Institute of Welsh Affairs
Centre for Welsh Politics & Society
Aberystwyth University
March 2025

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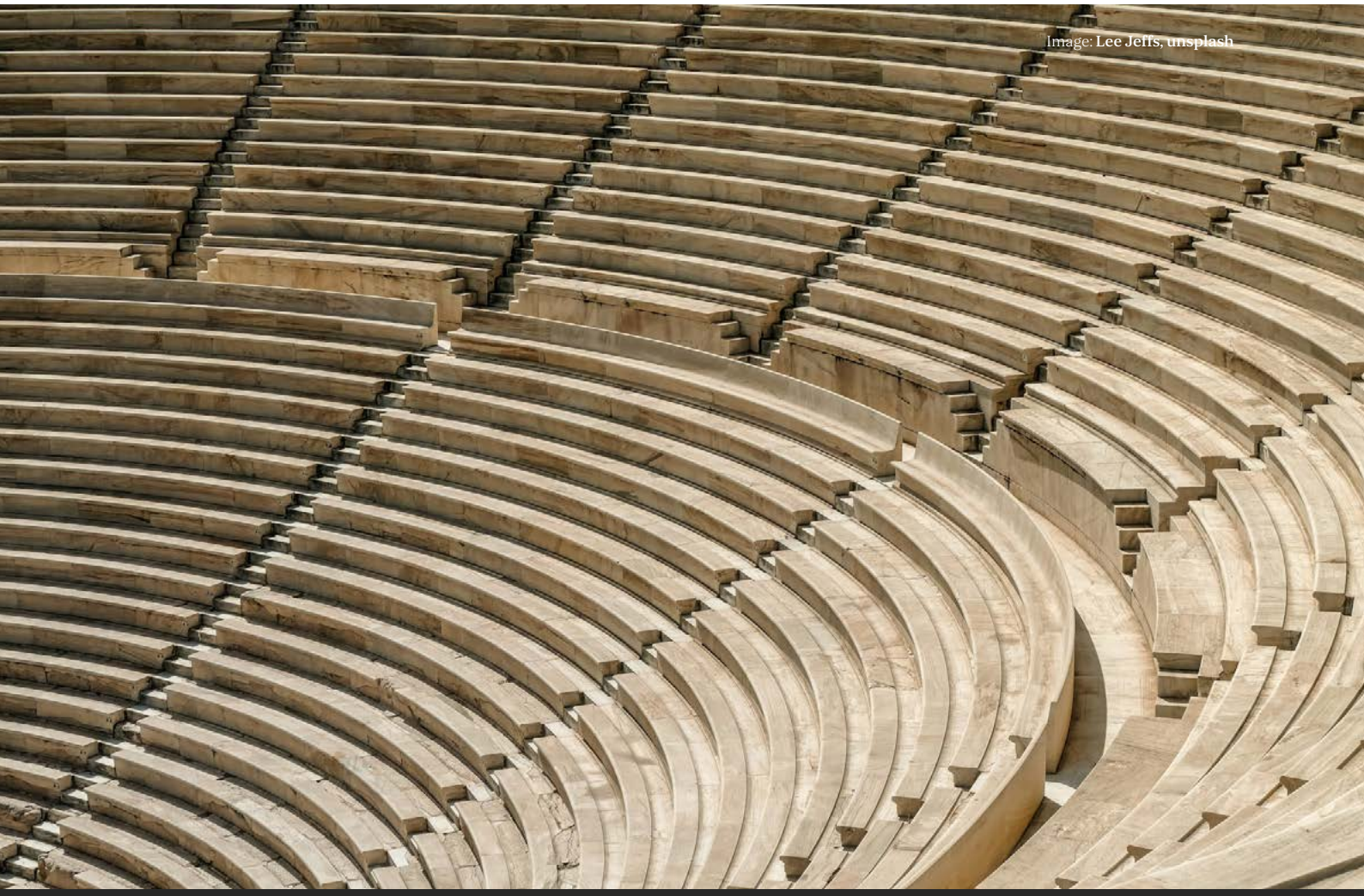
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Fostering Democratic Innovations in Wales: Lessons From Around the World

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This report is part of the IWA's wider work on 'Fostering understanding and participation in Wales' ongoing constitutional discussion' which is funded by the Legal Education Foundation - with the Legal Education Foundation.

Contents

Executive summary

Democracy in Wales is not in good health. Turnout in elections is low, as is knowledge of how democratic government works and trust in politics and politicians. Most people in Wales feel unable to influence the political decisions that impact their daily lives. There is a general sense that life is not getting any better or easier.

These challenges are not unique to Wales. Similar trends can be observed around the world. In response, there is a growing interest in finding ways of doing democracy differently. Much attention has focused on so-called 'democratic innovations'. These are activities that aim to deepen the role of citizens in democratic politics beyond the conventional acts of voting in elections and responding to consultations. They aim to empower citizens to shape the societies they live in through participation and deliberation in decision-making.

This report explores the potential of democratic innovations for improving the health of Welsh democracy. It has three aims:

1. **To raise awareness of democratic innovations: what are they, how do they add value to democratic politics, and how are they used around the world?**
   There is growing international evidence of the potential of democratic innovations to tackle the challenges faced by representative democracies. Democratic innovations can take myriad forms, providing different ways of supporting public participation and deliberation in decision-making. After defining the term 'democratic innovation' as we use it in this report, we present some of these different methods and provide case studies of how they have been used in different places to involve citizens in democratic processes. We consider the following democratic innovations:

   — **mini-publics** such as citizens' assemblies, juries and dialogues, where a representative sample of citizens deliberate on policy issues and propose recommendations;
   — **participatory budgeting** which allows citizens to decide how to allocate public funds;
   — **collaborative governance** approaches which bring together decision-makers, interested organisations and citizens to explore policy solutions together;
   — **referenda and citizens' initiatives** which provide opportunities to vote directly on specific policy issues;
   — **creative and arts-based methods** which support citizens to bring emotional and lived experiences into participation and deliberation; and
   — **digital tools and innovations** that can facilitate broader and more inclusive citizen involvement.

2. To identify good practice in the design and delivery of democratic innovations

Drawing on international experiences and evaluations of democratic innovations, we identify five elements of good practice in relation to the design and delivery of these approaches. These include considerations such as who takes part, what democratic innovations to use, the role of design and facilitation, ensuring democratic innovations have an impact, and building capacity to foster citizen involvement in democratic politics. Any effort at fostering democratic innovations in Wales would do well to take this good practice into account.

3 To identify steps for fostering a more innovative Welsh democracy

Informed by international experience and emerging good practice in the field, as well as an assessment of Wales's experience to date of these approaches, we recommend three specific actions that Wales can take to foster a more innovative Welsh democracy.

These aim to build on existing strengths and clear opportunities to further innovate Welsh democracy. These include the commitment in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act to citizen involvement and collaboration, the recent establishment of the Welsh Government's Innovating Democracy Advisory Group, and forthcoming reforms to the Senedd which aim to create a Welsh parliament that can better serve people in Wales. Together, these create a promising context for doing democracy differently in Wales.

However, our recommendations also recognise the challenges Wales faces in moving forward with its democratic ambitions. These include a prevalence to date of ad-hoc and one-off democratic innovations with limited impact on decision-making; limited opportunities to share experience and build a supportive community of practice; and weak implementation of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act in this area.

We propose the following actions to enable Wales to foster a more innovative democracy:

— **A stronger and more co-ordinated effort to raise awareness of what democratic innovations are, and why they can help tackle the challenges to Welsh democracy.**

— **Further research to map and evaluate existing democratic innovations in Wales, in order to better understand existing strengths and identify barriers for broadening and scaling these approaches.**

— **A systematic and collaborative design-process that brings together key individuals and organisations to co-produce specific proposals for fostering sustained and impactful democratic innovations in Wales.**

1. Introduction

Democracy in Wales is not in good health. In the 25 years of devolution in Wales, fewer than 50% of voters have cast their ballot in each of the Assembly or Senedd elections so far. Levels of knowledge and understanding about how democratic government works in Wales and the UK is low,[1] as are levels of trust in elected politicians and institutions.[2] Most people also feel unable to influence decision-making at UK, Welsh or local levels.[3] Underpinning this experience of democratic alienation is a sense that life is not getting any better for people in Wales. Public services are in a parlous state, inequalities are widening, the cost-of-living crisis has hit people's incomes, and children and young people are faring worse since the pandemic.[4] Collective wellbeing in Wales – that is, people's sense of whether they are living better or worse over time – has stagnated.[5]

It is not only in Wales that representative democracy is struggling. The Global State of Democracy 2024 report finds that participation in elections around the world continues to decline, and the legitimacy of electoral outcomes are increasingly being challenged. [6]A recent OECD survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions found only 39% of respondents said they had high or moderately high trust in their country's national government; a slightly larger number (44%) said they had no or low trust.[7] The same survey found that only 30% feel that current political systems give them a say, indicating low trust in many current norms of public consultation. These results correlate with economic status, suggesting that the challenges to wellbeing experienced in Wales have parallels across the globe. Most people in electoral democracies worldwide say that their political system needs major changes or be completely reformed.[8]

Efforts at tackling these challenges, and reinvigorating representative democracy, have increasingly focused on new ways of involving citizens in decision-making. Often referred to as 'democratic innovations', these approaches strive to increase and deepen citizen participation in the policy-making process.[9] The focus of this participation goes beyond voting in elections and simply providing information about policy decisions or engaging the public in consultation. The aim is to involve and collaborate with the public to consider the complexity of an issue and influence decision-making.[10]

These democratic innovations can take many forms. For example, since its introduction in Porto Alegre in Brazil in the 1980s, participatory budgeting has been used around the world to give citizens more of a say in decisions about government spending. More recently, in many places, assemblies of randomly selected citizens have been charged with deliberating and making recommendations on issues including abortion rights, assisted dying and climate change. In parts of Belgium and the United States, citizens' assemblies and juries have become permanent features of democratic decision-making.

There is growing international evidence that involving the public in decision-making in these innovative ways can help to tackle the challenges facing democratic systems, as described above. Democratic innovations can strengthen democracy by:

- **Improving policy making** by harnessing the collective intelligence of a wide range of citizens who are affected by an issue;
- **Finding ways through divisive or complex policy problems,** especially those that require sacrifice and compromise, or long-term policy solutions;
- **Building greater legitimacy for policy decisions** that people can get behind because they have played a role in creating them;
- **Creating more informed and 'active' citizens** who better understand the complexities and trade-offs of decision-making, and who feel more capable of participating in politics in their communities;
- **Re-building trust in democracy** by giving citizens a meaningful voice and nurturing their belief that they can influence politics.[11]

This report starts from the position that the case for democratic innovations is growing, and that they offer a way forward for tackling the weaknesses of Welsh democracy. From this perspective, this report has three aims:

1. **To raise awareness of democratic innovations: what are they, and how are they used around the world?**
   There are a range of methods and principles that can support public participation and deliberation in decision-making. These vary in terms of how, and how many, people take part; the time and resources they require; and the kinds of issues and contexts to which they are best suited. In Section 3, we present some of these methods and provide case studies of how they have been used in different places to involve citizens in the democratic process.

2. **To identify good practice in the design and delivery of democratic innovations**
   In Section 4, we draw further on international experiences and evaluations of democratic innovations to identify good practice in the design and delivery of democratic innovations. We consider five aspects: who takes part, what democratic innovations to use, the role of design and facilitation, how to ensure democratic innovations have an impact, and building capacity to foster citizen involvement in democratic politics.

3. **To identify ways in which democratic innovations can be fostered in Wales**
   In Section 5, we draw on international experience and good practice to inform specific actions that Wales can take to foster democratic innovations. There are elements of strength that can be built upon: there is some existing experience of these approaches, and legislative and political frameworks that provide a clear focus for involving citizens in decision-making. There are also, however, significant challenges to be overcome. We recommend three specific actions that could enable Wales to become a more innovative democracy, where citizens can participate and deliberate in decision-making in a sustained and impactful way. These focus on:

   - raising awareness of democratic innovations and the added value they can bring to representative democracy;
   - calling for further research to better understand the barriers to broadening and scaling the use of democratic innovations; and
   - proposing a systematic and collaborative design-process to co-produce specific proposals for fostering sustained and impactful democratic innovations in Wales.

2. Defining 'democratic innovations'

In recent years, the term 'democratic innovation' has grown rapidly in popularity amongst academics, practitioners and policymakers interested in alternative ways of involving citizens with democracy. It has been used in very different contexts to describe a wide range of activities, and in relation to different policy areas and issues.[12] One of the first attempts to map the use of democratic innovations around the world identified 57 such varieties.[13]

This report takes as its starting point the definition of 'democratic innovation' proposed by Elstub and Escobar:

> Democratic innovations are processes or institutions that are new to a policy issue, policy role, or level of governance, and developed to reimagine and deepen the role of citizens in governance processes by increasing opportunities for participation, deliberation and influence.[14]

There are several aspects of this definition that merit unpacking, in order to clarify the scope of the democratic innovations that are considered in this report:

> *"processes or institutions that are new to a policy issue, policy role, or level of governance"*

A process is thus novel if, in a given context, it is different to what is already being done, irrespective of whether the innovation has been tried out in other contexts. For example, the use of direct democracy tools such as referenda would not be considered innovative in a Swiss context where these are a standard mechanism for citizen input into democratic decision-making.[15] In a different country, where referenda have not previously been used, their introduction could indeed be considered a democratic innovation. Novelty can be considered not just in relation to geographical contexts, but can also be understood more broadly to include "policy area, level of governance, stage in the policy process and function in the policy process".[16]

> *"reimagine and deepen the role of citizens in governance processes"*

This is a defining feature and ineliminable core of the concept of democratic innovations.[17] Not only are such innovations designed to increase democratic legitimacy; they also reimagine citizens more as co-producers and problem-solvers. Democratic innovations thus deepen citizenship by recasting the parameters of participation and influence.

Democratic innovations also entail thinking about the role of citizens beyond elections, and in relation to broader "governance processes". This definition thus focuses on efforts at including citizens in democracy *in-between* elections, and typically as a complement to elections as a central feature of democratic political systems.[18] From this perspective, "governance processes" directs our attention to how citizens can be involved in political decision-making more broadly, e.g. in identifying policy priorities or developing specific policy recommendations.

Recent uses of democratic innovations also point to their role in governance more broadly, and beyond the political sphere. For example, they have been used to inform policy- and decision-making in a broader range of settings including workplaces, schools and within communities and social movements. In this sense, "governance processes" can also be understood as anything that relates to how power is exercised and how decisions are taken within society. Our main focus in this report is on citizen involvement in decision-making related to systems of political governance.

> *"opportunities for participation, deliberation and influence"*

One confusion in the field relates to the use of the terms 'participation' and 'deliberation', not least because they are often used interchangeably to refer to the overarching ideal of enhancing the direct involvement of citizens in decision-making. However, they are not the same and aspire to promote related but ultimately different approaches and practices. Carson and Elstub suggest that participation and deliberation are different in three key ways: numbers of participants, the type of participation, and the method of selecting participants (*see Figure 1*).[19]

Different democratic innovations can thus promote participation or deliberation to different extents, depending on whether they aspire to increase inclusion or thoughtfulness.[20] In practice, these approaches can and often do overlap, with many processes combining citizen participation and deliberation (see examples below).

Figure 1: What's the difference between participation and deliberation?

Participation	Deliberation
1. Number of participants	
Involvement of large numbers of people. The aim is to achieve breadth, in order to include as many people as possible that are affected by a political issue or decision, or that live in a particular jurisdiction.	Smaller number of participants, making it easier to engage them in more in-depth discussions of, and reflection on, political issues.
2. Type of participation	
Because of the priority to involve as many people as possible, advocates of participation are less concerned about specific methods of participation. They embrace and encourage a diversity of opportunities for participation, including observation, listening, voting or discursively expressing a view.	Deliberation typically requires that participants are i) informed about the topic; ii) consider different perspectives; in order to iii) arrive at an informed viewpoint.
3. Selection method	
Usually favour self-selection (i.e. open participation), in order to allow as many people as possible to be involved.	Typically a selection of specific citizens who are in some way representative of a broader group (e.g. society as a whole, or a specific population that is being targeted).

Democratic innovations also aim to influence governance processes.[21] They can do so at different points in a decision-making cycle: to set general direction, to identify policy options, to make specific policy recommendations or scrutinise policy proposals, or to evaluate policy outcomes.

Based on this definition, five families of democratic innovations can be identified:

— mini-publics;
— participatory budgeting;
— collaborative governance;
— referenda and citizens' initiatives;
— creative and arts-based methods.[22]

A further set of innovations cut across these families:

— digital tools and innovations.

The next section defines each of these families in more detail, and gives examples of how they have been used in different contexts. The examples evidence the myriad ways in which democratic innovations have been deployed: in relation to different policy areas, at different stages of a policy process, and at different levels of governance.[23] We summarise this information in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Summary of different types of democratic innovation

Type of democratic innovation	Number of participants	Number of meetings	Type of participants	Selection of participants	Mode of participation	Scale	Focus
Mini-publics							
Citizens' juries	12-25	2-5 days	Citizens	Random selection	Deliberation	Mostly local/regional	Specific public policy issues; policy development or scrutiny
Citizens' assemblies	30-160	15-25 days	Citizens (with mixed variations - citizens + politicians)	Random selection	Deliberation	Local/regional/ state/transnational	Complex or divisive policy problems; values-based issues; political issues that are 'stuck'
Citizens' dialogues	150-400 (much larger for online formats)	1-2 days	Citizens + stakeholders	Random selection + purposive/self-selection of stakeholders	Participation + deliberation	Regional/state/ transnational	Controversial or complex issues, frame future policy decisions
Participatory budgeting	100s-1000s (depending on scale)	1-2 days; process repeated regularly	Citizens	Random, self- and/or purposive selection	Participation + deliberation	Mostly neighbourhood/ local (some state-wide)	Identify budget priorities, allocation of funds to specific policies/projects
Collaborative governance	3 – 1000s (depending on scale)	Variable depending on scale	Public bodies, private organisations and businesses, civil society groups + citizens	Purposive and/or self-selection	Participation + deliberation	Mostly neighbourhood/ local, some state-wide	Specific problems that require expert knowledge; complex issues that demand multiple perspectives
Referenda and citizens' initiatives	100s -millions	Usually none; more deliberative variations may meet over 1-10 days	Citizens	Referenda: self-selected Citizens' initiatives: Random selection + self-selection	Participation (but can incorporate deliberative elements)	Regional/state	Approval/rejection of specific policy proposals
Creative/arts methods	8-30 (depending on scale)	Legislative theatre: 1-2 days; design charrettes: 4-7 days	Citizens, stakeholders and decision-makers	Purposive and/or self-selection	Mostly participation (may include elements of deliberation)	Neighbourhood/local	Policy development
Digital	10s – 1000s (depending on scale)	n/a – digital tools allow on-demand and asynchronous involvement	Citizens	Self-selection	Participation + deliberation	Local/regional/state/ transnational	Variable

3. Democratic innovations around the world: approaches and case studies

3.1 Mini-publics

Much of the interest in democratic innovations in recent years has focused on the increased use of representative deliberative processes, known as 'mini-publics', around the world. Examples of these are citizens' assemblies and citizens' juries, which have rapidly grown in salience in recent years. In an influential report published in 2021, the OECD coined the term "the deliberative wave"[24] to capture the growth in mini-publics: in 2020, 282 such processes had been recorded, increasing to 733 by 2023.[25]

As representative deliberative processes, mini-publics have two defining characteristics. Firstly, participation takes the form of randomly selected citizens, who represent the broader public in some way (hence 'mini-public'). Participant selection is often done through sortition, i.e. random selection by lottery. Typically, this means selection through stratified random sampling so that a range of demographic characteristics (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, income, geography, language) from the broader population are represented. In some cases, selection may also take into account participants' views on the issues under consideration.

Secondly, the method of participation and decision-making is based on deliberation. Mini-publics follow a staged process that is typical of most deliberative processes: i) *a learning phase* where participants are provided with information on a topic from different perspectives; ii) *a deliberative phase* where the information is considered and discussed; and ii) *a decision-making phase* where participants come to informed viewpoints (and often determine priorities, identify solutions or make recommendations). [26]

Beyond these core features, mini-publics have taken several different forms with variations in the number of participants involved, how long they operate for, and the kinds of issues they have considered.[27] In the rest of this section, we focus on three forms of mini-publics that have been amongst the most frequently used around the world: citizens' juries, citizens' assemblies, and citizens' dialogues. [28]

3.1.a – Citizens' Juries

Citizens' juries typically consist of 12-25 people and meet over 3 to 5 days.[29] Although there are important differences, analogies are often drawn with legal juries: "in common with the legal jury, the citizens' jury assumes that a small group of ordinary people, without special training, is willing and able to take important decisions in the public interest".[30] They tend to be commissioned by governments to consider specific public policy issues, and have often been used to explore citizens' views in areas including infrastructure, health, urban planning and the environment. They typically do so in an advisory capacity, and their conclusions/ recommendations are often used to help set a policy agenda or to inform choices between policy options.[31]

Most citizens' juries are organised on a one-off basis. In Oregon in the United States, however, they are a core feature of a Citizen Initiative Review process which is a permanent feature of law-making in the state (see Case Study in Section 3.4.b below).[32]

Case Study **Noosa community jury on organic waste management (Australia)**

In 2014, Noosa Shire Council in Queensland convened a 24-member citizens' jury to consider "what is the best option for minimising organic waste sent to landfill"?[33] The jury met monthly over a 6-month period; they considered evidence from a range of experts and interest groups/organisations, as well as submissions from the wider public. At the end of the process, a unanimous report made nine recommendations for minimising organic waste being sent to landfill in the community. These were accepted by the Council and have led to new policies on waste collection and a 'zero waste' education campaign.

Case Study **The Scottish Parliament's citizens' jury on land management and the natural environment (UK)**

The citizens' jury was sponsored by the Scottish Parliament's Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee.[34] Held over a weekend in March 2019, its 21 participants explored the question of how funding and advice for land management should be designed to help Scotland's natural environment. The jury came to a consensus on principles for a new funding model for future land management, and these have informed subsequent Scottish Government policies on this issue.

3.1.b – Citizens' Assemblies

Citizens' assemblies typically involve more participants that citizens' juries - between 30 and 160 citizens – and are convened for a longer time (on average for 18 days[35] and often over the course of several months). Like citizens' juries, they are usually made up of citizens selected to represent the broader community or society in specific ways. There are exceptions to this standard approach: the Irish Constitutional Convention established in 2012 adopted a hybrid model that mixed 66 citizens (randomly selected) and 33 politicians (self-selected).[36]

Citizens' assemblies are often used for complex or divisive topics, values-based dilemmas, or on issues "in the 'too difficult box' – where those in power are likely to face opposition however they act."[37] In practice, they have been used to consider constitutional issues (e.g. reforming the constitution in Ireland[38], and electoral reform in British Columbia[39] and Yukon[40], societal challenges such as climate change,[41] complex political or ethical issues such as assisted dying[42] and genetic modification,[43] and more specific public policy issues such as urban planning and transport.[44] Recent innovations also include citizens' assemblies with children and young people.[45] They have been used early in the policy process to gather opinions and encourage wide public discussion, or at a later stage to examine specific policy options. Whilst citizens assemblies have mostly been organised at state and local government levels, these are also being adopted at community and supranational/global scales.

Like citizens' juries, citizens' assemblies have mostly been organised as one-off forums that come to an end once deliberation has been completed and conclusions or recommendations have been agreed. More recently, however, permanent citizens' assemblies have been established (see 'Ost Belgian' in Case Studies below) that link into formal political institutions on an on-going basis (see also Section 4 below).

Case Study **Burnaby Community Assembly to develop an Official Community Plan (Canada)**

Burnaby City Council in British Columbia convened a citizens' assembly to input into its plans to guide and manage growth between 2024 and 2050. A representative group of 40 residents met over 8 days to hear and discuss evidence from experts, community groups, and the wider public.[46] They made 24 recommendations related to specific elements of a new Official Community Plan – including land use, transportation, housing, and community facilities – as well as broader principles according to which future decisions should be made.[47] Burnaby City Council has committed to responding to the assembly's recommendations, and the assembly will be re-convened when a draft of the Official Community Plan is published in order to review and provide feedback.

Case Study **Permanent Citizens' Dialogue, Ostbelgien (Belgium)**

In February 2019, the parliament of the German-speaking community of Ostbelgien passed a law establishing a model for permanent citizens' deliberation.[48] It consists of a permanent Citizens' Council, composed of 24 members selected by lottery and who are members for 18 months. The Citizens' Council can initiate one-off citizens' assemblies to deliberate and formulate recommendations on any subject that the Citizens' Council has submitted to them; these are selected from an open call to the public for suggested topics. The recommendations of the citizens' assemblies are discussed in a joint committee between members of the citizens' assembly, elected representatives and the relevant government minister for that issue. The latter two are required to indicate whether and how the recommendations will be implemented by the regional parliament or government, with rejections requiring specific justification. Topics considered through this process thus far include healthcare, digital skills and immigrant integration.[49]

3.1.c – Citizens' Dialogues

Citizens' dialogues (also called public dialogues) are similar to citizens' juries and assemblies in that they aim to include a representative sample of citizens in a structured process where they get to learn about and deliberate on an issue. Like citizens' assemblies, citizens' dialogues also often focus on complex or controversial issues, with the aim of feeding into future policy decisions. Examples include the future of healthcare,[50] the long-term management of used nuclear fuel,[51] and reducing carbon emissions.[52]

They differ, however, in four respects. Firstly, citizens are convened in multiple locations as part of the process, to consider the same issue. For example, a citizens' dialogue on a new national security strategy in Germany in 2022 featured discussions in seven different cities as part of the process.[53] Indeed, these are often state-wide processes, with recent examples also being supranational[54] and global[55] in scope. Secondly, and because of this, the number of citizens involved is usually larger; this can range from 150 to 400 for state-wide processes but can also reach thousands of participants in cross-country and online formats. Typically, those selected to participate would meet over one or two days. Thirdly, dialogue amongst citizens is also often accompanied by similar dialogues with interested or affected organisations, and both strands feed into the dialogue's outcomes. Fourthly, and unlike other mini-publics, participants are not always asked to deliver specific recommendations, but rather invited to explore their informed reactions to the questions which are posed to them.

Case Study **Citizens' Dialogue on Canada's Energy Future**

In 2017, and as part of Natural Resources Canada's 'Generation Energy' public consultation, a citizens' dialogue was organised on the question 'What should Canada's energy future look like over the course of a generation and how do we get there?'.[56] 146 citizens participated in regional dialogues in five cities across Canada; 35 of these were also selected to participate in a pan-Canada dialogue towards the end of the process. The process culminated in a final set of consensus recommendations to the government; these included general criteria and principles to guide policy and decision-making, as well as specific recommendations related to governance and actions to advance Canada's energy future.

3.2 Participatory budgeting

Participatory budgeting (PB) is the idea that "ordinary citizens should have a direct say in public budgets" that shape their lives and communities.[57] PB is typically initiated by governments allocating a certain amount of money to a PB process. Citizens are then invited to generate ideas, discuss, deliberate and vote on how these funds should be allocated. The government then spends the allocated funds according to the citizens' preference (typically following technical, legal, and feasibility checks). In this way, PB involves citizens directly in financial decision-making.

By bringing citizens into otherwise poorly understood and obscure budgetary processes, PB has been advocated as both a means of distributing resources and a way of governing that "empowers citizens to better understand their rights and duties as citizens as well as the responsibilities of government".[58] It is also considered to be effective at engaging participants who are often marginalised or excluded by traditional democratic procedures (e.g. young people, low-income groups and those with lower levels of formal education) with financial decisions that impact their lives and communities.[59]

As PB has spread around the world since its development in Brazil in the 1980s,[60] variations of the original model have also proliferated.[61] For example, participants can be chosen via self-selection, purposive selection, election of representatives, or via a combination of these methods. Moreover, whilst PB has mostly been utilised at the level of neighbourhoods or local government, there are also examples of it being used at the state level (e.g. in South Korea[62]). The scale of participation can vary from hundreds in the former, to several thousands in the latter. The approach can be used either at the formulation or decision-making stage of the policy process.[63]

Case Study **City-wide participatory budgeting in Warsaw (Poland)**

Since 2018, large cities in Poland have been required by law to commit at least 0.5% of their budgets to PB processes. Warsaw is undergoing its eleventh PB cycle in 2024, and innovations include allowing the full participation of children over 13 years of age and the partial participation of younger children who may submit project proposals.[64] Citizens submit and vote for proposals for consideration, and public meetings are arranged to provide information and allow discussion of the most popular ones. Citizens then vote on proposals to be funded; in recent years these have included urban tree-planting, renovation of pavements and cycle paths, resources for healthcare facilities and cultural events.[65]

Case Study **Participatory budgeting at the local level in Cascais (Portugal)**

Portugal has one of the highest rates of PB use at the local level in the world.[66] The city of Cascais has gone furthest in this context in terms of the level of participation achieved and funding allocated to the PB process.[67] Citizens first submit and vote for proposals via a website run by the town council. The two most popular proposals are then discussed during in-person public workshops open to all residents. Those that pass a feasibility test by the town council are then put to a month-long public ballot, with votes cast by text message.[68] Participants may also cast one negative vote to indicate their opposition to a proposal,[69] providing a mechanism for rejecting more contentious suggestions. The vote is binding on the local council, which commits to funding the most-voted proposals.[70] This and other local experiences underpinned efforts at the end of the 2010s to scale PB downwards to community and parish councils, and upwards to regional and state-wide levels (although the latter have been suspended since the Covid-19 pandemic).[71]

3.3 Collaborative governance

Collaborative governance is broadly understood as a process in which a range of actors – public bodies, private organisations, civil society groups, and citizens – work together to address an issue.[72] Collaborative decision-making provides a holding environment - or a 'container' - to engage the whole ecosystem in decision making to achieve a shared goal.[73] Often focused on a public policy or public management issue, this family of approaches includes significant variation in terms of who is involved, which forms of participation and methods are used to reach a consensus, and what happens to the conclusions or recommendations once they have been confirmed.[74]

For example, collaborative governance processes may combine public forums, partnerships and other kinds of democratic innovations. They may also involve several stages as challenges are reassessed, new information comes to light, and new interested or affected actors are identified.[75] Their level of influence can also vary from an advisory and consultative capacity through to co-governance and direct authority.[76]

Case Study ***Etorkizuna Eraikiz ('Building the Future')*, Gipuzkoa (the Basque Country)**

Led by the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa, the *Etorkizuna Eraikiz* initiative was initiated in 2016 to facilitate dialogue between the Provincial Council, businesses, civil society groups, and citizens.[77] The aim is to collaborate on preparations for future social, economic and environmental challenges in the province, particularly around its ageing population. Over 900 businesses, associations and organisations have proposed ideas and solutions, and over 50,000 citizens (roughly 7% of the population) have participated in projects and initiatives since its inception. Every year, the public are invited to propose strategies to address key issues; 150 of these 'experiments' have received funding so far. Experiments test out possible solutions for persistent issues, including care for the elderly, mobility, work-life balance and sustainable food. In addition to supporting dialogue across society, there are 11 specialised spaces ('reference centres') where the provincial government, universities, health and social care bodies, civil society and industry collaborate on sectors of strategic importance, such as cybersecurity or Basque language and culture.

Case Study **Collaborating on climate adaptation in Kokkedal (Denmark)**

Following the introduction of Danish and EU legislation that requires municipalities to reduce the risk of flooding, Danish municipalities have sought to integrate stormwater management with urban development in ways that improve the quality of the urban environment for local residents.[78] Kokkedal, a town of around 10,000 people, experienced significant flooding in 2007 and 2010. In response, the Climate Adaptation Kokkedal project brought together six project partners – Fredensborg municipality government, a utility company, two housing associations, a philanthropic organisation and a charitable trust – to develop the urban landscape for climate resilience, cultural and recreational activities and social cohesion.[79] Local residents attended open meetings and were able to comment on project plans.[80] The project has successfully mitigated flood risk, created play spaces for local children, and improved residents' sense of safety; it also contributed to participants feeling that they held real power over the decision-making process regardless of their financial contribution to the project.

3.4 Referenda and citizens' initiatives

Referenda and citizens' initiatives are regarded as instruments of direct democracy, because they allow citizens to participate directly in political agenda-setting and decision-making.[81] In practice, these approaches have very different functions in different political systems and a detailed discussion of these variations is beyond the scope of this report. Rather, we consider both in turn, with the aim of introducing their key features and highlighting innovations that seek to complement direct citizen *participation* with citizen *deliberation* as elements of these processes.

3.4.a – Referenda

With regard to the former, referenda in themselves are not a new tool for giving citizens a direct say in democratic politics. There is, however, significant variation in the extent to which they have been used in different political contexts, the kinds of questions that they have focused on, and the rules governing their conduct (e.g. whether referendums are required or not, who initiates them, and whether or not their outcomes are binding on decision-makers).[82]

A general critique of referendums – regardless of the way in which they come about and are organised – relates to the quality of public discussion they engender.[83] The fact that they are typically decided by majoritarian rule encourages an adversarial style of argumentation between those who support and oppose the proposals, leading to increased polarisation of the political debate. This style of public discourse can involve mis- and dis-information coupled with low engagement in the complexity of an issue; as a result, the public may not be casting informed votes. Such dynamics are difficult to reconcile with deliberation and an interest in supporting voters to make informed choices.

In response, recent innovations have sought to introduce formal deliberative elements into referendum processes. The concept of a 'deliberative referendum' envisages incorporating citizens' assemblies or juries into such a process to prepare or scrutinise a referendum proposal.[84] An example of how deliberation can serve a preparatory role in relation to a referendum is provided by the Irish Citizens' Assembly (see Case Study below). Deliberative input in the form of scrutiny is exemplified by the Citizen Initiative Review process developed in Oregon (see Case Study in section 3.4.b below). This approach was used in Finland in 2019 prior to a referendum on the merger of two local councils, in order to provide voters with balanced and considered information on the proposals.[85]

Case Study **Irish Citizens' Assembly on abortion[86]**

The Irish Citizens' Assembly, which ran between 2016 and 2018, was composed of 100 randomly selected citizens. Participants deliberated on various constitutional issues, including amending the Irish constitution's almost complete ban on abortion. The assembly recommended the liberalisation of abortion and, after further consideration by a special committee of the Irish parliament, a referendum was called on 25 May 2018. Electors voted in favour of amending the Irish constitution to remove the abortion ban (with a majority of 66.4% in favour).

3.4.b – Citizens initiatives

The term 'citizens' initiative' refers to a process that allows a number of citizens to raise an issue onto the political agenda. In practice, there are many permutations of such a process. For example, initiatives can have different purposes: to propose referendums, to propose or respond to new policy or legislation, or to recall authorities and governments before their term in office comes to an end.[87] There are also different thresholds in different places for an initiative to qualify: in Switzerland, and initiative requires 100,000 signatures to be collected in 18 months,[88] whilst the European Citizens' Initiative requires support from at least 1 million EU citizens (with a minimum level of support across Member States).[89] There are also different rules regarding what happens to these initiatives if thresholds of support are met (e.g. whether political authorities have to act or not), and whether any resulting vote is binding or not. For example, in California, a popular ballot follows from an initiative almost automatically after the threshold of signatures is met (5% of votes cast in the previous election of the state governor initiative also becomes law immediately if it receives a majority of support in the ballot.[90]

As with the notion of a deliberative referendum above, innovations to the citizens' initiative model have sought to promote a more informed public debate as part of the process. The best known model in this respect is the Citizens' Initiative Review developed in Oregon in the United States (see Case Study below), and which incorporates a citizens' jury prior to the public ballot.[91] This model of deliberative forum has been incorporated in other US states (e.g. California, Colorado and Arizona) and elsewhere around the world. [92]

Case Study **Oregon's Citizens' Initiative Review (CIR) model (USA)**

Oregon's CIR model was established in 2010, when a small group of randomly selected registered voters were convened to deliberate on ballot initiatives that were due to be voted on in an upcoming election. Participants drafted a 'Citizens' Statement' setting out the facts about the initiatives, and their reasons for supporting or opposing them; this was circulated to all voters ahead of the ballot to help inform their vote choice. The CIR model has since become an established feature of decision making in the state: a panel, made up of a representative sample of 18-24 citizens meets for five days to learn (from experts and interested organisations) and deliberate about a ballot initiative, and their conclusions are made publicly available prior to the ballot being held.

3.5 Creative and arts-based methods for citizen participation and deliberation

The democratic innovations considered in this section thus far prioritise participation and deliberation via talk-centric modes of communication. Such modes – speaking, discussion, rational argument and formal reasoning – prioritise certain kinds of cognition to gain knowledge and understand the issues. It has also been argued, however, that affective, creative, and sense-based cognition can aid democratic innovations. Affective engagement should be included since political issues may also invoke a more emotive, visceral response that cannot be adequately captured (and may even be suppressed) by talking.[93]

Creative and arts-based processes and practices have been posited as a means to go beyond rationality, facts and debate into more affective engagement with people's lives and concerns to improve holistic understandings of the issues. Creative approaches can express "reasons that are difficult or impossible to put into words" and "contribute to the expression of reasons that would otherwise remain unnoticed".[94] In this respect, creative and arts-based approaches have the potential to allow different viewpoints to come to the fore within participatory and deliberative processes.

These are emerging areas of practice in the field of democratic innovations, but there are several specific approaches that suggest the potential of creative and arts-based approaches for enhancing citizen participation (see Case Studies below). There is also experimentation with bringing creativity into standard democratic innovations: Mosaic Lab – an organisation which designs and delivers citizens' assemblies in Australia – recently piloted drawing as one of the activities to develop participants' meaning-making around the issues under discussion.[95]

Case Study **(Un-) Stitching Gazes project in Antoquia (Colombia)**

In the context of the 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), this project used embroidery to foster dialogue between ex-FARC guerillas and communities in Antoquia where they were being hosted.[96] Embroidery workshops created spaces for sharing experiences and tackling dominant narratives of political violence. The resulting conversation contributed to easing community tensions, supporting integration and changing attitudes and practices of peace-making.

3.5.a – Design charrettes

A design charrette (also known as community-led design events in some contexts) is a participatory planning session where citizens, planners, designers and others collaborate on a vision for the development of a particular area. Design charrettes often focus on community regeneration, urban and land-use planning. It provides a forum for ideas and offers the unique advantage of giving immediate feedback to the designers; it thus allows everyone who participates to have a say in the design of the communities they live in.

Case Study **'Make Your Mark' in East Pollokshields (Scotland)**

In 2016, a team of architects and urban designers commissioned by Pollokshields Community Council facilitated a community led design event with local residents to co-produce a strategic plan for the future development of East Pollokshields, Glasgow.[97] 'Make Your Mark' involved focused workshops and on-street consultations which invited citizens to suggest ideas to improve the area, guided by a framework to assess their community's physical and social assets. Citizens' suggestions were combined into a 5-point vision and masterplan around topics including improved access to facilities, safe and attractive streets, and quality green space. The process highlighted a dilapidated former bowling green as a potential mixed-use area to address an urgent lack of accessible greenspace in East Pollokshields. The site was subsequently regenerated into an urban common and community space.[98]

3.5.b – Legislative theatre

Originating in Brazil in the 1990s, legislative theatre is a creative, participatory policy-making process in which communities, organisations and policymakers work together to identify, develop and build support for new legislation.[99] Through interactive theatre shows, community members act out solutions to situations of oppression, then work with officials to transform them into new laws or changes to existing laws. Legislative theatre has been used around the world to develop creative solutions for issues such as homelessness, inequitable justice systems and workers' rights.

Case Study **Greater Manchester Homelessness Prevention Plan (England)**

In 2020, a five-year Homelessness Prevention Strategy for the city was co-produced by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) homeless team, service providers and residents with lived experience of housing insecurity via a legislative theatre (LT) process.[100] The GMCA selected topics including service users' multiple complex needs, funding and service commissioning and employed an arts-based practitioner to facilitate the writing, rehearsal and performance of short plays alongside actors with lived experience of these issues. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the performances were streamed online via Zoom to an audience of frontline support staff, GMCA officers, local councillors, advocates and neighbours who improvised solutions to the systemic problems presented onstage.[101] Over twenty suggestions derived from the performances, workshops and subsequent discussions were included in the final Greater Manchester Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2021-2026.[102] In addition, five formerly homeless participants were trained as LT facilitators, building actors' confidence in their advocacy skills and increasing the capacity of LT to address subsequent policy issues in the city. [103]

3.6 Digital tools and innovations

Around the world, the use of digital technologies is making the process of engaging a new or more diverse range of participants with political decision-making easier and more inclusive.[104] Digital approaches are typically not separate and distinct from the other forms of democratic innovation outlined above; rather, digital technologies have been widely used as part of citizens' assemblies, PB, collaborative governance and creative processes, as well as in referenda.[105] Digital tools have also been applied to both participatory and deliberative forms of democratic innovations, such as city-wide text-message voting on participatory budgets, and online forums for discussion and debate as part of a deliberative process.[106] In countries with established digital tools for engaging their citizens (e.g. Estonia's i-voting system for general elections or Denmark's 'Digital Post' inbox which directly connects citizens with state and municipal authorities), these pre-existing e-governance tools have been adapted to support citizens' involvement in democratic innovations.[107] Digital tools are also enabling cross-national citizen engagement, for example the European Commission's Transnational Citizens' Dialogues.[108]

However, the quality of decision-making processes and the approach taken to employing digital tools are more important to successful outcomes than simply choosing a digital format without due care.[109] For example, digital tools can reach a younger demographic than traditional means of democratic engagement, and can overcome barriers to participation amongst underrepresented groups.[110] They also offer different ways of visualising different viewpoints, often highlighting diversity and consensus of opinion (see the vTaiwan case study below). However, digital participation also tends to be skewed towards well-educated, urban-dwelling citizens who are already politically active.[111] This, combined with persistent digital divides in many contexts, requires a combination of digital and offline means of engagement to ensure broader accessibility and inclusivity. In South Korea, for example, citizens can submit PB proposals online or via "visiting receptions" where officials visit and audio-record proposals from organisations for vulnerable groups.[112]

Case Study **vTaiwan (Taiwan)**

vTaiwan is a hybrid online and in-person consultation process which has been identified as a "leading example of digital democracy [involving] large-scale engagement on controversial policy issues".[113] vTaiwan is organised by the civil society group g0v which plays a key role as an autonomous facilitator of the consultation process. The process has four stages: the 'objective' stage where organisations share fact-checked information about a topic and agree on definitions; the 'reflective' stage where citizens voice viewpoints on the facts presented using an online survey tool for large-scale opinion mapping (Polis[114]); an 'interpretive' stage where an in-person, live-streamed meeting of interested/affected individuals and organisations summarises participants' opinions and draws up recommendations; and a 'decision' stage where these recommendations are conveyed to government officials.[115] Two factors are critical to the operation of the vTaiwan process. Firstly, the Polis tool focuses on areas of consensus between participants rather than disagreement, allows participants to visualise different viewpoints on an issue as the discussion evolves, and encourages statements that can gain support across diverse viewpoints. Secondly, although any recommendations are not politically-binding, the process has strong government support: every government ministry can be contacted by citizens via the vTaiwan forum and must respond to information requests about existing legislation or regulations within seven days.[116] The process was first used to agree on regulation of the ride-sharing app Uber; since then, it has been used to discuss other contentious topics including internet alcohol sales and the regulation of financial technology.[117]

Case Study ***decidim.barcelona*** **(Catalonia)**

Decidim is a free and open digital platform for citizen participation.[118] It was used by the City Council of Barcelona to co-design the municipality's strategic plan for the 2016-2019 period in conjunction with local citizens.[119] Citizens were able to submit and discuss proposals, and track their proposals online (through various stages such as technical/feasibility checks and political approval) through to inclusion in a final strategic plan.[120] This digital process was accompanied by 400 in-person events organised by the council to reduce barriers to participation and maximise inclusivity in the process.[121] Since 2020, the platform has also hosted a PB process.[122] It has also been used by over 200 organisations in 30 different countries to support digital citizen participation.[123]

4 Good practice in the use of democratic innovations

Section 3 focused on a selection of approaches that enable citizens' participation and deliberation in democratic politics. The increasing use of these different approaches around the world has been accompanied by increased efforts – by scholars and practitioners – to evaluate different experiences, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and develop good practice guidelines.

This has resulted in a proliferation of studies of what works (and what does not), and 'how to' guides for designing and implementing these different approaches effectively and successfully. We list some of these resources in the Annex to this report, with the aim of raising awareness of good practice in undertaking democratic innovations. These resources are useful for exploring and contrasting approaches, anticipating and fixing problems, and designing and delivering better democratic innovations.

In this section, we focus on key findings emerging from this work to identify good practice in relation to five aspects of democratic innovations: who is involved; what democratic innovation to use; how democratic innovations are designed and facilitated; the extent to which democratic innovations actually have an impact on democratic politics; and how to build capacity to undertake democratic innovations.

4.1 Who is involved?

As suggested by the examples in Section 3, different types of people can be involved in a democratic innovation process: a broad group from diverse backgrounds, a representative sample of citizens, a particular community based on geography or other demographic characteristics, as well as interested or affected groups.[124] Much of the debate around good practice has focused on the nature of *citizen* involvement (rather than that of interested/affected organisations), and who the relevant people are to take part in a democratic innovation process.

There are three different responses to this question in the field. The first prioritises the mini-public approach of selecting a sample of citizens that are representative in some way of the broader community or society. Some argue that this approach is "democratically superior",[125] and the "most radical and democratically robust",[126] of democratic innovation formats. Such a view underpins the growing advocacy of citizens' assemblies (or variations including citizens' juries or dialogues) as a particularly effective mechanism for "democratic renewal".[127] As suggested above, the value ascribed to such an approach is the opportunity it provides to explore how the wider public would deal with an issue "if they had the time and resources to learn and deliberate about it in order to reach an informed decision".[128]

There are, however, challenges with this model of citizen involvement. By definition, only a small number of citizens are involved, meaning that the vast majority of citizens are not given a say on the issue being considered. Small sample sizes also limit the range of criteria that can be used to select participants; it is thus inevitable that not all groups in society (or their intersections) will be represented in the mini-public.[129] There is also emerging evidence that structural inequalities may prevent certain groups from being recruited or being able to participate in mini-publics, skewing the process towards the more socially privileged.[130] An analysis of the participant profile of Ireland's Convention on the Constitution illustrates this challenge: the citizens that took part did not include homeless people, new Irish citizens, or members of the travelling community.[131]

A second response to the 'who takes part' question anticipates open participation by all citizens. This is, in principle, the most inclusive form of citizen involvement as there are no formal restrictions on participation.[132] Advocates of participatory budgeting and creative and arts-based approaches consider open participation to be especially effective at engaging participants who are often marginalised or excluded by traditional democratic processes (e.g. young people, low-income groups, and those with lower levels of formal education).[133] It has also been argued that broader participation is especially important to legitimise some kinds of decisions, e.g. constitutional changes that alter the 'rules of the game' that all citizens in a political system are subject to.[134]

However, this approach to citizen involvement also poses challenges. Whilst full participation in democracies (e.g. in elections or referendums) is rarely achieved, participation rates for democratic innovations are often even lower (e.g. around 7% for participatory budgeting processes in Paris, which is considered to be a huge achievement[135]). It can also attract self-selected participants of certain socio-demographic and attitudinal characteristics, and struggle to reach a cross-section of the population.[136] This can lead to low inclusion and diversity, which in turn provides a poor foundation for effective deliberation. Deliberation is also more difficult to achieve the greater the number of participants, and there is a trade-off between participation and deliberation: as you expand participation, deliberative quality will be reduced.[137]

One conclusion to draw from this work is that different types of democratic innovations are likely to be required to achieve different participatory vs deliberative goals.[138] A third approach, however, seeks to bridge the first two by designing processes that combine different methods of citizen involvement at different stages.[139] This is exemplified by the 'deliberative referendum' model described above, which builds a mini-public into a referendum process. Such a hybrid approach has also been taken up by designers of citizens' assemblies, who have invited wider public input at the pre-assembly stage to identify broad priorities (e.g. Ireland's "We the citizens" assembly)[140] or at a mid-point in the assembly process to test emerging recommendations through public meetings (the Citizens' Assembly on Sustainable Consumption in Denmark[141]). In a broader sense, processes can be designed to incorporate different forms of democratic innovation at different phases, enabling citizens' involvement in various ways to different ends. For example, a case has been made for combining citizens' assemblies with participatory budgeting,[142] whilst Iceland's Constitutional Convention consisted of a randomly selected National Forum, a directly elected Constitutional Assembly, and a process for 'crowd-sourcing' proposals through online and social media platforms.[143]

4.2 What democratic innovation to use?

Designing processes that combine different types of democratic innovation also mitigates against a tendency by some in the field to assume that certain approaches are better than others - that "my democratic innovation is the only way".[144] This attitude is evident in the growing promotion of the "deliberative wave"[145] alluded to above, and the rapid uptake of mini-publics (and especially citizens' assemblies) around the world. Lerner has made the case, however, that "waves...lead to groupthink, cause unhelpful competition, and are unsustainable."[146] This leads to ignoring other forms of participation and deliberation, and stifles innovation.[147] It also overlooks the value of weaving different approaches to citizen participation and deliberation as part of a holistic and more balanced democratic ecosystem.

From this latter perspective, there is growing interest in the field in investing in a diversity of involvement methods, and mainstreaming participation inside and outside of government and at different scales of political and societal decision-making. Such a systemic approach supports a different culture of citizen participation and deliberation, whereby democratic innovations are embedded and integrated into existing decision-making structures and processes. It also encourages more integrated strategies for citizens' involvement in decision-making by providing "an umbrella to existing but scattered initiatives".[148] Creating and developing a culture of democratic innovation can also underpin and support new initiatives over time.[149] For example, the rapid take-up and institutionalisation of the decidim.barcelona digital platform (see above) has been attributed to strong traditions of citizen co-production and direct democracy through referendums and participatory budgeting experiences.[150]

4.3 How should democratic innovations be facilitated?

Regardless of the specific type of democratic innovation, one theme emerging from project evaluations is that good design and facilitation is critical to their success.[151] These two functions often go together: the role of the facilitator is thus to "make it easy for everyone to participate equally and productively" by "designing spaces that both enable and constrain various types of interaction".[152] Facilitators often collaborate with government/civil society sponsors to define the purpose of the engagement, establish the level of influence participants will have, and identify the outcomes citizens are expected to generate. This groundwork ensures the activities are appropriately designed to meet these goals. From this perspective, facilitators have been described as the "essential workers" of democratic innovations.[153]

However, whilst the quality of participation and deliberation often hinges on careful design and facilitation, this is an aspect that is often overlooked in resources advocating for and providing guidance on specific democratic innovations. There is an emerging recognition that designing and facilitating different forms of citizen participation and deliberation requires different skills, but all forms usually require more planning than the inexperienced assume. This can also pose challenges in terms of the capacity and experience of individuals and organisations in delivering appropriate and high-quality facilitation. With this in mind, the Annex lists some useful toolkits for facilitators of participatory and deliberative activities.

4.4 To what extent do democratic innovations impact on democratic politics?

There is growing evidence that democratic innovations create the democratic spaces for citizens to gather together, listen to and understand one another, grapple with complexity, and find common ground solutions. However, democratic initiatives are often criticised for being one-off and isolated initiatives that are often dependent on political will; when the latter is absent, the outcomes of citizens' participation and deliberation are often ignored. As a result, there is limited follow-up on citizens' ideas and recommendations and little impact on politics and policy-making.[154] This inevitably fuels distrust and undermines citizens' positive sense of agency and collective purpose that comes from taking part in democratic innovations.[155]

In order to tackle this challenge, there have been increased efforts around the world to institutionalise and embed democratic innovations as an integral and permanent part of the democratic architecture. This means creating regular opportunities for people to take part in democratic innovations, and establishing formal structures and processes that link these into political systems and institutions. There are many benefits from doing so: it scales capacity to make better decisions, it gives the public and decision-makers the opportunity to build mutual trust over time, it lowers the costs and resources required by not starting from scratch every time, and it strengthens democracy's "democratic fitness" by increasing the positive democratic dividend of citizens' participation and deliberation.[156]

Different models for institutionalising democratic innovations have been developed in different places; we summarise some of these below. These examples are not exhaustive. Rather, they serve to give an idea of the possibilities for linking democratic innovations into different *parts* and *levels* of the governance system on an on-going basis:

- **Permanent citizens' assembly** (Ostbelgien (see Case Study above) and Paris[157]) – selects issues to be considered in depth by smaller citizens' juries (and in Paris, chooses themes for participatory budgeting); parliament is required to respond to recommendations within a set timescale.
- **Deliberative committees of citizens and politicians** (regional parliament in Brussels[158]) - meets three times a year to consider a topic suggested by elected representatives and citizens;

recommendations issued to parliament, which is required to respond within a given timescale.

- **Citizens' Initiative Review process** (Oregon (see Case Study above) - links citizens' jury proposed ballot measure.
- **Standing citizens' advisory panels** (Toronto[159]) - representative citizens' panel for two-year period, to advise city council on various planning and transportation issues; wider remit than one-off panels and sustained learning/deliberation over time.
- **Permanent PB processes** (Warsaw (see Case Study above) and Paris) - formal process specifying allocated budget by city council, process for citizen participation and voting; and council obligations in terms of implementation and reporting.

Whilst there is growing interest in these different models for institutionalising democratic innovations, recent work has also cautioned against focusing only on specific institutional design. Changing attitudes and behaviours is also critical if these approaches are to be properly embedded in democratic politics.[160] This work directs attention to the actors within and around decision-making spaces - politicians, civil servants, practitioners and activists - and how they can support or undermine the potential of democratic innovations to meaningfully impact on politics.

4.5 How can you build capacity for fostering democratic innovations?

Building on this latter point, achieving healthy ecosystems of democracy requires investing in training and capacity-building to enable key actors to meaningfully open up democratic politics to the collective wisdom of citizens through democratic innovations.[161] Different initiatives have sought to do precisely this, with a particular focus on supporting politicians and civil servants to understand and use diverse democratic innovations.[162] Investing in training and shared infrastructure is a key element of this work; this includes one-off training as well as ongoing learning and access to tools, materials, and other support that creates cost-cutting economies of scale.[163]

This focus on securing the support of politicians and civil servants is especially critical since they are often key actors in making democratic innovations happen. They typically commission and resource these activities, and the extent to which democratic innovations have impact depends on their willingness to open up decision-making to citizen influence. However, recent research has highlighted the barriers to getting politicians and civil servants on side.[164] There can be confusion about the term 'democratic innovation', fostering misconceptions about what this entails and why these approaches are beneficial. Moreover, whilst there is recognition of the need to change how we engage citizens, there is often a sense that doing things differently is not urgent.

The research also revealed, however, that there is more appetite for democratic innovations when they are presented in less abstract terms, and more as practical tools for tackling concrete policy challenges. Being clear about the specific added value of these approaches is thus imperative.[165] From this perspective, building

support for democratic innovations should start with understanding the specific challenges politicians and civil servants face, and involving them in the discussion of democratic innovations as a different way of exploring solutions. In this way, strategies for fostering democratic innovations can be grounded in and responsive to the specific political and social contexts where they are developed, and politicians and civil servants "can have ownership of the narrative of democratic innovations". [166]

The recently published Citizens' White Paper[167] from Demos, provides an excellent example of how to collaborate with politicians and civil servants - alongside practitioners, academics and citizens - to co-produce proposals for embedding citizen involvement. The process included interviews with UK politicians and civil servants to identify problems with current decision-making; deliberative workshops with a representative sample of the public; and a policy design sprint with civil servants, academics and practitioners to design the ways in which the government could embed public participation in policy-making. The outcome is a practical, costed roadmap to change consisting of specific short- and long-term actions that would enable UK citizens to participate in the policy decisions that affect their lives.

5 Fostering democratic innovations in Wales: strengths, challenges and recommendations

In this final part of the report, we draw on the preceding discussion to consider how democratic innovations can be fostered in Wales. There is already some experience of these approaches, which we summarise in the next section. This provides a good platform to build on. There are also, however, several challenges to overcome. We recommend a series of actions that can enable Wales to realise its potential of becoming a leading innovator on democracy.

5.1 Strengths to build on: The Welsh experience of democratic innovations

To date, there has been some use of democratic innovations in Wales. These have taken a range of forms, have operated at both national and local scales, and have focused on different policy issues. For example, citizens' assemblies have explored the role of citizens in the work of the National Assembly for Wales[168] and the impacts of climate change on local housing, transport and food systems.[169] Different projects have also used citizens' juries to examine the role of the media in Wales,[170] the delivery of social care,[171] and preferences on constitutional change.[172]

There is also some experience of participatory budgeting in Wales, with this approach having become normalised as a process of resource allocation to community wellbeing projects in Newport.[173] Co-production is well developed as a collaborative way of working in the reform of public services,[174] and some innovative creative practices have been piloted in different communities as a means of opening up new spaces for dialogue and deliberation.[175] There are also several co-created community projects that are having positive societal and democratic benefits for people in communities across Wales. [176]

Furthermore, the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015) provides a clear framework for further embracing democratic innovations. In particular, the Act's commitment to 'involvement' and 'collaboration' as ways of working[177] provides a focus for early, sustained and meaningful engagement with citizens as part of local and national decision-making and across policy sectors. More recently, the Welsh Government has established an Innovating Democracy Advisory Group to advise Welsh Government and partners on expanding the use of democratic innovation and to enhance civic engagement in public life.[178] Senedd reform proposals, to be implemented at the next Senedd elections in 2026, also offer an opportunity to think beyond changes to electoral democracy in Wales: how could citizens be more directly involved in parliamentary process and decision-making in-between elections?

5.2 Challenges to overcome

There is thus a strong basis on which Wales can build a more innovative democracy. However, doing so also requires overcoming several challenges. The examples above of democratic innovations in Wales are for the most part ad-hoc and one-off initiatives, and there is not always clear evidence of what has changed as a result of their outputs and recommendations. Moreover, there is little systematic evaluation of the barriers and opportunities to undertaking such initiatives. Learning from one project is often not shared more widely as a means of building knowledge and capacity, and to inform future activities.[179] This points to a weakness of the democratic innovations space in Wales: there is currently no forum or network that brings together those interested and experienced in democratic innovations to harness their collective wisdom for planning future activities.

The potential of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act to fundamentally transform citizen involvement practices in Wales has also not yet been realised. One problem here is that there is "no comparative data on how public bodies have implemented this principle in practice".[180] This is symptomatic of a broader challenge around the implementation of the Act, which has been recognised as not proceeding "at the pace and scale needed".[181] Previous proposals have been made to pool experiences and expertise from a range of organisations to inform and plan a programme of research, development and capacity building in relation to democratic innovations.[182] To date, however, this has not resulted in any concrete initiatives being taken forward.

5.3 Recommendations for fostering democratic innovations in Wales

Informed by experiences of democratic innovations elsewhere around the world, and Wales's efforts to date at different approaches to citizen participation and deliberation, we recommend three actions that can help foster a more innovative Welsh democracy.

The new Innovative Democracy Advisory Group is well placed to scope and co-ordinate these actions. It must also, however, be supported by key partners – Office of the Future Generations Commissioner, Welsh Government, Senedd Cymru, the Welsh Local Government Association and others in civil society – who better understand how to reach and engage with different constituencies. There must also be a role for citizens themselves to feed into the design of any democratic innovations designed to empower them to have a stronger voice in decision-making.

1. **A stronger and more co-ordinated effort is required to raise awareness of what democratic innovations are, and why they can help tackle the challenges to Welsh democracy.**
This work should establish a common terminology, and focus on the practical added value of democratic innovations for tackling complex and potentially divisive issues and re-building citizens' trust in democratic politics. Raising awareness of these positive and long-term impacts is essential for overcoming objections to trying something different, and ensuring the long-term acceptance and viability of democratic innovations.

2. **Further research should map and evaluate existing democratic innovations in Wales, in order to better understand existing strengths and identify barriers for broadening and scaling these approaches.**
This requires working with and across existing projects, organisations and scales of government to build a clearer picture of examples and experiences of innovative approaches to democracy. It is also necessary work for understanding the specific opportunities and challenges presented by the Welsh political and societal context (and differences within Wales, across levels of government and policy areas). There is obvious value in learning from experiences elsewhere, but this learning must also be applied in a way that makes sense, and works, for Wales. This is necessary groundwork for creating a democratic innovations community of practice that is Wales-specific, and can support subsequent activities aimed at scaling and embedding these approaches as a core feature of Welsh democracy.

3. **A systematic and collaborative design-process that brings together key individuals and organisations should be considered, to co-produce specific proposals for fostering sustained and impactful democratic innovations in Wales.**
This action is inspired by the good practice noted above, whereby the principles of participation and deliberation are applied to a process for developing specific proposals for involving and empowering citizens in democratic politics. This should involve politicians and civil servants, practitioners and academics, as well as citizens themselves. Such a process can serve to demonstrate and build confidence in the kinds of approaches that we advocate for more generally: a mix of participatory and deliberative methods, carefully designed and facilitated, to generate proposals for building knowledge of and capacity for innovating Welsh democracy in a sustained and impactful way.

Annex: Databases and Guides on Democratic Innovations

Here, we provide a selection of resources for those interested in exploring democratic innovations further. This list is by no means exhaustive; rather, we focus (with a few exceptions) on resources openly available and compiled by practitioners and think-tanks with direct experience of designing, implementing and evaluating democratic innovations.

1. Databases of democratic innovations

Involve:
Knowledge base
Methods

LATINNO:
Innovations for Democracy in Latin America

Participedia:
Database of public participation and democratic innovations

OECD:
Deliberative Democracy Database

Utrecht University:
Collaborative Governance Case Database

2. 'How to...' guides and good practice guidelines for organising democratic innovations

Andreea-Loredana Tudorache:
Using Theatre to Make Politics: Legislative Theatre Manual

Collaboration for Impact:
Collaborative Governance: An Introductory Practice Guide

DemocracyNext:
Assembling an Assembly Guide

Democratic Society:
Guide to Deliberation: Participatory Budgeting

FIDE:
Resources on Deliberative Democracy and Citizens' Assemblies

Glasgow Disability Alliance:
Budgeting for Equality - Action research by disabled people: how can disabled people play a full and meaningful role in participatory budgeting in Scotland?

Go Vocal:
The Beginner's Guide to Participatory Budgeting

Innovation in Democracy Programme:
How to Run a Citizens' Assembly

Involve:
A Practical Guide to the Types, Roles and Spaces of Public Engagement on Climate

KNOCA:
Guidance on Climate Assemblies

Marcin Gerwin:
Citizens' Assemblies. Guide to Democracy that Works

MASSLBP:
How to Run a Civic Lottery

NESTA:
Advancing Democratic Innovations Toolkit

New Democracy Foundation:
Enabling National Initiatives to Take Democracy Beyond Elections

OECD:
Eight Ways to Institutionalise Deliberative Democracy

OECD:
Guidelines for Citizen Participation Processes

People Powered:
Participation Playbook

People Powered:
Guide to Digital Participation Platforms

The PB Unit:
Participatory Budgeting Self-Evaluation Toolkit

Tina Nabatchi:
A Manager's Guide for Evaluating Citizen Participation

Welsh Government:
Participatory Budgeting Toolkit

What Works Scotland:
How to Design and Plan Public Engagement Processes: A Handbook

3. 'How to...' guides for facilitators of democratic innovations

Anwen Elias and Jennifer Wolowic:
A Collage of Dialogue – A Creative Method for Setting-up Deliberative Conversations

Sam Kaner:
Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-making

MosaicLab:
Facilitating Deliberation: A Practical Guide

NESTA:
The Advancing Democratic Innovations Toolkit – Facilitator's Guide

NHS:
The Facilitator's Toolkit

Endnotes

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