

Background paper: The Global citizens' Debates (GCD)¹

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – THE THREE GOLDEN RULES

It's not a survey, it's a global deliberation

The GCD is a three step process of coalition building, citizen participation and impact activities:

1. Coalition building means that the debate is launched, co-designed and supported by a group of key stakeholders at global and regional/national level. They are supported by a network of associated partners that implement the debate in the participating countries and regions.
2. Citizen participation means that thousands of ordinary citizens, representative of the diversity of their country take part in massive f2f deliberative events: They get informed, discuss, are confronted with competing arguments and build an informed opinion through a process of collective intelligence. This kind of debate allows considering the views, thoughts, fears, desires and expertise of ordinary people which otherwise are absent from global policy decisions. They are epistemically better.²
3. Impact means that the results are used to fuel and inform the decision-making process and discussion of stakeholders worldwide and at all levels, creating an ecosystem of impact. Also, each partner benefits from the results for its own strategy, having in the hands the informed opinion of the global public.

It's not expensive or cheap, it's worth the money³

The global budget of a debate is ca. €5M. Following elements are crucial to this budget:

1. The debate is the joint effort of a coalition. If 5 strategic partners join, the contribution per partner is €1M. If 10 strategic partners join, costs for each drop down to €500K.
2. Average cost/participant to the f2f meetings is €250 (20.000 participants worldwide), if online participants (100.000) and participants to the off-debates (30.000) are taken into account this sum drops to €33/participant.
3. Around a quarter of the costs (€1.2M) are grants given to the local and national partners of the initiative. This represents 200 organizations in 120 countries that secure the quality of the citizen participation on the ground and that are empowered (method of citizen participation, topics at stake and impact action). There is a huge ripple effect.
4. The global budget encompasses the preparation of the debate (1 year), its implementation (1 year) and its impact (1 year). During three years, hundreds of stakeholders, influencer and decision makers are involved in the process. All in all the outreach can be evaluated to 200.000 persons (meaning €25 per person).
5. 1/5 of the budget is needed in 2018, 3/5 in 2019 and 1/5 in 2020. Taking a coalition of 10 partners as basis, each organization would have to support the initiative with €100K in 2018, €300K in early 2019 and €100K in 2020.

It's not bottom-up or top down, it's both

A Global Citizens' Debate is a new way of doing policy because it opens at the same time a top-down channel (creation of the coalition, framing of the debate, use of results) and a bottom-up channel (pilots with open framing of topics, participation of local organizations as partners, recollection of the informed opinions of ordinary citizens). It is at the same time education of the people and of the policy makers.

¹ Note written by Missions Publiques in order to develop some aspects of the Method. It is not the complete handbook.

² See Rask (2012), Dryzek (2012), Cook (2000) and/or Landmore (2018).

³ See below for detail of outputs and products delivered by the process.

GLOBAL DECISION MAKING IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

Global challenges are becoming more in number: Climate Change, Oceans and Seas, Space, Migrations, Security, Future of Internet ... This evolution is often referred to as characteristic of the Anthropocene, an age of Earth marked by Human civilization⁴.

At the same time the historical way of dealing with such issues is outdated. National politics and international negotiations are not any more in the capacity of delivering satisfying results. They are stuck into parochial interests and national biases.

So: What would it take to find a better way to decide at international level that would live up to the humanity of the 21st Century? Seven elements seem crucial. The good news is that they already partially exist. The bad news is that their respective strengths are not combined at the moment.

1. **Deliberation:** Deliberation in its modern meaning often refers to a decision process based on the force of the best argument (and not the strongest player).⁵ It considers that an effective and highly qualitative process should be based on a strong procedural basis. Deliberative processes have increasingly been used worldwide to tackle local and national issues and have a proven track record.
2. **Facts:** Based on above definition of deliberation, a truly deliberative process should rely on facts and balanced information, themselves relying on science and experience from the ground. Typically, facts are present in multistakeholder processes where scientists, experts and advocacy groups bring their results and positions into the process of negotiation and discussion. This is quite deliberative but not frankly open and inclusive. Participating actors in this setting are also pushing for specific agendas. Call it lobbying.
3. **Numbers:** Inclusion in its prime definition means that the opinion and will of all citizens are central to any decision process, not only the one of experts. Nowadays this will is - at the global level - mainly caught by opinion polls. Because they are based on sampling techniques and random selection (vs self-selection), polls allow to find out what a representative sample of citizens of the world think about global issues. This is very efficient but at the same time very fragile because opinion polls are highly volatile and are not an *informed* picture of what citizens *really* think. Participants have to answer questions for which they may not have a real position or for which they just lack the necessary knowledge and a clear vision of existing arguments and facts (yes, see first point). Opinion polls are based on *individual* not *collective* preferences and are strongly based on marketing assumptions (policies as products, citizens as consumers).
4. **People:** Many thinkers, activists, governments reached this conclusion and started to design and implement new ways of getting an informed opinion of the citizens through local deliberative processes often referred to as participatory democracy. At the core of the process are the people that meet, talk, exchange and discuss around balanced arguments in order to build themselves an opinion and articulate it. Often, participatory processes are based on random selection of participants in which case they combine representativeness and informed opinion. But participatory processes have two major drawbacks: They are very difficult to scale without losing quality because they are mainly face-to-face and they concentrate on producing a fact-based opinion and often disregard the emotional side of human nature.
5. **Feelings:** This is why social networks raised very high hopes because they are digital only and rely on the feeling of participants. It was often said that they would bring democracy to a new age by scaling up discussions and debates. But they didn't because they are very prone to effect of polarization and little world effects. Citizens do not meet other citizens to discuss on the base of facts: They share their feelings with their peers and are exposed to phenomenon like fake news and polarization.

⁴ See Crutzen (2002)

⁵ See Habermas (1992) or Bächtiger (2014).

6. **Decisions:** Politics, deliberative or not, is about making decisions. Multistakeholder processes and opinion polls, social networks and participatory processes inform this decision making. But it is still in the hands of national governments to take final decisions. The advantage of such a setting, is that it is quite simple: Governments meet, talk, decide. It has many major drawbacks: By nature, such a process is driven by national interests that may be incompatible with global issues. It is easily polluted by side agendas and historical factors and is not quite transparent. Also it often ignores major stakeholders like the civil society or the private sector and the views of citizens, which have to bear the consequences of this global policy making. Progress have been made on this front in the past 15 years, but they seem to have reached a plateau.
7. **Action:** This is why many people put their hopes into the action of Civil Society Organisations that are based on the ground and local realities. They do act and implement solutions that may or may not have been decided at global level. But at the global level, CSOs are as far from the ground as governments. They represent networks of networks (of networks) and are highly specialized lobbying groups. Also they claim to represent the citizens but do not really have a mandate to do so.

	Opinion Poll	Direct democracy	Social Media	Classical Media	Multi-stakeholder process	International negotiations	Citizens' Debate
Informed opinion	X	X	X	XXXX	XXX	XXX	XXXX
Deliberation	-	X	-	XX	XXX	XX	XXXX
Inclusiveness	XXXX	XX	XX	X	XX	X	XXXX
Possibility to take emotions into account	X	XX	XXXX	XX	X	X	XXXX
Impact on decision making	XXX	XXXX	X	XX	XXX	XXXX	XXX

A comparison of tools of decision making

So what?

All in all, a process living up to the new century would allow stakeholders to engage with samples of the world's population that would be confronted with balanced facts and opinions before discussing with fellow citizens and deliver their informed opinion through a process of collective intelligence. This opinion would be channeled back to stakeholders and fed into a multistakeholder process of discussion before being transformed into action. German have a word for that: *eierlegende Wollmilchsau* (egg-laying wool-milk-sow). A chance: We have already gathered some experience in breeding such a fantastic animal.

First movers

Since 10 years, practitioners worldwide have started to experiment with national, international and global processes of massive citizen participation. Important steps in this development were the first European Citizen conference (2006) or the first World Wide Views (2009). In 2015, the third World Wide Views demonstrated the possibility of improving the reach-out and impact of such processes. It also allowed to see the limits to it and pushed us to imagine a stronger form of global deliberation for the Anthropocene: The global Citizens' Debate.

SOME NOTES ABOUT THE METHOD

Why building a coalition?

The first step of A Global Citizens' Debate is the gathering of a broad coalition that will frame, implement and disseminate the debate and its results. We are convinced that the old way of doing citizen participation is not any more sufficient to tackle the worlds' major challenges. The building of a Public-Private participatory coalition allows to create a dynamic and ad-hoc space around a clear project. Partners are able to discuss the topic at stake in a secured space. They are able to define the topics that matters to them and present the policy options. They are able to embark a highly qualitative, transparent and neutral process.

Why does it have to be a deliberative citizen participation?

Deliberative processes seek to produce qualitative and informed recommendations thanks to the format of the debate. The idea is to create a horizontal dialogue between citizens: They are considered as co-decision makers and not only as customers. Unlike a survey, such a debate generates long lasting results based on an informed judgment of participants.

Background information is presented to the participants (videos, booklet...) before and during the debate. This information is created with the strategic and scientific partners in order to be the most relevant and balanced possible. It ensures a common base of information for all participants over the world. The given information is tested in pilots prior to the full scale debate.

Participants are seated at tables of six to eight (approximately 90 to 100 people are present in total in each site). All day long, they debate and express themselves to develop their arguments and recommendations. At each table, a facilitator, who is previously trained, is present to ensure the rules of a respectful debate, to be sure that all topics are discussed and to break traditional hierarchical discussion patterns.

Participants exchange and debate on several themes: At the end of each session, they answer closed and open questions (both quantitative and qualitative approach), individual and collective ones, and are asked to prioritize their thoughts. Questions are the same in all countries in order to create comparable results.

Unlike opinion polls, participants are not necessarily statistically representative of the population of their country/region but they tend to reflect its diversity. A special attention is given during the recruitment to give space to less heard populations (less educated people, youngsters,).

Different ways of recruiting the citizens are used: Phoning, personal letter, random selection, face-to-face, advertising... Partners in each country are trained to the best recruitment strategies.

Can you tell a bit more on Impact?

The results of the debate are used to fuel and inform the decision-making process and discussion of stakeholders worldwide and at all levels, creating an ecosystem of impact.

Thanks to this process of public deliberation, participants become more informed both about big challenges and their own preferences. They strengthen their knowledge and arguments about fundamental issues: The debate allows the empowerment of individuals, who more often than not become ambassadors of the debate.

The debate also produces better decisions and discussions: As the debate is framed by the partners, it is ex ante relevant to them. During the debate, participants exchange their point of view: More information is analyzed, more preferences too; irrational and emotional thoughts are taken into account; manipulation of the less informed participants is reduced; detection of errors is increased.

Very often, results are surprising and strongly innovative for decision makers. For example during the European Citizens' Debate on Space (2016), participants expressed the wish that ESA guided its funds toward fundamental research rather than applied research. During World Wide Views on

Climate (2015), participants expressed their willingness to see a strong climate action without taking into account the historical contributions of each country.

Information produced is both quantitative and qualitative: It provides data at global, regional and national scales. This unique material can be discussed inside and between organizations of the coalition.

The coordination team and all the partners of the coalition bring the results at all relevant places to put them on the table: IGF, Web summit, National and Regional Initiatives, ITU meetings, national conferences and events, traditional policy makers, etc. The goal is to have a full year of activity dedicated to make the results count.

WORKPLAN, FINANCES AND REACHOUT

Metrics to evaluate investment⁶

In terms of reach-out

	Minimum debate	Full scale debate	Dreamed debate
Estimated budget	€4M	€5M	€6M
Countries covered	80	120	160
Languages covered	70	110	140
Local f2f debates organized	100-150	200-300	300-500
Participants to f2f meetings	10K-15K	20K-30K	30K-50K
Trained organizations	70-100	100-150	150-200
Participants online	70K	100K	150K
Off-debates	150	300	600
Impact and dissemination events	100	200	400
Total reach-out	90K	150K	250K

Some of the products of the Debate:

1. Coalition: Creation of a coalition of strategic partners that become a high-level, neutral and legitimate arena to discuss core matters of Internet governance.
2. Method toolkit: This toolkit explains to each local partner how to organize well the debates in order to guarantee a high-level quality process. The toolkit is freely available and creates a leverage effect on public participation worldwide.
3. Information toolkit: This toolkit is composed of the information material provided to the citizens (booklet, videos, flyers, podcasts, articles, music, performances, etc), translated in all languages of participating regions and countries. It is available to download and use after the debate in order to organize off-debates, or partial debates (on one topic for example).
4. Impact and Action toolkit: This toolkit gives tools and contents for all strategic and associated partners to use the results for their strategy, to make the results visible and put them on the table.

⁶ Some metrics are linear, other are not: For example the number of debates scales more rapidly than the number of countries as each partner in a country is potentially able to organize more than one debate.

5. Strategic Data: This data is reserved to the strategic partners and supports them to better understand the results, use them for their strategy and engage with them.
6. Public data: This data is available for all and supports the impact strategy. It is one of the core products of the citizen participation.

Workplan

- WP1. **Coordination**: general coordination and administration, development of method, fundraising and grant management, reporting.
- WP2. **Strategic partnerships**: strategic partnerships with strategic partners, policy makers and media.
- WP3. **Online platform**: platform for partner management, training, monitoring, support, results, online participation, website.
- WP4. **Information**: identification of topics and relevant stakeholders, production of method, questions and open sessions, design and production of information material (video, text, sound), production of toolbox for spin-off debates.
- WP5. **Face-to-face deliberation**: Implementation of the massive f2f debates all over the world.
- WP6. **Online participation**: engagement strategy, monitoring and moderation.
- WP7. **Results**: Aggregation and analysis of the results.
- WP8. **Impact**: design of communication and dissemination strategy, implementation at global and national level, production of impact toolkit, presence at key events.
- WP9. **Evaluation**: evaluation framework, evaluation activities.
- WP10. **Grants for partners**: management and monitoring of grants given to partners.

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