘We made the Global Assembly happen,’ one Cluster Facilitator said confidently. They were assertive that it was their work that kept the Assembly going, from motivating Community Hosts to completing their tasks to filling the gaps when Community Hosts or the Central Circle are unable to provide support. Some Cluster Facilitators, for example, mobilised a network of volunteer scientists to translate expert evidence and information packets, as translating scientific evidence was beyond the capacity of volunteer translators the Community Hosts commissioned for Assembly Members. Cluster Facilitators in authoritarian regimes realised they had to seek legal advice on how funding from the Global Assembly can be disbursed to Community Hosts, given that it takes

at least a year to get approval from authorities for online activities like the Global Assembly to be recognised.

While Cluster Facilitators had the power to improvise to suit their contexts, they had limited power when it comes to high-level decision-making. They had the power to relay feedback, but it was the Central Circle that had the power to decide on operational matters. 'We're the face of the Global Assembly but we were not part of decision-making,' said one Cluster Facilitator.

This was not a problem for the first Global Assembly, at least for one Cluster Facilitator. At that time, 'we could not picture what a Global Assembly looked like,' so deferring to the people who had the vision made sense. In the future, however, Cluster Facilitators prefer to have a direct say in decision-making. One suggested creating a 'central resource station' where all Community Hosts and Cluster Facilitators can exchange ideas and provide support to each other, instead of relying on the Central Circle for support. Others suggested creating an oversight committee where Assembly Members can directly express their grievances when the Community Hosts or Cluster Facilitators have lost their trust. This could prove especially relevant given that we documented isolated incidences of Assembly Members whose Community Host failed to turnover reimbursements for tech-related expenses or Assembly Members who did not receive their allotted compensation. Another suggested that there should no longer be a distinction between the Central Circle and Cluster Facilitators in the next Global Assembly. Cluster Facilitators, one suggested, should be part of the Central Circle.

We observed a sense of frustration among Cluster Facilitators that the Central Circle has not yet decided on what to do next, now that it has been more than a year since the first Global Assembly concluded. Sustainability

of the Global Assembly was important for a number of Cluster Facilitators.<sup>23</sup> Cluster Facilitators were candid in sharing their perceived shortcomings in the implementation of the Global Assembly, but these were often qualified with the understanding that it was the first Global Assembly, and so shortcomings were to be expected. These statements from a Cluster Facilitator are illustrative of this sentiment.

*Even though the structure is not perfect enough, or the procedure is not perfect enough, everyone was putting their hearts into it. We see tears... and a lot of great positive emotion going on. And everyone's like, 'oh it's difficult but we're gonna make it.' Everyone's putting their tears and sweat into it. And it actually came out not bad from my perspective. We accomplished a lot, but we can make it better. (Cluster Facilitator A)*

*I personally received a lot of requests from our Community Hosts and Assembly Members asking "hey, what's next? Are we going to have another Global Assembly next year? "How can I get involved? How can my Assembly Members get involved?" "How can we help you build the project next year?" I don't have anything to tell them because we still haven't decided on the work that we're going to do this year, but that's definitely something that needs to be improved, we need to maintain a stable and sustained communication flow, even after the assembly, of the Global Assembly (Cluster Facilitator B)*

'Cluster Facilitators are excited to move forward. Everyone is waiting to find out what's next,' said another.

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<sup>23</sup> Thank you to Granaz Baloch for emphasizing this point.

## 4.3 Identifying roles, expectations, and spaces for improvisation

‘Learning in practice’ was one of the guiding values of the Global Assembly (Global Assembly Team 2022: 44). It takes the position that no one has all the answers and so it is important to openly share lessons and mistakes so the team can learn together. The Global Assembly convened a series of ‘Deliberative Labs’ or pilot assemblies which allowed the core delivery team and cluster facilitators to testing various components of the Assembly, identify potential issues in implementation, and brainstorm on design features suitable for various contexts.<sup>24</sup> Because the Global Assembly was unprecedented, there were no templates from which role descriptions and expectations can be drawn.

We asked members of the Central Circle to describe their roles in the Global Assembly. ‘Nebulous’ was how one member described their role, while another said they found themselves ‘just building, running’. Another described their role as ranging from ‘sending fifty emails to fifty different people’ to ‘trying to hook up people with backup generators’, all while ‘frantically calling facilitators when there were dropouts’.

We heard similar stories from Community Hosts who had to play various roles in the Global Assembly. Among their responsibilities included recruiting Assembly Members and translators, providing internet access, and providing the honorarium to participants. These roles give Community Hosts a lot of power in shaping the course of the Global Assembly, but at the same time, the huge responsibility assigned to them left many scrambling for resources

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24 Thank you to Indira Latorre for emphasizing this point.

to complete their tasks.<sup>25</sup> From their perspective, deliberations taking place over Zoom were the ‘frontstage’ of the Global Assembly and the bulk of the work was unfolding in the ‘backstage’.

They organised ‘back channels’ such as WhatsApp groups where they texted live translations of break-out group deliberations for Assembly Members to read. There were one-on-one tutorials that localised the content of expert testimonies to prepare Assembly Members for the next sessions. One Community Host supplied vitamins to their Assembly Member because they were concerned that staying up late to attend breakout groups and waking up early to go to work would compromise the Assembly Member’s health. Another provided emotional support after a family member of the Assembly Member passed away. Others took care of seemingly mundane but nevertheless important considerations, such as crafting a credible look for the Global Assembly. A Community Host from Latin America recalled:

*The first time we went to a meeting I had to provide him with the proper clothes to be able to go because he didn’t feel well to have to give an interview the way he was dressed in the clothes he had, so I went, bought him an outfit, a t-shirt, jeans, he cut his hair, so our first assembly I had to be with him earlier, much earlier, to prepare him to be able to go, in the others I was also with him earlier so we could pass the content and study.*

Of all the people involved in organising the Global Assembly, it was the facilitators and notetakers that had the clearest task description. Facilitators appreciated that they received a detailed, clear, and standardised process plan. They called the process plan a ‘script,’ a ‘bible’ or a ‘lifeline’. Some studied the process plan multiple times and practised reading it out, but

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25 Thank you to Remco van der Stoep for this insight.

this also meant overstressing their capacities. One facilitator said they felt ‘overwhelmed by the material’, another shared it was difficult for them because they didn’t have enough time to prepare and ‘it really felt like a lot of material that we were expected to go through in a three-hour session’.

Notetakers, meanwhile, received ‘high-quality’ training for them to fulfil their roles. They were tasked to prepare charts and graphs on Miro Board that participants would use during breakout groups. After breakout groups, their task was to uphold the notes they took so these notes could serve as bases for the design of the next sessions. Among the biggest challenges they faced was accurately capturing the content of deliberations given the varied quality of translations. Zoom’s chat function helped notetakers to clarify some of the content they were recording.

While respondents in our interview have taken pride in the improvisations they crafted for the Global Assembly, many of them also wished they would not have to deal with the mental load of finding ways to make things work without clear lines of accountability. ‘I don’t know who’s in charge,’ said one Community Host from Western Asia. In our interview, the Community Host expressed disappointment over the delay in disbursing money for the Assembly Member they were working with. They felt that they suffered from reputation damage because of this, as the Assembly Member was expecting compensation by a certain time. ‘A person claims to be in charge of everything, but if it’s about the financial issue, another person is responsible,’ they said.<sup>26</sup> This experience was not unique to this Community Host, as several of our respondents also expressed similar experiences of

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26 The Global Assembly Team acknowledged the challenges of disbursing funds to Community Hosts, considering ‘some regions of the world are excluded from global financial markets,’ which resulted to delays and difficulties in making financial transactions (Global Assembly Team 2022: 244). On various occasions, the core delivery team provided assurance that all Assembly Members would receive their compensation.

being unclear about the lines of accountability.

Facilitators, meanwhile, felt a different kind of mental load. Many of them appreciated the clear process plan but they also felt that the process plan was someone else’s work and therefore felt no ownership of it. Some did not know why some topics were selected over others, why some questions had to be read word for word, and how the Assembly Members’ statements would feed into the People’s Declaration. A couple of facilitators confessed to not knowing what would happen after the People’s Declaration was read in COP26.

As the Global Assembly progressed, however, some facilitators realised that the process plan was not ‘carved in stone.’ Their suggestions were heard, and so the process plan became more responsive to the needs of Assembly Members. Some groups started using ‘low tech’ visuals instead of Miro Board as most of the participants joined using their mobile phones. Reflecting on this experience, one facilitator narrated how much they appreciated the adaptability of the Central Circle in responding to their feedback.

*I then thought about how valuable it was the humility with which they did the process. Because it isn’t simple: imagining this, building this, finding the funding, doing all of the work, and suddenly one day they [the facilitators] come and tell you ‘this isn’t working.’ And they [the core team] had the openness to say: ‘ok, let’s rethink it.’*

The next Global Assembly has the benefit of building on a wealth of lessons and experiences that can inform the organisational structure and scope of responsibilities for delivery partners. Cluster Facilitators, Community Hosts, breakout group facilitators and even a few Assembly Members called for co-designing the process plan and providing input in high-level decisions.

This suggestion, among others, demonstrates commitment from a global community of practice to build the next Global Assembly's operating principles and practical implementation guidelines based on shared values and lived experiences.

## 4.4 Ways forward

This section discussed the heroic efforts and great sacrifices demanded by the world's first Global Assembly. Our aim in this section was to place the spotlight on how various personalities negotiated their roles and improvised ways to realise the Global Assembly's vision. We also laid bare some of the taken-for-granted assumptions of the Global Assembly's design and how these assumptions shaped the experience of Assembly Members faced with different structural constraints. Based on this discussion, we offer two reflections that may inform the design of the next Global Assembly.

**First, inclusive design is good design.** The first Global Assembly conformed to the structure of climate assemblies in Europe, which included the use of civic lotteries, expert evidence, small group and plenary deliberations, collective recommendations (in this case a People's Declaration) and a ceremony to publicise recommendations (in this case The People's Declaration). That said, the Global Assembly also demonstrated innovations that depart from the typical model of a citizens' assembly, including pairing Assembly Members with Community Hosts, using hand signals to harness the power of non-verbal communication, Assembly Member-generated videos to pluralise forms of expression (some citizens' assemblies are already doing this), and breakout group facilitators advancing critical design edits and improvisations as the Global Assembly was occurring, among others.

Cluster and breakout facilitators strongly articulated their desire and commitment to co-design the next Global Assembly. They have the power to diversify the inspiration for the Global Assembly's design by drawing on participatory traditions from their own communities. What would a Global Assembly look like if it were designed from the perspective of women, indigenous people, and people with disability? How would a Global Assembly look if it were designed from the perspective of Assembly Members living in authoritarian regimes, conflict zones, refugee camps, and, indeed, communities most affected by climate change? How much farther can the reach of the Global Assembly be if a more diverse group of people were put in charge of communication and fundraising campaigns? We may find satisfactory answers to these questions through co-design.

**Second, the governance structure of the Global Assembly needs serious attention.** The Global Assembly was governed by a consortium of NGOs, foundations, and civil society groups with no independent governance board or organisation responsible for execution and accountability towards complaints and grievances. A working group composed of Cluster Facilitators and other stakeholders may be formed to conceptualise a plausible structure for the next Global Assembly.

**Third, the power to convene the Global Assembly can be shared.** The composition of the Central Circle (or the main decision-making body of the Global Assembly) may consider mirroring the distribution of Assembly Members.<sup>27</sup> In the Global Assembly, 85% of Assembly Members are from the majority world while 60% of members of the Central Circle are from the minority world. High-level decisions on the conduct and design of the Global Assembly can benefit from a wider diversity of a community of practice coming from different participatory traditions and epistemic

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27 Thank you to Yago Bermejo Abati for this idea.



communities. This implies addressing structural inequalities that prevent transnational/collective brainstorming during the grant application stage of the process. Funding for the writing of the project grant should be ensured so organisations and participatory experts from the majority world are able to participate and consequently own the process.<sup>28</sup>

**Finally, it is important for the next Global Assembly to have a mechanism for aftercare, not only of the Assembly Members but also the Community Hosts and facilitators.** Some of our respondents were expecting an invitation to a follow-up session or an update about the next steps but did not receive any. There is a growing conversation about appropriate mechanisms for ‘member aftercare’ in the climate assembly network, and so emerging best practices are worth considering.

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<sup>28</sup> Similarly, the evaluation of the Global Assembly should have, in the future, the necessary funding to compensate the expertise and embodied knowledge of researchers from the majority world working in the majority world. See ‘Ways forward’ in Appendix A: Methodology.

# Addressing Inequalities



## **The Global Assembly sought to address the structural constraints of convening global citizen deliberation in a highly unequal world. Not all constraints can be overcome.**

The scholarly literature on deliberative democracy has long emphasised structural constraints that prevent deliberative forums from fully realising their democratic goals (see Young 2002; Lupia and Norton 2017). Identifying these structural constraints is not merely an academic exercise, but a practical one, for it opens a conversation on what process design can achieve given certain limitations. After all, citizens' assemblies are not decontextualised forums. They are embedded in societies constrained by economic, cultural, political, and social inequalities that limit people from fully participating in political life.

In this section, we identify how the digital divide, language barriers, and time limitations operated as structural constraints that deterred the Global Assembly from realising its ambition of giving everyone a seat at the global governance table. We conclude this chapter by providing reflections on implementing a Global Assembly in a world defined by systemic and structural inequities.

## **5.1 Digital divide**

Holding the Global Assembly online was the only reasonable option in 2021. Online deliberations reduced operational costs, massively reduced the event's carbon footprint, and included Assembly Members from countries that still had pandemic-related travel bans. However, online deliberation also created barriers in accessibility and amplified the constraints faced by people in many parts of the world.

The digital divide is the most obvious structural constraint in the Global Assembly. The majority of Assembly Members we interviewed reported difficulties with internet connectivity. Inequalities in digital literacy were also prominent, as many Assembly Members used Zoom, Miro Board and GoogleDrive for the first time.

All Assembly Members we interviewed told us their Community Hosts provided them the technological support they needed to participate. We documented stories of Community Hosts providing microphones, cameras, and tablets to Assembly Members. One even provided a ring light, so the Assembly Member looked presentable on camera. Other Community Hosts kept their offices open late at night for Assembly Members to use as these spaces, unlike Assembly Members' homes, are connected to the internet. Others relied on their Community Hosts to figure out how to use Miro Board, which one Assembly Member described as a 'real struggle'.

'Madam was looking after such things,' said an Assembly Member from South Asia, referring to their Community Host. 'She would connect everything for me, and I just open my mouth to talk. Ha, ha!' Other Assembly Members relied on their family members or neighbours to help them operate technology.

Pairing Assembly Members with Community Hosts that provided tech support worked in contexts where digital infrastructure exists. Broadband connection and mobile phone communication may often be patchy, but there were workarounds to address these challenges. For some Assembly Members, however, little to no infrastructure was part of their everyday reality. Power outages, dead cellular zones, and digital exclusion made online deliberation a time and resource-intensive event.

We documented stories of Assembly Members travelling late at night to and from areas with stable electricity and internet connection to take part in deliberations (see Section 5.3). Others borrowed generator sets because their community experienced regular power interruption.

These experiences spotlight the vastly different experience of online deliberation among Assembly Members. For some, online deliberation means setting up the laptop on a kitchen table and clicking on a Zoom link a couple of minutes before the session begins. For others, online deliberation means spending hours before the session charging gadgets and travelling to nearby towns to make it on time. And even such effort does not guarantee a seamless digital experience.

There are various consequences of digital inequality with the way the Global Assembly unfolded. This means some Assembly Members were excluded from deliberations whenever their internet connection dropped, or they were facing extreme events due to human-induced climate change. This also means the cost of participation is higher for Assembly Members that need more time and resources to log-in Zoom. We emphasise this structural constraint because improvisations of Community Hosts and design tweaks such as asking Assembly Members to watch expert testimonies on YouTube can only do so much to enforce parity in participation. The challenge, as

we explain further Section 5.4, is to design the Global Assembly from the perspective of the most disadvantaged communities.

## Fair compensation

All Assembly Members received a stipend of USD 600. Is this a fair way of allocating resources? Our research finds that the answer depends on two considerations: cost of living and cost of participation.

USD 600 may not seem enough for an Assembly Member based in countries with high cost of living or high minimum wage, and too much for Assembly Members based in countries where the norm is to earn less than ten dollars a day.

But cost of living is not the only consideration.

'I know it's fair to pay people the same amount of money,' said one Cluster Facilitator, 'but people don't necessarily live the same life.'

Living in precarious conditions like civil war or areas with poor digital infrastructure increases the cost of participation. In these contexts, USD 600 was spent finding secure venues for online deliberation or buying gadgets to address data poverty.

This raises a critical question for the next Global Assembly: Does equal compensation mean fair compensation?

## 5.2 Dependencies on language

The Global Assembly is the world's largest multilingual citizens' assembly. There were at least thirteen languages spoken and the majority of the Assembly Members (64%) required a translator (Global Assembly Team 2022: 98). Choosing English as the 'global exchange language' informed decisions in the design and implementation of the Global Assembly. English proficiency was a criterion for recruiting Cluster Facilitators, Community Hosts, facilitators, and notetakers. Expert knowledge and the process plan were communicated in English.

The Central Circle recognised the limitations of choosing English as the Global Assembly's exchange language. They recognise that this further entrenched inequalities as English language speakers had direct access to expert information and instructions from facilitators, while others were dependent on their translators (Global Assembly Team 2022: 174).

We also observed unevenness in the quality of translation. This was a problem that Community Hosts, Breakout Facilitators, Cluster Facilitators and Assembly Members reported to us. Some translators were skilled in contextualising statements expressed in English, so the Assembly Members they were working with got a fuller appreciation of what was being discussed. Others, however, found it challenging to translate jargon and technical terms on the spot. We also documented stories from Assembly Members about translators that inserted their own voice in deliberations. An Assembly Member in South Asia for example, recalled:

*(I) remember there was a lady who spoke in Hindi, and I could understand it clearly what she was saying. But, when the man*

*who was sitting next to her, helping her in translation, he used to give a different opinion which were not the words of that lady.*

Fidelity in translation goes beyond accurately conveying an Assembly Member's views. It also entails capturing the affective dimensions of speech which ground deliberations to Assembly Members' values and lived experiences and accurately representing the relevant context and conditions required to fully grasp the views expressed. As one member of the evaluation team writes in her notes:

*In the BRs [breakout rooms] I observed, the issue was not so much that the translation was bad, but that AMs [Assembly Members] would talk for a long time and then translators had to summarise everything in one sentence, leaving aside stories or nuance, either because there was no more time, or because the AMs had not made the necessary pauses for translators to register everything.*

Some Assembly Members affirmed this observation. One participant from East Asia told us that their translator was not able to 'fully express my ideas and emotion' while a Community Host observed that their translator was 'unable to faithfully portray the richness of the viewpoints, simplifying the Assembly Member's speech and life experience.' Several participants reported feeling 'intimidated' by the fact they did not speak English and confirmed that English-speakers seemed more confident in their capacity to express their opinions and appeared to dominate the conversations more.

Facilitators shared similar concerns with using English as the exchange language. In our interviews, facilitators felt that the terms used in the facilitation guide or script too complex. The combination of translation and poor internet connection also created barriers for rapport-building. 'It was

also about bad connections. You'd tell a joke, and you would have to repeat it four times because one cannot understand if one cannot listen... This would complicate things.'

## Designing an activity from an English-speaker's perspective<sup>29</sup>

Beyond issues in the quality of translation, some Assembly Members expressed concern over process design decisions that privileged English speakers.

This encounter in a breakout session is illustrative of this point. On 16 November 2021, Assembly Members were tasked to compare the outcomes of COP26 to the People's Declaration. Assembly Members were given a spreadsheet that provided an automated translation of the COP26's outcomes.

An English-speaking Assembly Member problematised this task. As an English speaker, they were personally confident that they could complete this task. COP26's outcomes were published in English. They were able to follow the Anglophone media's news coverage and therefore had the head start in thinking about the implications of COP26 ahead of their deliberations. But this opportunity was

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<sup>29</sup> Thank you to Bianca Ysabelle Franco for bringing this to our attention.

not available to all Assembly Members in their breakout group. There were Assembly Members coming from countries that did not have as extensive coverage of COP26. They felt it was unfair for them to complete the task on the spot without the same benefit of preparation. The English-speaking Assembly Member therefore suggested that more time was needed for all Assembly Members to reflect on the task given to them.

*Sometimes I sit on this call, and I think how lucky I am that I can actually understand every single word of English that's been spoken. And then I also look at my colleagues and my friends and my family that are on this call who require some of this information to be translated into their languages for them to also fully understand it the way I am understanding it. And this is all I'm trying to say, that you know, I just think that it is not, it doesn't come across as being a fair process if this is the sort of disabilities that we are giving to others that are on the call because they don't understand the way that this is all coming out in English. And I think, for me, it would just be fairer if they would have had this information yesterday or even the day before so they could deliberate it and think about it in their own minds.*

The facilitator responded to this suggestion. They decided to give Assembly Members more time to think about the task and asked them to share their responses in their WhatsApp chat group. This improvisation may not fully address inequalities in language, but it demonstrated responsiveness to critiques of a process plan designed from an English-speaker's perspective.

## 5.3 Time Inequality

The structural constraint posted by time is a subtle but powerful influence that shaped the Global Assembly. Problematizing time exposes taken-for-granted assumptions about designing citizens' assemblies, and how these assumptions affect the norms of inclusion and deliberation. We identify three assumptions about time that were built in the design of the Global Assembly.

The first assumption relates to temporal autonomy or a person's freedom to choose how they spend their time. Some studies already identified 'lack of time' as one of the reasons why people recruited to join a citizens' assembly decline to participate (see Jacquet 2017). Indeed, a rigorous and long form of citizen engagement makes enormous demands on people's time. It presupposes that Assembly Members have the power to put some of their social obligations on hold so they can attend the sessions and carve out hours in their day to examine expert evidence and follow the proceedings of COP26. In our interviews, we listened to stories of Assembly Members who slept fewer hours than usual so they can attend the sessions. This was especially challenging for Assembly Members whose workday begins early, such as farmers, fisherfolk, and people with caring responsibilities. Other Assembly Members admitted to compromising some of their obligations, such as attending mandatory political party meetings as this clashed with the schedule of the Global Assembly or disturbing their family and small children's sleeping schedule due to the noise from the video calls. One Community Host felt bad that the Assembly Member they worked with lost their interest in attending sessions as the demands of their schoolwork intensified.

Citizens' assemblies typically address the issue of time poverty by giving Assembly Members enough compensation so they can take time off work and devote time for deliberations. This arrangement is valuable, but it

assumes that Assembly Members come from a context with enforceable labour laws, predictable work patterns, labour participation in the formal economy or, for others, transferrable caring duties. A truly diverse cohort of Assembly Members includes people who do not come from these contexts. Many come from precarious work conditions where skipping a day of work means risking not being hired again, or missing a day in the farming calendar means compromised crops for an entire season. Some of our interviewees reported having several jobs in the formal and informal sector to secure enough earnings. Attending the Global Assembly meant giving up income despite their unpredictable earning patterns. We view this as a structural constraint – one that cannot be overcome by design features of a citizens' assembly – as the Global Assembly takes place within various economic contexts that define a person's temporal autonomy.

The second assumption relates to what counts as a 'good time' to hold deliberations. The Global Assembly ran breakout group deliberations across at least ten time slots. These time slots were decided in consultation with cluster facilitators and members of the Global Governance and Participation Committee. These deliberations took place from late afternoon to late in the evening, depending on the Assembly Member's time zone. Deciding to hold deliberations in the evening is common for online citizens' assemblies. Evening, in some contexts, means the end of the workday and therefore signals discretionary time.

In a global context, however, 'the evening' bears a different weight. Evening, for some Assembly Members, signals danger. An Assembly Member from Central Africa living in a conflict zone requested their translator to travel to their home to provide tech support as they did not want to violate the curfew. This concern is also gendered. A female Assembly Member from South America boarded a motorbike to travel twelve kilometres to the next village to meet their Community Host

and translator and then travelled back to make it to their night shift in a restaurant kitchen. Although she did not consider this situation uncomfortable or dangerous, she believes that her condition was more difficult than that of others who could participate from their homes. 'There were people who participated at home, right? It was easier for them, right, the person with the translator, at home.' Another female Assembly Member from South Asia told us the stigma associated with women travelling in the evening. 'My brother-in-law asked my husband "why does your wife travel far, leaving her husband and kids and come back home so late in the evening? This is not good for a female."' One Assembly Member confessed to feeling awkward staying in the office of the Community Host late in the evening and did not know what to do during breaks. These narratives, among others, prompt reflection on the timing of breakout groups and consider the material, bodily, and cultural implications of time.

Finally, the speed at which the Global Assembly was organised had consequences on the quality of deliberation before making decisions on design and implementation. Here we spotlight the challenges faced by members of the Central Circle, of having to produce process plans and learning materials in a short span of time.

Breakout facilitators, who were often the link between organisers, experts, and participants, described members of the Central Circle as 'sleep-deprived,' while another felt they were in constant 'firefighting' mode as they felt the expectation to provide '24/7 support.' This reflection from a member of the Central Circle is illustrative of this point. The quote was edited for brevity.

*The heated conversations that I can recall were around the level of technical difficulty and the learning materials. We had a very text-heavy learning journey. That was for implementation purposes because it's a lot harder to transfer various graphs,*

*and comics, or animated videos into translatable formats. It boiled down to what is possible and that's where I think we sidestepped innovative pedagogical work that we could have done had we had more time. It just boiled down to 'okay, why are we even having this conversation, it's so unproductive, like we have no time, what's the point of talking about diverse learning styles right now when we genuinely have no time?'*

This reflection demonstrates how limited time for preparation and implementation also translated into limited time for deliberation. This poses a critical point for reflection on the appropriate lead time necessary to mount a Global Assembly.

## 5.4 Ways Forward

No citizens' assembly takes place in a vacuum. They unfold in contexts shaped by material, economic, linguistic, discursive, and temporal inequalities. These inequalities were brought into sharp focus in the Global Assembly, as discussed in this chapter. Our goal in identifying these structural constraints is to provide clarity on what a designed forum for citizen deliberation can reasonably achieve, and the extent to which design and improvisations can ameliorate these challenges.

We offer four paths forward based on our analyses.

**First, diverse experiences of vulnerabilities should be at the centre of the Global Assembly's design.** Citizens' assemblies, one could argue, typically use recipes to mitigate structural constraints. Providing tech support, pairing Assembly Members with translators, and providing stipend for participation are common responses of designed forums taking place in imperfect

societies. However, in a Global Assembly marked by different forms of inequalities, generic responses to specific vulnerabilities undermine the Global Assembly's potential as an inclusive space for deliberation.

One way forward is to conduct a 'sensitivity test' of the Global Assembly's governance, design, and implementation plan to suit the context of the most disadvantaged participants. The Deliberation Labs conducted before the Global Assembly was a good start, although it may be necessary to continue the 'sensitivity test' after Assembly Members have been recruited, so their specific needs are built into the process design. One, for example, can conceptualise designing an online Global Assembly, where power interruption and poor internet connectivity are the norm rather than the exception. Assembly Members may also be asked about the best time for them to take part in deliberations.<sup>30</sup> That way, Assembly Members whose everyday lives are defined by poor connectivity are not, by default, disadvantaged Assembly Members but have the potential to be full participants because the Global Assembly's design is fully sensitive to their context.

**Second, low tech may be good tech.** It may be worth experimenting with tech-based innovations to facilitate online deliberation (such as automated translation), but we are also cautious about tech solutionism to advance the goals of the Global Assembly. The improvisations we documented – from using WhatsApp as a back channel to using slides instead of the Miro Board – demonstrate that low-tech can also spark creativity. They have the potential to be more inclusive to resource-scarce participants who rely on smartphones with slow internet speed.

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30 Thank you to Remco van der Stoep for this suggestion.

**Third, if English is to remain the primary language of the Global Assembly, standard criteria should be established for hiring translators, as well as training, monitoring, and evaluating their activities.** Effective translation entails contextualising Assembly Members' statements instead of providing a literal or abridged translation of what Assembly Members said. With adequate training, this type of 'political translation'<sup>31</sup> could facilitate multicultural deliberation and address privilege within transnational deliberation, rather than inadequately conveying the non-linguistic dimensions of speech or reinforcing inequalities between translators, Community Hosts, and participants. In addition, some deliberative sessions may occur among groups of participants who speak the same or similar languages so that they lessen their reliance on translators during small-group deliberations. In these situations, facilitators who speak the dominant language of the breakout group can help lead the conversation in a language in which participants feel more comfortable expressing themselves. Translators could still translate the session for the observers and the conclusions to the plenary.

Other forms of linguistic exchange could be used more frequently in addition to speech and text, given that Assembly Members appreciated the creative forms of engagement. Participants can use videos, photos, and even performances to express themselves or present their views to each other. Emergent digital tools can offer real-time translations via speech recognition. The use of these tools could be explored for literal and simultaneous translation of deliberations, relying on individual translators for contextualisation and clarification. This could offer assembly members the additional advantage of replaying what has been said and taking time to truly understand exchanges.

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31 According to Doerr (2018), translation during multilingual deliberation is not only 'technical support' between participants and facilitators, but 'a disruptive third within deliberation' whose motivation is to address the inequities within the deliberation.



**Fourth, slow design is good design.** The field of democratic innovations is better served by slow thinking. One of the most crucial affordances of citizens' assemblies is the time it gives to Assembly Members to focus on an issue and engage in rigorous deliberation and reflection before making collective decisions. It is reasonable to expect the same affordance to be available in the process of designing, implementing, and evaluating the Global Assembly, especially in its first few iterations as new challenges emerge and alternative solutions are experimented with.

# Impact



## **The 2021 Global Assembly established itself as a potential player in global climate governance, but it also spotlighted the challenges of influencing global governance at the institutional level.**

There are many ways to assess the impact of climate assemblies. Often, attention is focused on institutional impacts, operationalised as policy uptake or the extent to which the outputs of climate assemblies influenced policymaking (see Vrydagh and Caluawerts 2020). In recent years, however, impact has been defined more broadly (see Boswell, Dean and Smith 2022). Some climate assemblies seek to make an impact in various ‘domains of influence’ beyond decision-making bodies, which may include civil society groups, the wider public, and the members of the climate assembly themselves (see Thorman and Capstick 2022).

This chapter assesses the impact of the Global Assembly using this broad lens. Our analysis contextualises the Global Assembly within the possibilities and constraints of making an impact in the sphere of global governance.

Those emerged from the initial design of the Global Assembly, but also from the specific configurations of international climate cooperation. Compared to most climate assemblies (such as the World Wide Views; see <http://wwwviews.org/> and Rask, Worthington and Lammi, 2012), the Global Assembly was not commissioned by or co-designed with public authorities or decision-makers that have the obligation to consider recommendations emerging from citizen deliberations. This allowed the organisers to focus their efforts on the logistics of running the Global Assembly, but it meant that there was no formal channel agreed upon upfront for how the outcomes of the Global Assembly would inform decision-makers or influence policy. As such, the Global Assembly’s routes to impact (as listed in section 6.1) had to be more indirect and hinged on proving that running such an initiative was possible and on advocating to make its work known. Compared to climate assemblies commissioned by public authorities, the Global Assembly had to find a niche in a particularly complex institutional space, where the most relevant institution, the UNFCCC, has been given less delivery power over time and is no longer necessarily the forum where the most important decisions on climate change are taken (Aykut et al., 2022).

We begin this chapter by describing the 2021 Global Assembly’s shifting goalposts in terms of impact, which, we suggest, indicated the need for the Global Assembly to clarify the scale of its ambition in its first year. We then put forward our findings on the Global Assembly’s impact based on its theory of change. We find that the Global Assembly established itself as a potential player in global governance, but it also spotlighted the challenges of influencing global governance on the institutional level. In its first year, we found the Global Assembly’s impact to be most pronounced in reaching a variety of audiences through reasonable media coverage and social media engagement, as well as in influencing the everyday lives of Assembly Members. We conclude this section with proposed paths forward.

## 6.1 Shifting goalposts

The Global Assembly identified three routes to impact (Global Assembly Team 2022: 30). It sought to:

- Influence institutional actors including governments, businesses, and other traditional power holders to address the climate and ecological crisis.
- Activate citizens who took part in the Global Assembly to take action in their own contexts.
- Advance a new governance model for global decision-making.

Members of the Central Circle were consistent in identifying these routes to impact in various avenues, including op-edsw,<sup>32</sup> the Global Assembly Launch Event,<sup>33</sup> and the Global Assembly Team's report (Global Assembly Team 2022). As we will discuss in this chapter, the success of each route to impact was varied and contextual.

We reviewed various documents that laid out the 2021 Global Assembly's impact strategy. We observed that the Global Assembly had shifting goalposts in terms of impact. In some outlets, the 2021 Global Assembly was portrayed as an initiative that seeks to influence COP26. This is most prominent on the website's landing page, which states: 'A global assembly in 2021 on the climate and ecological crisis to influence COP 26.'<sup>34</sup> Similarly, in

<sup>32</sup> For example: Mellier and Wilson (2023)

<sup>33</sup> See 'Launch of the first Global Citizens' Assembly for COP26' at 11:30. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PxlCB3oK5o4>

<sup>34</sup> Available at: <https://globalassembly.org/> as of April 10, 2023.

the press pack released last October 2021, the Global Assembly articulated a three-year objective to 'run at least 2 global citizens' assemblies that have had a profound and positive impact on global climate decision-making' (Press Pack p. 6). This scale of ambition, as we will discuss in the next section, shaped Assembly Members' expectations on how the People's Declaration would be received.



**Figure 3:** Landing page of the Global Assembly's website

In other outlets, however, the Global Assembly was portrayed in a more modest way. The 2021 Global Assembly was described as a 'our prototyping year' (UNA-UK Magazine, November 1, 2021).<sup>35</sup> This modest language was affirmed in the Global Assembly Team's report published a year later. The 2021 Global Assembly was described as a 'pilot,' therefore its aim is to provide the first **proof of concept** that a global citizens' assembly is possible,' and

<sup>35</sup> Available at: <https://una.org.uk/magazine/2021-1/join-worlds-first-global-citizens-assembly-cop26>. Accessed April 10, 2023.

which ‘stress-tested these ideas such they might be refined by others in the future’ (Global Assembly Team, 2022, p. 247, emphasis in original).

The previous chapters have established that a global citizens’ assembly is indeed possible. We identified various challenges and lessons from which future assemblies can learn. Our approach in assessing the 2021 Global Assembly’s impact is based on the extent to which it advanced each of the routes to impact and document some of the challenges the Global Assembly faced as it sought to connect or ‘dock’ to COP26. Each route to impact, as we will discuss in the next sections, requires different sets of capacities, background knowledge, and resources, and raises different expectations from various stakeholders.

## **6.2 The Global Assembly made significant first steps in establishing itself as an actor in global climate governance by docking into COP26**

Members of the Central Circle used the term ‘docking’ to describe the unofficial connection between the Global Assembly and COP26. Docking served as an idiom to describe the process of members of the Central Circle finding where the Global Assembly would fit in global climate governance. In 2021, the ‘hook’ was the UNFCCC and its COP26 held in Glasgow.

Members of the Central Circle recognise that the Global Assembly’s impact on COP26 was modest. Given ‘the assembly’s minimal integration into the COP negotiating cycle and relatively low media profile, it is fair to assume

that the impact was limited,’ Claire Mellier and Rich Wilson wrote in their piece for Carnegie Europe.<sup>36</sup> Our research affirms this observation.

### **6.2.1. Achievements on the institutional level**

A light and one-time docking experiment seemed like a sensible option for the Global Assembly. On a practical and logistical level, the Global Assembly had no precedent and had to win its spurs before it could gain the ear of institutional actors and secure access to the COP. ‘The conversations with funders and institutional actors became markedly easier after the core assembly deliberations had begun,’ noted a member of the Central Circle in our interview.

In its first year, the Global Assembly had two observable achievements on the institutional level. It secured the endorsement of key actors and gained access in the blue and green zones of COP26. These achievements raised awareness about the Global Assembly and were significant first steps in establishing itself as an actor in global climate governance.

The endorsement of United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres connected the Global Assembly’s goals to ‘Our Common Agenda,’ which is the Secretary-General’s ‘vision on the future of global cooperation through inclusive, networked, and effective multilateralism.’ He described the Global Assembly as a ‘practical way of showing how we can accelerate action through solidarity and people power.’ This endorsement created a pathway for the Global Assembly to connect to other UN initiatives emerging from ‘Our Common Agenda,’ such as the Summit of the Future to be held in 2024 and advance the conversation it started in COP26.

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<sup>36</sup> See: Mellier and Wilson, 2023

Meanwhile, endorsements from the UN High level Climate Action Champion for COP26 Nigel Topping and President of COP26 Alok Sharma drew attention to the Global Assembly in COP26. Topping emphasised the Global Assembly's role in 'building new relationships between people across the world' as well as 'between citizens and leaders,' while Sharma explained why the Global Assembly was 'selected for representation in the Green Zone' of COP26. 'We recognize just how important its work is,' he said, 'because we are committed to bringing the voice of global citizens into the heart of COP26.' The Global Assembly, for Sharma, 'creates that vital link between local conversation and global conference.'

The Global Assembly was also present in five blue zone events. Blue zone refers to the space outside formal negotiations only accessible to accredited attendees such as members of parties, accredited observers, and the media. The schematic representation below demonstrates the structure of UN climate conferences as 'transnational mega-events' (Obergassel et al 2022: 3).

Securing a spot in blue zone events gave the Global Assembly visibility in COP26. 'It was not a given that the Global Assembly would be speaking at these events,' recalled one member of the Central Circle in our interview. It is typical for organisations and civil society organisations to lobby for slots in high profile panel discussions to give prominence to their respective projects and agendas. Securing five speaking slots in blue zone events served as an indication of the traction the Global Assembly gained among COP 'insiders' and the network of allies it has built over a short span of time.

The green zone, meanwhile, refers to the space for civil society events which are open to the public. The Global Assembly was present in two green zone events. The first event served as the Launch of the People's Declaration for a Sustainable Future of Planet Earth (November 1, 2021).

Assembly Members selected through sortition read the content of the declaration via Zoom while several members of the Central Circle presented the design of the Global Assembly. First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon, together with Vanessa Nakate, the Founder of Youth for Future Africa and the Rise Up Movement, Laurence Tubiana, the CEO of the European Climate Foundation and key architect of the Paris Climate Accords, Natalie Samarasinghe, the CEO, United Nations Association UK and Sir Bob Watson, Chair of the Global Assembly's Knowledge and Wisdom Advisory Committee and former Chair of IPCC and IPBES also spoke in the event. This green zone event is the third most watched green zone session online in COP26's YouTube channel, with more than 7,800 online views.<sup>37</sup>

The second green zone event featured Flynn Devine from the Central Circle who took part in a panel discussion on 'Great Recovery Dialogues: Bridging Climate and Social Justice.'

The public acknowledgement of the value and importance of the Global Assembly by many high-profile figures involved in global climate governance and beyond, along with its inclusion in several blue and green zone events at COP 26, suggest that it established itself as a potential player in global governance. Achieving a more substantive policy impact proved considerably more challenging as we now proceed to outline.

## 6.2.2. Challenges in making institutional impact

The 2021 Global Assembly provided a 'proof of concept' that global citizen deliberation was possible, but how exactly global citizen deliberation can make an impact on global governance remains an open question. 'Docking'

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<sup>37</sup> As of April 10, 2023. See: <https://www.youtube.com/@COP26/streams>. Click 'popular' tab.

**Figure 4:** Schematic illustration of the layered structure of the UN climate conferences as transnational mega-events. Source: Obergassel et al 2022



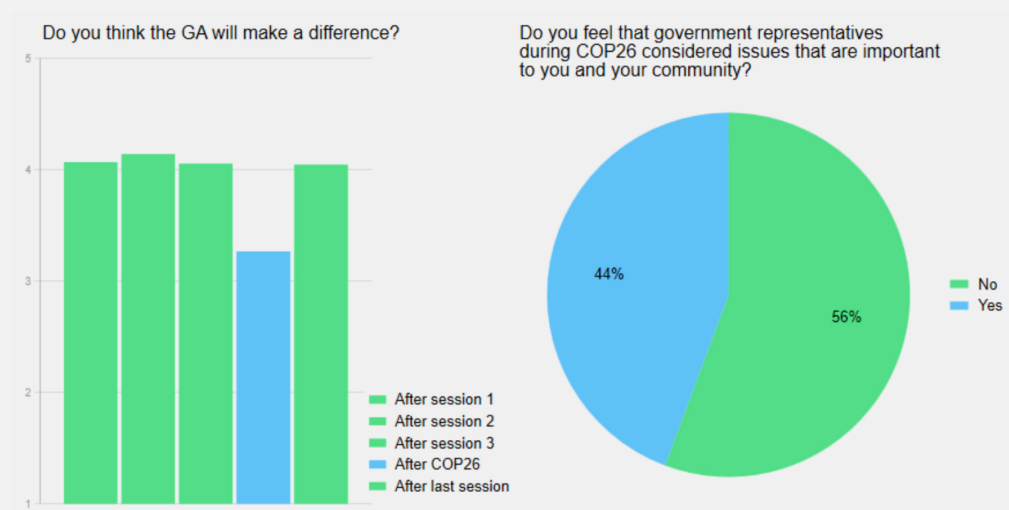
the Global Assembly within the COP26 infrastructure, we find, did not give it sufficient prominence to have a genuine bearing on the considerations of the key negotiators.

‘Will it change anything?’ asked an Assembly Member from Latin America. ‘They [world leaders] listened to proposals, but the question is are they going to implement what we suggested,’ asked another Assembly Member from South Asia. ‘The result remained the same,’ said another from Western

Asia. ‘World leaders did not listen to the people’s voice in the past and they will not listen now.’ In that regard, participation in COP26 had a sobering effect on participants’ views on the impact of the Global Assembly, as the figure shows. Furthermore, participants expressed mixed feelings about the uptake of their recommendations by world leaders at the event and a substantial majority of them did not feel that world leaders addressed the issues that matter to them and their communities.

While influencing politicians, business leaders, and institutional actors is one of the Global Assembly’s routes to impact, it is clear from members of the Central Circle that directly influencing institutional actions was not a priority for this first experience. There are three reasons for this.

**Figure 5:** Impact of the Global Assembly (institutional)



First, one of the Global Assembly's 'core assumptions,' according to a member of the Central Circle we interviewed, is that institutions will ignore people's recommendations. 'We don't want them to, but that's our experience.' 'There was no expectation that the People's Declaration will suddenly make the headlines and spark official negotiations,' said another member of the Central Circle. The Central Circle preferred a bottom-up initiative independent from 'existing power structures.' In practice, this means the Global Assembly lacked a direct channel of influence at COP26's negotiation space. As a member of the Central Circle put it, 'the more focus you have on the assembly or the citizen setting their own agenda, the further away it might be from a specific policy dialogue.'

In place of directly influencing policy or the negotiations, some members of the Central Circle focused on raising the profile of the Global Assembly through outreach and advocacy work. The aim, as a member of the Central Circle put it, was 'not to inform a political chamber' but to 'create a political climate in and of its own right.' Various members of the Central Circle shared their view. As one member of the Central Circle explained, the Global Assembly was not responding to a climate crisis, but to a 'governance crisis.' 'We know what the solutions are, it's just our systems can't make the decisions that they need to make.'

Consequently, the strategy was to raise the Global Assembly's profile by fundraising to support communications work. However, the Global Assembly's advocacy work was heavily constrained by time (also see Section 5.3). 'We just didn't get it, we just didn't get in advance of COP,' the member of the Central Circle said. The People's Declaration presented in COP26 was an interim draft, which Assembly Members would return to and revise after COP. This raises a clear challenge about 'docking' the Global Assembly to a time-sensitive event, as it needs Assembly Members to work at a certain pace to generate outcomes that can be used for campaigning

and advocacy during, if not before, negotiations. The Global Assembly sought to sustain momentum even after COP26, by presenting at the Stockholm +50 international meeting and in the United Nations Environment Assembly but they were unable to do further advocacy work in UNFCCC intersessional meetings in Bonn.

Second, members of the Central Circle leading the advocacy work were, foremost, experienced in designing and running citizen engagement initiatives, but less experienced in establishing influence in global climate governance. 'We are governance people, not climate people,' as one member of the Central Circle put it. 'I think that's probably our biggest takeaway from COP, being able to make ourselves known to more people not only in the participation arena,' said another.

Members of the Central Circle 'very much aware' that they did not have the 'skills and things we needed to really think about the impact or how to design it so we have the biggest impact possible.' In the previous chapter, we documented the various demands members of the Central Circle faced as they experienced the complexities of recruiting Assembly Members, managing Community Hosts, preparing educational resources, and hosting multilingual and multi-week online deliberations. 'Learning in practice' and 'building the plane while you're flying it' were some of the ways in which they described the prototyping year. This experience also applies to the Global Assembly's advocacy work. While the Central Circle received input from various advisory committees on how to 'dock' the Global Assembly in COP26, these discussions were crammed in a short period of time.

'I feel like we need a much more sophisticated power map of the global government institutions who control different things,' one member of the Central Circle reflected. Indeed, having a fuller picture of the different levers of power would enable the Global Assembly to identify hospitable (as well

as inhospitable) spaces that can amplify the Assembly Members' messages, as well the Central Circle's aim of advancing a new governance model for decision-making.

The third reason relates to the consequence of the remit chosen for the 2021 Global Assembly. 'How can humanity address the climate and ecological crisis in a fair and effective way?' is a broad remit, which resulted in the People's Declaration containing broad statements.

Minutes from the Knowledge and Wisdom Committee's meetings explain the thinking behind this remit. The remit was purposely broad as Assembly Members were not expected to get into detailed policy recommendations. 'The citizens can't go into detailed policy recommendations, but they can provide moral guidance,' said one member of the Committee. 'It is best for the Global Assembly to focus on the big macro issues and not get into the speciality areas that require experts,' said another. Foregrounding issues of fairness and effectiveness gave the remit a moral frame, which structured deliberations about values and beliefs instead of 'clean recommendations.' The 'challenge is to move the discussion from the level of actions they want to make to the kind of action they want to support,' as one member of the Committee put it.

A set of general recommendations makes it challenging for the Global Assembly to make direct policy impacts. Various scholars and practitioners have made a case for framing remits around specific problems or in ways that speak to 'what the decision-maker will ultimately decide' (Carson 2018) whilst also enabling the Assembly Members an opportunity to narrow the remit, particularly in climate governance (Elstub et al. 2021). In the case of the Global Assembly docked to COP, this may mean selecting one policy area subject to negotiation (or 'agenda item' in the UNFCCC jargon) where the 'moral voice' of ordinary citizens has weight in influencing negotiations.

In sum, there is little evidence to suggest that the Global Assembly achieved influence on global climate policy, much to the frustration of some Assembly Members. Members of the Central Circle were more realistic about the significant challenges involved in achieving this type of impact in the 2021 Global Assembly, although some considerations – such as collaborating more closely with people experienced in global climate governance or narrowing the remit to certain policy areas – could have extended the Global Assembly's potential in realising its first route to impact.

## **6.3 The Global Assembly had concrete impacts in Assembly Members' everyday lives**

The Global Assembly made concrete impacts in Assembly Members' everyday lives. Assembly Members spoke positively of their overall experience, with some describing it as 'life changing.' They valued the knowledge they gained from expert evidence. In our survey, 97% of respondents considered the experience very or quite valuable. Many adapted their daily practices based on their learnings, such as organising recycling bins and reducing the use of plastic. Some Assembly Members saw themselves as 'messengers' of the Global Assembly and felt responsible for raising others' awareness of the climate and ecological crisis. Some became activists in their communities, others took part in documentaries and television programmes spotlighting climate change. One was recognised as 'Woman of the Year' in their city for representing their community in an international event. Another changed careers and started working in an environmental NGO.

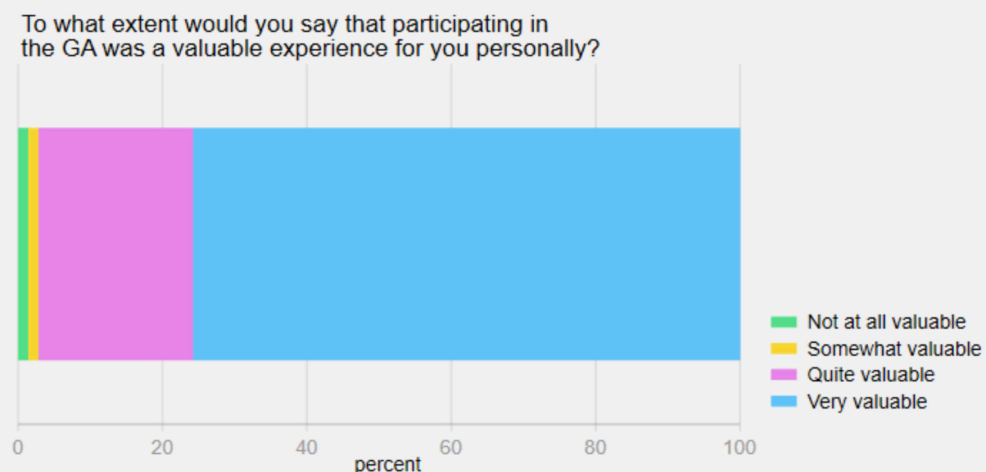


Assembly Members also focused on thinking about the connection of the Global Assembly to their immediate communities. An Assembly Member from Latin America is illustrative of this observation. At various points in our interview, the Assembly Member commented that the people in their community were neither aware of COP26 nor the Global Assembly. They had various ideas on how the Global Assembly can be popularised, including holding local climate assemblies in a more open way. As they put it, 'what we participated in was a closed thing, right? They could do it in a school in the future, on a Saturday morning, for teenagers ...' 'We need these deliberative sessions, and forums, to be held in local villages,' said another Assembly Member from West Africa.

These suggestions, among others, are already consistent with the Global Assembly's strategy of hosting community assemblies and promoting the 'cultural wave'.<sup>38</sup> The next phases of the Global Assembly can deepen the connection between the deliberative assembly and other networked forms of climate action to maximise its impact, as well to robust the Global Assembly's positioning in the public.

<sup>38</sup> See Mellier and Wilson 2023.

**Figure 6:** Impact of the Global Assembly (individual)

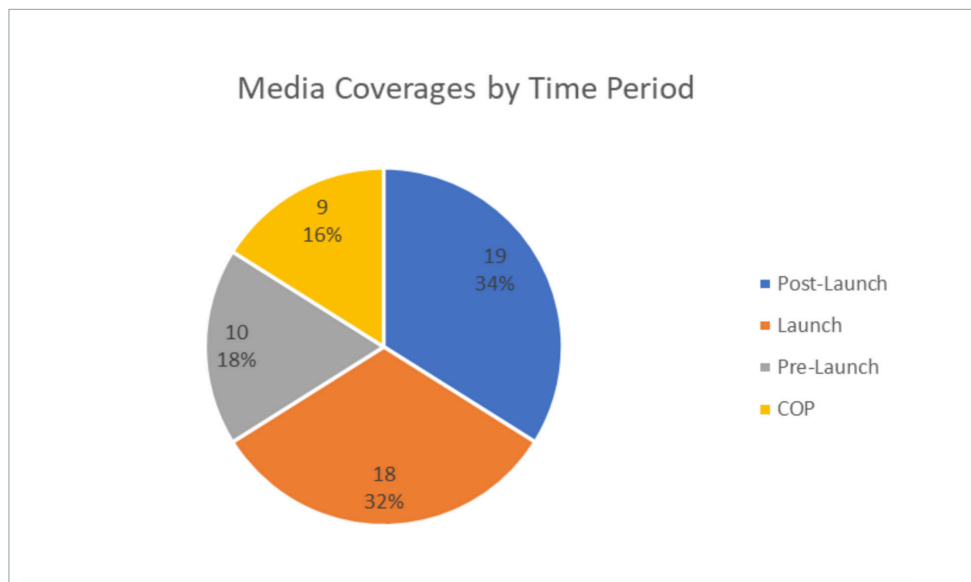


## 6.4 The Global Assembly reached a variety of audiences and introduced alternative ways of decision-making at the global level

The impacts on the Assembly Members are impressive achievements but it is ultimately 100 people in total. As a result, it is useful to see if the Global Assembly managed to reach other audiences beyond the assembly itself and COP26. One route to achieving this is through media coverage. We therefore analysed the mainstream online media and social media coverage of the Global Assembly.

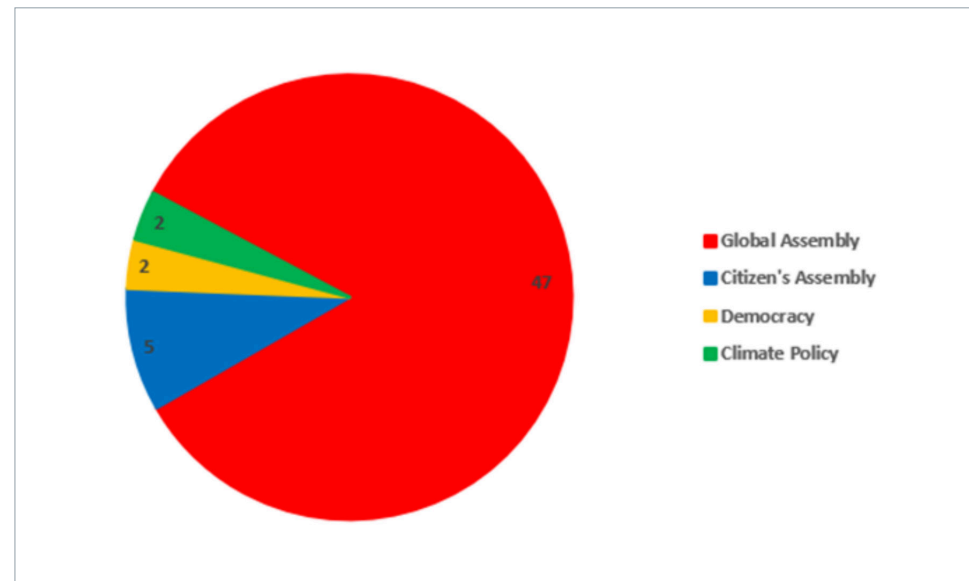
We found 56 online media articles in English that featured the Global Assembly, in total. This coverage was reasonably spread-out throughout the lifespan of the Assembly with peaks of coverage at the launch (32%) and post launch (34%) as can be seen in Figure 7.

**Figure 7:** Volume of Global Assembly Media Coverage by Time Period  
(Total News is 56 articles)



As can be seen in Figure 8 the focus of the vast majority of coverage (84%) was on the Assembly itself, although some articles did focus on themes of citizens' assemblies more generally, or issues of democracy and climate policy.

**Figure 8:** Focus of Global Assembly Media Coverage



There was media coverage in 20 countries in total across a range of continents, as well as coverage in global media outlets. Most coverage was in India and the UK (but only English-language articles were included in our sample). The English language media coverage of the Global Assembly in the majority world was primarily found in the South Asian media.

All articles were positive except for two that focused on climate policy. Part of the reason for this is that the perspectives of members of the Central Circle were prevalent in the coverage (34%). Nevertheless, the views on the Global Assembly of climate activists (13%), government members (13%), Assembly Members (8%), and United Nations officials, amongst others (24%), were also captured in the media.

We drilled down further to the individual level and found that a number of ‘high profile figures’ frequently commented on the Global Citizen Assembly in the media. For example, Nigel Topping’s (U.N climate champion) views were recorded in 12 sources and was quoted as saying that ‘the Global Citizens’ Assembly for COP 26 will be the biggest ever process of its kind – building new relationships between people across the world, but also between citizens and leaders’ (see Green 2021). Alok Sharma (President of COP26 and UK Government Minister) was quoted in 11 sources, including ‘The Global Assembly is a fantastic initiative and was selected for representation in the green zone [of the COP26 presentation hall] because we recognise just how important its work is.’<sup>39</sup> Nicola Sturgeon (First Minister of Scotland) was quoted in 8 different sources.

We asked Community Hosts about their experiences in reaching out to journalists to amplify the message of the Global Assembly. One key issue they raised is the need for more support in crafting media and communication plans that were suitable to their context. A Community Host from Latin America, for example, sent a press pack to various media outlets but did not get a response. Comments such as ‘What materials need to be sent? What materials need to be translated?’ from Community Hosts suggest they needed further support. While some Community Hosts were able to organise meetings with government officials and give interviews in local media, others showed little interest or capacity to disseminate the work of the Global Assembly.

A Community Host from South Asia, meanwhile, points at a challenge more profound than providing support in preparing communication plans. The challenge, as they point out, is communicating what exactly a citizens’ assembly is. ‘These are global north terms,’ the Community Host said, and

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<sup>39</sup> Examples include Harvey (2021); Editorial Team of Umbria Green Magazine (2021)

the aspirations of building a new piece of global governance infrastructure may not necessarily resonate with the political demands of people from the majority world.

Moving onto the social media coverage of the Global Assembly, we found that Twitter was the most used platform for Global Assembly-related communication and the official account attracted 2,225 followers. Activities related to assembly activities in India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand got the most attention in our sample, but this intensity was amongst the same followers rather than reaching large audiences. The Global Assembly Facebook account was used quite intensely with various issues, such as environmental crisis, extreme poverty, and human right to gender issues frequently highlighted. Ultimately though, this account had relatively low engagement from its followers. There was less activity on Instagram, with 725 followers & 70 posts.

Overall, both the mainstream and social media coverage focused on raising public awareness of the Global Assembly, its activities and its role in COP26. In this respect it helped disseminate the concept of a global citizens’ assembly on climate governance further, making the case for an alternative way of decision-making at the global level, which addresses the Global Assembly’s third route to impact. Especially as it attracted the attention of some high-profile figures in global climate governance which enabled a variety of audiences to be reached.

Ultimately though the coverage of the Global Assembly with respect to quantity, distribution, and diversity of voices included was limited. This is unsurprising as previous national climate assemblies have struggled to get media coverage, they need to reach large audiences (Carrick and Elstub, forthcoming) and the absence of a developed global public sphere makes this even more challenging at this level (Fraser 2014).

The Global Assembly media coverage, both traditional and social media, has created space to maintain public communication activities, a forum for consolidating public opinion that arguably is quite effective in embracing the public, increasing public awareness, and encouraging public participation in its activities.

## 6.5 Ways Forward

The challenge for the next Global Assembly is to advance a roadmap on how it can become an established and influential actor in global climate governance, now that proof of concept has been established. Developing this roadmap, we argue, entails a sustained and systematic dialogue among Global Assembly's stakeholders. Here we outline several open questions that seek to crystallise some of the issues we identified in our research.

**First, how can the Global Assembly achieve and maintain influence in the UNFCCC process?** While it is unlikely that States will agree to share their decision-making power with a citizens' assembly (the UNFCCC remains a Party-driven process), there are other ways to exert influence in the negotiations. Future initiatives will need to reflect on the Global Assembly's relation to the nine existing constituencies (admitted NGOs)<sup>40</sup> and evaluate whether the establishment of a self-organised citizens' constituency could be a means to gain visibility and presence in the UNFCCC. They would also need to think about more tailored interventions, possibly targeting certain agenda items of the negotiations. The potential to achieve these

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40 Business and industry NGOs (BINGO), Environmental NGOs (ENGO), Farmers, Indigenous people's organisations (IPO), Local government and municipal authorities (LGMA), Research and independent NGOs (RINGO), Trade union NGOs (TUNGO), Women and Gender (WGC), Youth NGOs (YOUNGO) and Farmers NGOs.

aims would be dependent on the nature of the 'docking' with the UNFCCC, which requires more prominence for future Global Assemblies than in the first iteration. Stronger 'docking,' however, is not the sole responsibility of the Global Assembly's organisers, but one that is shared by other actors in global governance, and in particular countries. The level of inclusion afforded to the Global Assembly in the future serves as a test for the extent to which high profile personalities that endorsed the Global Assembly are willing to realise what they considered to be Global Assembly's potential and to lobby for institutional changes in global climate governance and beyond. In that sense, the need to craft a 'sophisticated power map of global government institutions,' as suggested by one member of the Central Circle is especially critical as the Global Assembly seeks to deepen its relationships with champions and allies and identify spaces where it could have the most impact.

**Second, which route to impact will the Global Assembly prioritise next?** Is engagement with UNFCCC negotiations the most appropriate path to impact and, if so, is participation at future COPs the most effective way to achieve this? Or should other global policy forums be explored, such as the G7, the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation or the Summit of the Future 2024 (see section 6.2.1 above) whose remit is broader than climate change? An argument could be made that it is pragmatic to take such a step-by-step approach in establishing the Global Assembly as a permanent feature of global governance, given limitations of time and resources. In other words, after piloting the logistics of hosting such a complex event at COP26 in 2021, the Global Assembly could in future years focus more on how and where to effectively exert 'a profound and positive impact on global climate decision-making'. The UNFCCC, whose governance is shifting toward soft coordination and non-binding regulation, might not be the most relevant forum anymore (Aykut et al., 2022). However, the potential for meaningful deliberation risks being undermined if the element of policy impact is not carefully factored into the design of a citizens' assembly from the outset,

so that the participants have a clear sense of, and can deliberate about, how their efforts may have influence. How these tensions can be balanced warrants further consideration.

**Third, what is the Global Assembly's relationship with other civil society groups?** The People's Declaration does not depart significantly from the moral positions adopted by other civil society groups such as environmental NGOs, Indigenous peoples' organisations or the Youth NGOs and marginalised countries such as the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the COP. How the Global Assembly's processes and outcomes can be 'docked' with deliberations of civil society groups who can be potential allies as well as interlocutors warrants consideration, to establish the Global Assembly's legitimacy in global climate governance. Related to this, the endorsement of high-profile actors can give the Global Assembly some credibility, but this can be challenging as well because not all civil society groups consider high-profile actors as genuinely committed to transformational change. Viewed this way, another challenge for the Global Assembly is to have clarity on its relationship between powerholders it seeks to persuade and civil society actors operating on local and global scales that have varying attitudes towards powerholders in global climate governance.

**Fourth, what kind of impact should the Global Assembly have in global governance?** Calling for the Global Assembly to become a permanent feature of global climate governance requires clarity of purpose. Does it (eventually) aim to directly influence the UNFCCC negotiations or other institutions of global governance? Does it seek to shape the global discussion on climate policy? Does it see itself as a moral voice that can guide action? What are the markers of success? Answers to these questions will shape the advocacy strategies of future Global Assemblies. We suggest that answering these questions should not be limited to members of

the Central Circle. Thus far, the impact strategy of the Global Assembly, although a bottom-up civil society initiative, is predominantly, if not solely articulated by actors from the minority world. We reiterate our suggestions from previous chapters to co-design the Global Assembly's impact agenda with its global network to fully appreciate what meaningful impact means based on the lived experiences of its various stakeholders.

Related to this, the Global Assembly may consider a more decentralised, but scaffolded approach to communication. Decentralisation would promote inclusiveness, creativity, translatability, and even the affective power of communication around a citizen assembly around the globe, complementing the logic behind a Global Assembly. However, this decentralisation would still need to be scaffolded to ensure Community Hosts and others had the resources to disseminate the process and outcomes of the Global Assembly in a meaningful way.

**Finally, how can the 'core assembly' be better connected with community assemblies and the cultural wave?** While this report focused on the 'core assembly' or the learning and deliberation that took place among 100 citizens selected by lot, the Global Assembly is a wider project. It involves self-organised community assemblies that use the same learning materials as the Global Assembly. It also advances a 'cultural wave' that invites artists and content creators to popularise the Global Assembly. The Global Assembly, therefore, already has an existing structure to address Assembly Members' suggestions we noted earlier when it comes to popularising and further democratising the Global Assembly. The challenge is to find ways to better link the components of the Global Assembly to maximise its impact on the public sphere.

# Conclusion



The latest IPCC report warns us that current adaptation and mitigation efforts are insufficient against the catastrophic consequences of climate change. Transboundary climate risks have proven to be more challenging to manage than anticipated (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2023). The governance of the environmental crisis has been relegated to negotiations among state actors, where movements and civil society organisations face challenges to weigh in on and are isolated from the communities most affected by extreme weather events and climate disasters. Against these odds and in the context of a flailing transnational climate governance system, the Global Assembly was a tenacious and necessary intervention.

**The Global Assembly brought a refreshing governance possibility to otherwise ossified negotiations and increasingly incommensurable national interests. This Evaluation Report poses critical questions and signals both systemic and situated challenges in the governance, design, implementation, and impact of the Global Assembly, with the aim of supporting future institutions for global deliberation in the midst of the climate and environmental crises, and beyond.**

Our evaluation took a power-sensitive approach that utilised mixed methods with a diversity of data sources.

**First, we identified design challenges that emerged with the use of random selection at the global level and how demographic diversity does not necessarily translate into diverse climate discourses.** Even though the Global Assembly successfully brought together a variety of individuals, the fact that radical climate viewpoints were marginal reveals a need for intentional efforts to ensure a broad range of perspectives is heard. To promote greater inclusivity and equity, the selection process for participants needs to be re-evaluated, including exploring acceptable parameters for random selection, reconsidering the criteria for the global location lottery, and looking beyond a shared belief in a climate crisis. Implementing mechanisms for challenging established forms of knowledge can deepen discourse and foster a more thorough understanding of the intricate and multifaceted nature of climate change.

**Second, we problematised the Global Assembly as a space for collective learning and deliberation.** To enable political discourse, we propose dedicated time slots for citizens to learn about deliberation, not just climate change; horizontal exchanges with experts; more creative pedagogies; and both designed and improvised facilitation strategies.

**Third, we characterised the governance of the Global Assembly as driven by passionate, time-constrained, and driven design, yet confronted by socio-economic, gendered, racial, and geopolitical imbalances of power among its members.** We identified durable hierarchies and patterns of exclusions in running civil society-led projects, which foreground questions of power and privilege at both the global and local levels. These are systemic issues that need to be better addressed by future Global Assemblies—and not just their organisers, but funding agencies and international organisations

– while also recognising that there are structural barriers that even the best designed citizens’ assembly cannot address.

**Fourth, we emphasised that no citizen assembly is detached from the material conditions and social structures that enable and constrain democratic participation.** In other words, the distinct intersection of inequalities experienced by Assembly Members ‘outside’ the Global Assembly, such as material, economic, linguistic, discursive, and temporal, can introduce asymmetric and even unfair conditions for citizen participation and deliberation. To address these political constraints, it is crucial to improve the sensitivity of deliberative design tools to mitigate specific intersection of disadvantages faced by each Assembly Member.

Based on our analyses, we suggest four paths forward. Firstly, we propose a ‘sensitivity test’ to ensure the process design meets the unique needs of the most disadvantaged participants. Secondly, low-tech solutions may offer more inclusive and innovative ways to facilitate online deliberation, particularly for those with limited resources. Thirdly, establishing standard criteria for hiring and training translators and exploring alternative forms of linguistic exchange could reduce the reliance on translators during small group deliberations. Finally, we recommend adopting a slow-thinking approach to ensure sufficient time for designing, implementing, and evaluating the Global Assembly.

**Finally, we discussed the impact of the Global Assembly on global climate governance.** It proved to be highly challenging to influence the COP negotiations, and ultimately the inclusion of the Global Assembly into COP was not significant enough to achieve these. Nevertheless, it did become recognised as a player in global climate governance, which is an achievement that should not be underestimated. Going forward, we recommend a stronger connection to future COPs but also to look beyond

the UNFCCC and form connections with other global climate institutions, including civil society organisations. Moreover, there is a need to co-design the Global Assembly's impact agenda with a global network to ensure what 'impact' means is based on the lived experiences of its various stakeholders. Relatedly, a more decentralised approach to communication of the assembly is encouraged.

To learn from the Global Assembly and the processes that precede and surround this deliberative institution is a courageous task. It implies refusing to accept a top-down, expert-led climate verdict, and instead deliberate our collective futures with those most affected and least responsible for this crisis. To do so in a world ravaged by profound historical inequalities might mean questioning not only who sits at the decision-making table, but also who designs and governs these deliberative institutions.

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# Appendix A: Methodology



This evaluation report is a collaborative effort of a network of researchers from around the world. To leverage our expertise and interests, we divided our network into four clusters, with each focusing on specific aspects of the Global Assembly.<sup>41</sup>

**Table 6:** Research Clusters

Cluster	Researchers
<p><b>The deliberative experience</b></p> <p>How did Assembly Members, Community Hosts, Cluster Facilitators, members of the Central Circle, and facilitators experience power relations in the design and implementation of the Global Assembly?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nicole Curato, University of Canberra*</li> <li>• Azucena Morán, Research Institute for Sustainability—Helmholtz Centre Potsdam</li> <li>• Melisa Ross, Universität Bremen</li> <li>• Lucas Veloso, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais</li> <li>• Hannah Werner, Universität Zürich</li> </ul>
<p><b>Climate discourses</b></p> <p>What discourses did Assembly Members and experts put forward in the Global Assembly? How were these discourses articulated and which discourses gained more prominence over others?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emerson Sanchez, Australian National University*</li> <li>• Wendy Conway-Lamb, University of Canberra*</li> <li>• Pierrick Chalaye, Australian National University and University of Pau</li> <li>• Kari De Pryck, University of Geneva</li> <li>• Javier Romero, University of Salamanca</li> <li>• Selma Tilikete, Paris 8</li> <li>• Lucas Veloso, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais</li> </ul>

<sup>41</sup> Each of these clusters gathered and analysed data that conform to the ‘minimum standards and criteria for evaluation’ as set out by the OECD’s (2021) *Evaluation Guidelines for Representative Deliberative Processes* (also see Carrick 2022). Each cluster, whenever applicable, examined process design integrity: evaluating the design process that setup the deliberation; deliberative experience: evaluating how a deliberative process unfolds; pathways to impact: evaluating influential conclusions and/or actions of a deliberative process.

Cluster	Researchers
<p><b>Facilitation</b></p> <p>How did facilitation enable deliberation during the Global Assembly? How was the role of facilitators enacted? How did it change?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Azucena Morán, Research Institute for Sustainability—Helmholtz Centre Potsdam*</li> <li>• Daniel Oppold, Research Institute for Sustainability—Helmholtz Centre Potsdam</li> <li>• Dirk von Schneidemesser, Research Institute for Sustainability—Helmholtz Centre Potsdam</li> <li>• Dorota Stasiak, Research Institute for Sustainability—Helmholtz Centre Potsdam</li> </ul>
<p><b>Impact</b></p> <p>To what extent did the 2021 Global Assembly advance its theory of change?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kari De Pryck, University of Geneva*</li> <li>• Pierrick Chalaye, Australian National University and University of Pau</li> <li>• Wendy Conway-Lamb, University of Canberra</li> <li>• Nicole Curato, University of Canberra</li> <li>• Stephen Elstub, University of Newcastle</li> <li>• Emerson Sanchez, Australian National University</li> <li>• Novieta Sari, University of Newcastle</li> </ul>

\*Cluster lead

Through this approach, our team was able to work in parallel as we investigated critical aspects of the Global Assembly. Working in parallel was complemented by continuous dialogue and micro-workshops that allowed the team to critically reflect on each other's work and advance actionable insights for future Global Assemblies.

## 9.1 The deliberative experience

This research cluster's aim is to generate a multivocal narrative of how the Global Assembly was experienced by actors who took part in process design and implementation.

We conducted 63 in-depth interviews with Assembly Members, Cluster Facilitators, Community Hosts, advisers in the Knowledge and Wisdom Committee, and members of the Central Circle. Researchers from the Facilitation Cluster interviewed the facilitators, while members of the Impact Cluster interviewed some members of the Central Circle in-charge of 'docking' the Global Assembly in COP26. A summary of our respondents is in Table 1.

**Table 7:** Breakdown of respondents in in-depth interviews

Role in the Global Assembly	Number of respondents
Assembly Members	13
Community Hosts & Cluster Facilitators	17
Central Circle and founding partners	15
Breakout Facilitators	16
Knowledge & Wisdom Committee	2
Total	63

Our evaluation takes a power-sensitive approach. This entails foregrounding overt as well as subtle forms of hierarchies, structural inequalities, and contingent disadvantages in the Global Assembly. This approach informed our selection of respondents of Assembly Members and Community Hosts, as well as our interview guides for all respondents.

We specifically focused on interviewing Assembly Members from the majority world, particularly Assembly Members experiencing precarious conditions. Understanding their experiences of the Global Assembly can lay bare some of the process designers' and implementers' taken-for-granted assumptions about what it takes to convene a truly inclusive Global Assembly, as well as identify structural constraints that place a limit on what a Global Assembly can reasonably achieve in a world characterised by structural and systemic inequalities?

We ensured that all regions from the majority world are represented in our respondents' list. We selected our respondents based on the availability of an interviewer who could speak their first language. We considered it essential to talk to Assembly Members without a translator so they can be candid in their responses to our questions. Members of the research team interviewed some of the respondents. We also commissioned journalists and researchers who have training in interviewing respondents in precarious conditions. Table 2 presents the profile of our respondents.

Meanwhile, we conducted 18 interviews with Community Hosts and Cluster Facilitators. These respondents provided insight into the decentralised governance of the Global Assembly including their understanding of various organisations and actors' responsibilities and lines of accountability, the resources made available to them and the improvisations they made to execute their roles. The breakdown of our respondents is in Table 3.

**Table 8:** Assembly Members respondents' profile

Region	Age range	Economic situation as self-described in the interview
East Asia	21-30	Good / stable
East Asia	21-30	Not good / difficult
South Asia	21-30	Not good / difficult
South Asia	71-80	Good / stable
West Asia	31-40	Not good / difficult
West Asia	No information	Good / stable
West Asia	31-40	Not good / difficult
Central Africa	No information	Not good / difficult
East Africa	16-20	Not good / difficult
Latin America and the Caribbean	No information	Good / stable
Latin America and the Caribbean	21-30	Not good / difficult
Latin America and the Caribbean	61-70 (estimated)	Not good / difficult
Latin America and the Caribbean	61-70 (estimated)	Not good / difficult

**Table 9:** Community Hosts and Cluster Facilitators Respondents' Profile

Region	Number of respondents
Latin America and the Caribbean	5
Southeast Asia	2
Western Asia	1
Southern Asia	2
Eastern Asia	2
Northern Africa	1
Southeast Africa	1
Middle Africa	2
Europe	2

We interviewed 2 members of the Knowledge and Wisdom Committee and 15 members of the Central Circle and founding partners of the Global Assembly. Our interview guide was structured to encourage respondents to reflect on their roles in the Global Assembly, identify moments of success and setbacks, particularly organisational dilemmas, and structural constraints they faced as they brought the Global Assembly's vision to life.

We also conducted direct observations of plenary sessions and small group deliberations and wrote our observations in field notes. One of us, Lucas Veloso, was a notetaker in the Global Assembly, and so he had particular insight into the lived experience of taking part in every single session of the Global Assembly. He closely observed and documented the learning process of Assembly Members and recorded their interactions. In this role, Lucas encountered both the challenges and benefits of a global digital mini-public, such as technological difficulties, language barriers, and the opportunity to interact and build relationships with individuals from highly diverse backgrounds.

In collaboration with the Core Delivery Team, we conducted a panel survey that tracked Assembly Members' attitudes before, during and after the Global Assembly. In total, six questionnaires were administered using google forms. The surveys were written in English language and for roughly 60% of participants, Community Hosts translated the surveys for the Assembly Members. The surveys contained both closed and open questions. The table below shows an overview of survey moments and response rates.

**Table 10:** Response Rate of Panel Surveys

Wave	Previous Session	Response Rate
Wave 1 - Pre	Induction Session	91
Wave 2	Session 1.2P	86
Wave 3	Session 3.1B	96
Wave 4	Session 3.4P	27
Wave 5	Session 4.2P	79
Wave 6 - Post	Final Session 5.6	70

## 9.2 Climate discourses

The Global Assembly was designed to be a deliberative body, where Assembly Members were expected to put forward and listen to a range of views before reaching collective judgment. To assess the quality of deliberation in the Global Assembly, the Climate Discourses Research Cluster examined the diversity of discourses and the extent to which these discourses were exchanged, scrutinised, and subject to reflection.

We conducted a discourse analysis of the following:

- Information booklet distributed to Assembly Members
- Minutes of the Knowledge and Wisdom Committee's meetings
- Videos of expert testimonies
- A sample of transcripts of plenary sessions and breakout group deliberations



We focused our analysis of transcripts in the second block of deliberation (Reviewing Scenarios, Pathways, and Principles) because this block fostered debates about the main theme of the Assembly, i.e., political principles of fairness and equity in considering action to combat the climate crisis.

Our conceptual anchor for coding discourses are typologies of climate discourses in the academic literature. This includes:

- ecological modernisation
- ecological civilisation
- climate skepticism
- transformative or green radicalism
- subaltern voices
- green governmentality
- climate justice
- mainstream sustainability
- expanded sustainability
- limits

## 9.3 Facilitation

This research cluster aimed to understand how deliberation came to be, not from a normative standpoint, but an empirical one.

We conducted a total of 16 semi-structured interviews with facilitators of the Global Assembly (80% of all facilitators). Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. They were recorded, transcribed, and anonymised with the consent of interviewees. The interview script was developed both inductively and deductively based on the existing literature on facilitation, the observation of the breakout-room deliberations during the GA, and the Detailed Process Plans for each session.

**Table 11:** Breakout Facilitators Respondents' Profile

Region	Number of respondents
Latin America and the Caribbean	2
North America	1
South Asia	1
Southeast Asia	4
Eastern Asia	1
East Africa	3
Europe	4

We also conducted an audio-visual analysis of the breakout rooms based on inductive categorization. The analysis focused on the following categories:

**Table 12:** Audio-visual Analysis of Breakout Rooms

Coding	(Micro)coding
Facilitator's interventions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Housekeeping announcements</li> <li>2. Conversational interventions</li> <li>3. Summary of participant's intervention</li> <li>4. Process design instructions (scripted)</li> <li>5. Responses to process-related questions</li> <li>6. Appeals to participants to engage (i.e., Call participants by name to engage in the deliberation or respond to a question)</li> <li>7. Displays of gratitude (i.e., thanking participants for their intervention)</li> <li>8. Improvisation/spontaneous changes to the script</li> <li>9. Explaining or paraphrasing content given by experts</li> </ol>
Translator	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Linguistic translation (only if done in main channel)</li> <li>2. Contextual Translation</li> </ol>
Procedural Challenges	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Connection issues (audio/internet)</li> <li>2. Technical difficulties (MIRO or Zoom)</li> <li>3. Silences / confusion</li> </ol>
Dialogue (by Assembly Members)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Questions to facilitator (content or process)</li> <li>2. Conversational moments (jokes, personal responses, reviewing pictures, sharing personal life stories)</li> <li>3. Review/summary of content shared previously by experts</li> <li>4. Sharing of content-related ideas-experiences (without building upon each other's ideas)</li> <li>5. Agreement/Disagreement (yes/no response the question posed by facilitators)</li> </ol>
Break / Reading time	—
Deliberative moments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. (Co-)Development of Arguments</li> <li>2. Change of opinions</li> <li>3. Exchange of participants ideas (i.e., Response to a question posed by the facilitator in which an Assembly Member acknowledges another participant's idea without developing it, or shares an opposing argument)</li> </ol>

Qualitative content analysis of interviews and session recordings were carried out using MAXQDA (a computer-assisted qualitative data, text, and multimedia analysis software). Qualitative content analysis of interviews and session recordings were carried out using MAXQDA (a computer-assisted qualitative data, text, and multimedia analysis software).

## 9.4 Impact

This research cluster aimed at understanding the impact of the Global Assembly on (1) global climate governance, (2) participants' everyday lives and (3) mainstream online media and social media. To do so, we critically reviewed the Assembly's routes to impact.

For (1) and (2), we relied on several data sources to understand how the design of the Global Assembly shaped its routes to impact, how the assembly influenced global climate decision-making, and how it impacted Assembly Members' actions through: interviews with members of the Central Circle and Assembly Members (see 9.1); webcasts of COP26 side events; speeches by key climate leaders and the Report of the 2021 Global Assembly. The evaluation was based on our expert knowledge of global climate governance and citizens' assemblies.

With respect to the media analysis (3) we identified 56 online media articles, available in English, about the Global Assembly. We also analysed three social media platforms (Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook). Messages on each platform were selected randomly. In total we analysed 53 posts (28 from Twitter, 16 from Instagram and 9 from Facebook). We divided our analysis of the online and social media sources into four time periods that represent the evolution of the GA:

1. Pre-launch (all media coverage before GA launch, 5 October 2021)
2. Launch (all news from 5 October 2021 to before COP event, 30 October 2021)
3. COP (from 30 October – 2 November 2021)
4. Post-launch (after 2 November 2021 onward).

We analysed the discourse and the content of the online media on the Global Assembly by coding each media source to identify:

- The focus of key message
- The skew in relation to both the Global Assembly and climate issues (positive, negative, neutral)
- Actors mentioned and their views on the Global Assembly

This content analysis of the media was supplemented with interviews of the Community Hosts (see 9.1)

## 9.5 Ethics

Our research was approved by the University of Canberra's Human Research Ethics Committee (202210374). All researchers signed a data-sharing agreement that contained protocols for using and storing personal data, among others. All respondents were de-identified in this report.

An academic misconduct case was filed at the University of Canberra due to an alleged conflict of interest between Curato serving as lead researcher of the evaluation team and serving as chair of the Global Governance and Participation Committee. An independent external preliminary assessment was conducted by the University of Canberra and found that the complainant did not have a prima facie case and that no further action should be taken in relation to the complainant. The Australian Research Council affirmed this decision.

## 9.6 Limitations

The main limit of our approach is generalisability. We only interviewed 13% of Assembly Members and Community Hosts, and so the narratives we shared in this report are snapshots of experiences in the Global Assembly. For broader claims, we relied on surveys we co-designed with the Global Assembly team.

Many of our interviews also took place months, others a year after the Global Assembly, and so it was common for some of our respondents to preface their answers with qualifiers about their recollections.

## 9.7 Ways Forward

There are various ways to improve the conduct of the Global Assembly's evaluation. Our suggestions are as follows.

### **First, evaluation should be built into the design of the Global Assembly.**

The evaluation team was commissioned midway through the design of the Global Assembly. Researchers had a very short lead time to carefully design questionnaires and develop observation guides, among others. Process plans also did not allocate enough time for Assembly Members to complete questionnaires, which may explain low response rates in some weeks. Building in evaluation in the design of the Global Assembly allows researchers to plan and better conceptualise the research design and for Community Hosts to brief the Assembly Members about the importance of completing questionnaires. Researchers and process implementers may also align their research priorities to identify which insights are useful and actionable to improve the conduct of the Global Assembly.

**Second, the procedure for commissioning the evaluation team should be transparent.** The 2021 evaluation team was brought together by Prof Nicole Curato in her capacity as Chair of the Global Governance and Participation Advisory Committee and staff member of the Centre for Deliberative

Democracy & Global Governance (the Centre), which is one of the Global Assembly's founding partners. For practicality purposes, researchers invited to be part of the evaluation team were mostly based on the Centre's network. Concerns about data management and data protection, especially of sensitive in-depth interviews with several respondents, were the main considerations for capping the membership of the research team. Future Global Assemblies may consider doing an open call for researchers to sign up to be part of the research team. There should be enough lead time to do this so the researchers can plan their workloads, and co-develop research protocols, as well as mechanisms for cross-institutional data sharing.

**Third, the Global Assembly should support the creation of a more diverse evaluation team.** The Global Assembly had zero budget for evaluation. It relied on the Centre's network, mostly composed of researchers working in universities from the minority world who had time and resources to conduct research. This effectively created barriers to participation from researchers working in resource-scarce institutions who may need teaching relief or compensation for taking on research tasks outside their normal workload. A way forward is for the Global Assembly to allocate a research budget per region to, at the very least, ensure linguistic and geographic diversity in the evaluation team.

**Fourth, the evaluation team may consider designing a direct way of capturing the views and concerns of Assembly Members.** Post-deliberation survey questionnaires were written in English. This means Assembly Members who did not speak English relied on their Community Hosts to translate the questions and their answers. This is problematic for both Community Hosts and Assembly Members. We documented concerns from Community Hosts who felt the extra burden of translating a long questionnaire after hours of deliberation. Some of them thought they were not qualified to translate the precise wording of a carefully worded

questionnaire. Assembly Members, meanwhile, effectively lost their privacy in answering what is supposed to be an anonymous questionnaire as their Community Host heard their answers. This is especially problematic in cases where Assembly Members' main concerns are the very people translating their answers. A direct form of data gathering from Assembly Members needs to be considered in the next Global Assembly. Language issues affected other parts of the analysis too. The media coverage analysed, for example, was exclusively English language material and there is a need for a multi-lingual analysis to capture the extent and nature of coverage around the World. A more diverse evaluation team, as outlined in point three above, would help address this limitation.

**Fifth, the next Global Assemblies could benefit from a better integration between the evaluation team and the core team in the creation and organization of the participant survey.** This relates both to the planning of the content of the survey to avoid overburdening the participants as well as the technical implementation to avoid coding errors and facilitate data analysis. Unfortunately, due to the ad-hoc nature in which the surveys were planned for consecutive sessions and the deficits of the online platform, the panel structure of the data could not be used to its full potential. Here we would suggest planning a thorough survey meeting well ahead of time between the responsible members of the evaluation team and the core team to ensure a cohesive and high-quality data collection process.



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