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Deliberative mini-publics as learning schools for democracy? Examining deliberation impact on dissatisfied and radical participants of a citizens' assembly in Poland

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ABSTRACT

In a global context of democratic challenges such as dissatisfaction and social polarization, research on Western European democracies suggests that deliberative democracy instruments like deliberative mini-publics (DMPs) may provide a solution with their positive impact on participants' attitudes towards politics and democracy. Despite the proliferation of citizens' assemblies, especially locally, little is known about DMPs in newer democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, and it is uncertain whether the findings about the virtues of deliberation would hold. This study assesses the impact of a mini-public in Poland, focusing on the Citizens' Assembly on Energy Poverty, the country's first national-level deliberative initiative. Poland has faced heightened political dissatisfaction due to eight years of right-wing populist governance and the rise of radical ideologies, raising questions about deliberation's impact on dissatisfied and radical participants. Our results confirm the positive impact of deliberation on participants, improving their perception of knowledge, political interest, efficacy, and support for mini-publics. However, we find no significant differences of deliberation between dissatisfied, radical participants, and other groups highlighting the universal benefits of deliberation. These inconclusive findings may be due to a common recruitment bias in DMPs, specifically enrolling politically engaged citizens, thus limiting the potential for a learning curve.

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Introduction

Scholars and practitioners have raised the alarm about the democratic malaise made evident in various research surveys indicating a downward trend in satisfaction with

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democracy.¹ The Global Satisfaction with Democracy Report 2020² highlights a significant rise in dissatisfaction since the mid-1990s, marking the highest level of global dissatisfaction recorded since 1995, with 2019 witnessing the peak of democratic discontent. This trend has been particularly pronounced since 2005, coinciding with the onset of the “global democratic recession”, “democratic backsliding” or “third wave of autocratization”.³

The decline of liberal democracy intensifies discontent with representative institutions, leading to diminished participation, weakened trust, and heightened polarization. It has been suggested that deliberative democracy⁴, through instruments such as deliberative mini-publics (DMPs)⁵, but more specifically citizens’ assemblies (CAs), in which randomly selected citizens debate an issue of public concern and develop recommendations, could remedy these issues, with hopes for various positive effects.⁶ A notable increase in interest for and adoption of deliberative instruments has emerged, driven by a growing belief in direct citizen involvement as a solution to contemporary democratic challenges, such as polarization, misinformation, legitimacy issues, transparency, and citizens’ empowerment.⁷ However, empirical findings regarding their role and impact present a mixed picture, confirming but also challenging these claims.⁸ Our study aims to contribute empirical insights into the effects of citizens’ assemblies.

While these insights have long been empirically established in the context of old Western European democracies, there is comparatively less literature on newer, post-communist democracies which are increasingly influenced by similar deliberative trends. Our study focuses on the case of Poland. As a newer post-communist democracy, Poland offers a unique context to examine the implementation and effects of deliberative democracy, providing insights into how these mechanisms function in a context where democratic institutions are still being consolidated. Additionally, the country mirrors global trends of dissatisfaction with representative democracy, recently exacerbated by eight years of democratic backsliding under the rule of a populist right-wing government.⁹ The 2023 parliamentary elections resulted in the defeat of the Law and Justice party, marking a potential reversal of autocratization trends. However, societal polarization persists, stemming from cultural and political divides exacerbated during the populist rule.¹⁰ Such polarization has been detrimental to Polish democracy and has contributed to the rise of radical ideologies.¹¹

Therefore, our inquiry delves into the impact of deliberative instruments, more specifically citizens’ assemblies, within this particular context. We first ask ourselves:

are the effects on participants similar to those observed in older European countries, insofar as these participatory instruments could serve as effective schools of democracy? Moreover, second, could these processes alter even more the perceptions and opinions of individuals dissatisfied with democracy and those holding radical political views?

By answering these crucial questions this research additionally hopes to contribute to the debate on the impact of deliberative democracy instruments in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, where broader problems related to representative democracy coincide with the demise of liberal democracy, facilitated by the dissatisfaction expressed by citizens with regard to their political institutions.

We approach our research questions through the observation of the effects generated among the participants in the first citizens’ assembly held at the national level in Poland (Citizens’ Assembly on Energy Poverty). The assembly was organized in 2022

by a civil society organization with the aim of formulating a series of recommendations regarding how the government should deal with energy crisis-induced poverty. Within this framework, we conducted a pre- and post-survey with the participants ($N = 68 \times 2$ waves) to assess the impact of the deliberative event on their feelings of being (a) knowledgeable about energy poverty, (b) politically interested and efficacious, as well as (c) supportive of deliberative instruments in general. We relied on paired *t*-tests to see whether there were significant mean differences before and after their participation. We observed a positive evolution on these three aspects, which confirms the findings of existing research and the role of mini-publics as schools of democracy. However, when comparing the effects observed among dissatisfied and radical citizens to those among satisfied and moderate ones, the results are inconclusive. Both groups saw significant increases in issue knowledge and individual efficacy, with dissatisfied participants also showing heightened support for DMPs. Yet, the effects on political interest and collective efficacy varied within these participant groups.

Theoretical framework: deliberation in times of dissatisfaction and polarization

The evaluations of their politics and of their political system by citizens play a significant role in democratic health.¹² Trust in democratic institutions is crucial for legitimacy. Additionally, citizens' views of and satisfaction with democracy and their governments, their sense of political efficacy, or their interest in politics, influence their political behaviour and engagement.¹³ The widespread dissatisfaction with democratic institutions, coupled with its detrimental impact on the levels of political interest and participation have been longstanding concerns for political scientists and policymakers.¹⁴ This dissatisfaction highlights the declining faith in representative democracy among the citizenry, leading to a democratic deficit and crisis of legitimacy in advanced democracies.¹⁵

To address these challenges, the ideals and instruments of deliberative democracy offer a promising solution to enhance citizen participation and citizen influence on decision-making processes, thereby offering a pathway for democratic renewal.¹⁶ At the core of deliberative democracy is the concept of deliberation, in which individuals engage in informed discussions, exchange views, and explore diverse perspectives.¹⁷ With this in mind, political authorities (as well as civic movements and organisations) have increasingly implemented deliberative policymaking instruments like deliberative mini-publics (DMPs), which have most recently taken the form of citizens' assemblies (CAs).¹⁸ These inclusive and deliberative forums involve a representative group of randomly selected citizens in meaningful and respectful discussions, facilitated and moderated by professionals, and informed by independent experts, to formulate a set of recommendations on a given policy issue. This deliberative configuration is intended to help citizens generate and recommend well-considered solutions, and thus eventually influence policy decisions.¹⁹

DMPs provide an opportunity for the greater inclusion of diverse voices, beyond those who typically engage in participatory democracy, to involve individuals of various ages, genders, education levels, and settlement locations (e.g. urban vs. rural, different districts, regions, etc.). The sortition process ensures that participants represent a sample of the local or national population²⁰, thus exposing them to diverse perspectives and breaking information bubbles. In this way, DMPs act as "schools of

democracy” by teaching individuals how to discuss complex and conflictual policy issues and thereby educating citizens about political matters.²¹ Furthermore, DMPs provide resources and opportunities for association, collective action, and interest representation, contributing to the mitigation of societal conflicts, the expansion of political participation, and the interaction with experts, stakeholders, NGOs, political party representatives, and local or national authorities.²²

While these new forms of citizen engagement (and their impact) are well-researched in Western European countries,²³ Australia,²⁴ and North America,²⁵ there is still an insufficient body of knowledge coming from Central and Eastern Europe, despite the increasing popularity of deliberative democracy innovations.²⁶ In the region, Poland stands out as an early adopter of deliberative practices.²⁷ Since 2016, citizens’ assemblies have flourished in local governance, these deliberative instruments sometimes becoming permanent quasi-decision-making processes.²⁸ However, the practice of citizens’ panels and the dissemination of their organizational forms mainly originate from civil society, with social activists and practitioners as organizers.²⁹ There have already been over 13 local citizens’ assemblies and one national-level grassroots assembly. These DMPs began in response to the shrinking democratic space under right-wing populist rule and to the issues facing representative democracy, namely democratic backsliding and increased polarization. These problems are typical of the CEE region, where radicalism, nationalism, and illiberalism seem to be popular trends that hinder the full consolidation of democracy.³⁰ While Poland has overcome right-wing populism in power, significant polarization on controversial issues related to public media or abortion remains. This suggests a potential role for DMPs in addressing these challenges.³¹ Capturing the impact of DMPs on participants in terms of democratic learning is therefore crucial in this context.

The impact of deliberation

The impact of DMPs on policy change has been particularly contested. Citizens’ assemblies have repeatedly presented recommendations that have been rejected or ignored by political authorities.³² However, regarding opinion change and democratic learning, empirical findings suggest a positive impact overall on the individuals engaged in these processes. Existing literature suggests that experiencing deliberation within mini-publics positively impacts the level of subjective political resources of participating citizens in several ways. Firstly, deliberative processes can significantly increase participants’ knowledge and understanding of political issues.³³ Participants receive information from independent experts and engage in discussions that delve deeply into the subject matter. Thus, people feel at least somewhat better informed on the topic after their participation, highlighting a process of perceived learning and awareness. This interactive nature of the engagement fosters comprehensive understanding and open-mindedness.³⁴ The perceived increase in knowledge among participants is attributed not only to the receipt of information but also to the deliberative engagement itself, which encourages critical thinking and reflection.³⁵

Secondly, deliberative participation stimulates political interest, civic identity, and support for deliberative processes.³⁶ Engaging in such processes often leads to a deeper involvement in public policy and political life. The interactive and inclusive nature of deliberation fosters a sense of belonging and responsibility towards the

community, encouraging ongoing civic engagement.³⁷ Moreover, participants who experience the benefits of informed discussion, diverse perspectives, and collaborative decision-making are more likely to appreciate and advocate for deliberative democracy. This support extends to a broader belief in the potential of citizen participation in democratic decision-making.

Thirdly, deliberation can enhance both individual and collective feelings of political efficacy, i.e. perceptions of participants' political capabilities and beliefs about others' abilities to handle political issues.³⁸ Deliberative engagement, by providing a platform for meaningful participation and discussion, can bolster participants' confidence in their political competence.³⁹ Moreover, it provides a space in which citizens can learn about the skills of their peers and develop confidence in others' ability to contribute to solving complex political puzzles. This is crucial for the legitimacy mechanisms of DMPs, building trust for future similar events where citizens may not be directly involved.⁴⁰ Yet, existing empirical studies reveal nuanced findings.⁴¹ Exposure to opposing viewpoints may reduce participants' sense of internal efficacy, and the evaluation of others' internal skills may not necessarily improve through deliberative events.⁴² Based on these mechanisms, we formulate our first, leading hypothesis:

H1: Participation in a deliberative mini-public will 1) improve citizens' perception of issue **knowledge**, 2) increase **political interest**, 3) enhance their self and collective sense of **political efficacy**, and 4) foster a more positive **attitude towards deliberative processes**.

Some comparative research on public opinion regarding mini-publics indicates that these instruments tend to appeal more, both in theory and practice, to citizens who are dissatisfied with traditional political institutions, across diverse contexts.⁴³ At the same time, other studies have shown that any participatory reforms to decision-making, that aim to delegate power to the people instead of the elites, are particularly appreciated by radical voters.⁴⁴ Yet, there is still a scarcity of research regarding the effective participation of these so-called "enraged citizens" – those with negative evaluations of their political system (dissatisfied) or who lean to the extremes of the political spectrum – in deliberative processes.⁴⁵ Although Jacobs⁴⁶ investigated the effect of a local climate assembly on populist participants, and evaluation reports of certain mini-publics have measured their presence among the participants,⁴⁷ our understanding of how these groups experience deliberative processes and their potential transformative impact remains limited.

Yet, one could argue that there are reasons to expect deliberation to have an even greater impact on dissatisfied and radical participants.⁴⁸ On the one hand, citizens dissatisfied with democracy often have limited exposure to diverse viewpoints in their social and political networks.⁴⁹ Participating in a CA automatically exposes them to a wide range of perspectives, experiences, and expertise, providing opportunities for dialogue, learning, and empathy-building. Interacting with individuals holding different opinions and positive evaluations of the system can challenge their assumptions about politics and broaden their understanding of complex issues, thereby increasing their knowledge and interest. Since dissatisfied citizens feel disillusioned or disempowered, the deliberative nature of the participatory process should reconnect them particularly with politics, empowering them (individual efficacy) and making them perceive others as more competent (collective efficacy). As a result, they may appreciate and value deliberative processes, expressing even more support after their participation.

On the other hand, deliberative democracy theory suggests that participants holding radical political views may experience a stronger impact from the deliberative process due to the transformative nature of the discussions and the potential for bridging divides and finding common ground.⁵⁰ Empirical findings show that these platforms foster opinion and attitude change, acquaint participants with diverse viewpoints, and promote political tolerance by familiarizing them with rationales supporting more moderate opinions.⁵¹ We therefore expect that radical participants will be impacted in the same way as those who are dissatisfied. Moreover, DMPs provide radicals with a unique opportunity to express their interests, especially since their opinions are often excluded from mainstream politics or they lack other forms of participation to transfer and echo their political opinions. Neblo has shown that people are attracted to this type of participation as a partial alternative to “politics as usual”, and the willingness to deliberate is much higher among those disenchanted with standard partisan and interest group politics.⁵²

H2: Citizens **dissatisfied with democracy** will be more impacted by their participation in a deliberative mini-public compared to satisfied participants.

H3: Citizens leaning to the extremes of the political spectrum will be more impacted by their participation in a deliberative mini-public compared to those with a moderate placement.

In summary, DMPs can enhance knowledge, political efficacy, and support for deliberative processes among participants, particularly impacting those dissatisfied with democracy or holding radical views. These mechanisms highlight the potential of deliberative democracy to address political dissatisfaction and polarization, contributing to democratic renewal and stability. In the next section we explore this empirically using Poland as a case.

Case study: analysing the impact of the Polish National Citizens' assembly on participants

We observe the impact of DMPs on participants in Poland through the case of the Citizens' Assembly on Energy Poverty, the first nationwide CA organized from the grassroots level. Following the local assemblies that have taken place in major cities in Poland since 2016, this assembly also focused on climate-related issues. The CA's theme was “How to counteract energy poverty in Poland?”⁵³ Climate remains a controversial issue in Poland, which makes this an even more interesting case. The saliency and polarizing nature of this topic highlights the importance of DMPs in addressing and navigating this issue within the population. The process involved a representative group of nearly 100 randomly selected Polish citizens from diverse backgrounds, including age, gender, education, and region of residence, ensuring a diverse and inclusive representation of the country (see Appendix Table 1).⁵⁴

The CA took place over five days, with three main sessions: the official inauguration and educational phase on October 22–23 in Warsaw, the deliberation on November 5–6 in Warsaw, and the voting process on November 16, held online. The participants were joined by experts specializing in topics related to energy poverty, environmental protection, energy efficiency, and renewable energy. These experts provided knowledge and proposed solutions during the educational sessions, acting as advisors to the organizers. Additionally, stakeholders were involved, representing organizations and groups directly affected by the issues discussed in the panel. They had the

opportunity to present their perspectives in recorded presentations during the educational sessions. The assembly also included observers, a team selected by the organizers with expertise in the methodology of CAs, to ensure compliance with standards and study the process for research purposes. Moderators led group discussions during the assembly meetings.

The CA produced over 100 recommendations that addressed various dimensions of combating energy poverty.⁵⁵ These recommendations included systemic support for improving energy efficiency in buildings, affordable access to energy through network modernization and renewable energy, ensuring accessible housing, and targeted support for low-income individuals. The project concluded with a public presentation of a report summarizing these recommendations. These were directed to representatives of national and local authorities, parliamentary groups, NGOs, think-tanks, and other relevant stakeholders. The decisions of this CA were non-binding and lacked any formal mechanism to implement recommendations that would directly influence policy. However, the organizers hoped that the report would prompt various entities to consider incorporating the recommendations in their agendas, including in the programmes of political parties.

Pre- and post-event surveys: assessing changes in attitudes

To investigate the impact of CAs on participants' views and perceptions, we conducted field surveys with the participants. One survey was conducted before the start of the CA (i.e. during the first day of the CA, October 22nd, 2022) and the other after, on the last day of the assembly (November 16th, 2022). Both surveys were coordinated with the organizers of the CA – local authorities and organizations. Without their consent, the surveys could not have been conducted. Participants had the option to freely withdraw from the study while remaining in the assembly. Since participation in the survey was voluntary, the final number of respondents (N = 68) differed from the actual number of participants (N = 100). This introduces some self-selection bias, meaning that we cannot rule out missing some profiles of participants, such as those more sceptical about the process or its outcomes.

The “pre” survey consisted of twelve comprehensive questions divided into two sections. The first, “Participation in the Panel on Energy Poverty”, aimed to understand the participants' specific and general opinions on CAs. Participants were asked about their motivations, hopes, and fears regarding their participation in the panel, as well as about any previous engagement in other participatory processes. This section also contained key questions about participants' views on CAs as a tool for decision-making. Participants could report their perception of their own knowledge regarding issues related to the CAs' topic, as well as their attitudes and behaviours towards energy consumption. The second part of the “pre” survey, “Opinions and Experiences”, focused on various baseline political attitudes, such as their interest in politics, identification with the left or the right of the political spectrum, satisfaction with democracy at the national level, social and political trust, and participants' self- and collective sense of competence in politics. Respondents were also asked about their voting activity in past parliamentary and local elections.

The “post” survey repeated several questions to observe changes and the impact of the CA on participants, such as their self-perception of knowledge about energy poverty, their general views on CAs as a decision-making tool, and some of their

attitudes towards politics (interest, efficacy). It also included a series of questions evaluating the perceived quality of their experience in this particular event.

In terms of measurements scrutinized in this article, **Issue knowledge** captures the respondent's subjective feeling of being knowledgeable about the issue discussed in the deliberative process, namely energy poverty, based on the question: "From 0 (*not informed at all*) to 10 (*very informed*), how much do you feel informed about energy poverty?" (10-point scale). We opted for this subjective approach to quickly gauge people's feelings of information learning from the process. This method aligns with our main argument and helps maintain the attention and trust of respondents during the fieldwork, as they might feel uncomfortable or judged by an objective knowledge quiz.⁵⁶

Political interest is measured via the question "How interested would you say you personally are in politics?", with a four-point answer range going from "not at all" to "very". **Internal efficacy** is the respondent's (reversed) level of agreement (5-point Likert scale) to the statement "Politics is too complicated for people like me", capturing how self-competent in politics people feel. **Collective efficacy** is measured by the level of agreement (5-point Likert scale) with the statement "Most people are knowledgeable enough to make decisions about important political issues", assessing how people feel about the competence of others in politics. **Support for deliberative mini-publics** was measured by asking respondents to report their level of agreement (5-point Likert scale) with 6 different statements. As reported in Appendix Table 2, we measured their attitudes regarding (a) the use of mini-publics (3 items) and (b) the capacity for "ordinary" citizens to make valuable decisions within these instruments (3 items). Given that the battery shows good reliability in the "pre" (Chronbach alpha = .88) and "post" survey (Chronbach alpha = .89), we computed an additive scale of support for deliberative processes based on these six items. The higher the value, the more positive the respondents are regarding mini-publics.⁵⁷

As far as the two last hypotheses (H2 and H3) are concerned, we identified individuals **dissatisfied with democracy** via the classical item "On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Poland?" (10-point scale). To ease the analysis, we dichotomized participants into two groups, with respondents scoring below the median value (= 3.0) considered dissatisfied and the rest satisfied. Based on the left-right self-placement question "In politics, people sometimes talk of "left" and "right". How would you place your views on the scale below?" (10-point scale), we distinguished **radical respondents** who were positioned at the extremes (scored ≤ 2 or ≥ 8) from the rest of the respondents (moderate respondents).

In this study, to test the baseline hypothesis (H1), we used a repeated-measures design. The same questions were posed twice (in the pre and the post-survey) to the same set of respondents (paired samples), allowing us to track changes for each respondent over two time-points and infer the influence of the treatment they all received – specifically their participation in a deliberative process. The data collected before the CA served as the baseline, while the data collected at the end measured the outcomes and impact of the treatment. Along with these time-variant data, we retrieved additional, static information in the pre-survey which we did not expect to fundamentally change as a result of such a short process. These included two key political attitudes necessary to assess H2 and H3 (satisfaction with democracy and left-right self-placement), as well as attitudes and behaviours towards coal and energy use, and the sociodemographic profile (age, gender, educational attainment, occupation and

urban-rural place of residence). All operationalization and distributions of the variables used in this study are provided in the online appendix.

For the analysis, to observe the differences in pre- and post- measures as postulated by the first hypothesis, we used paired t-test for matched/dependent samples. We compared the samples' aggregate means of our main measures of interest at the two different time points and checked whether a difference was (a) present and (b) statistically significant. We also measured the effect size, or the magnitude of the statistically significant mean differences, reporting the Cohen's d coefficient calculated with a specific formula adapted to paired samples (*power paired means* command in Stata). To assess the two last expectations, we first ran the paired t-test independently for the four subgroups (satisfied, dissatisfied, moderate, radical), to see whether a similar deliberation impact was found within each of them. Then, to properly evaluate whether dissatisfied/radical participants were more impacted than the satisfied/moderate ones, we needed to ascertain if the amount of change over time was significantly greater in one subgroup compared to the other.⁵⁸ We thus computed, for each respondent, the difference between post- and pre- scores for all variables and then ran classical two-sample T-Test analyses to capture significant mean differences.

Findings

Building on the virtues of deliberation, our first hypothesis assumed that participants would feel better informed about the debated issue at the end of the process and report being more knowledgeable about energy poverty. To empirically assess this claim with our data, we can first look at the boxplots displayed in [Figure 1](#). They show the

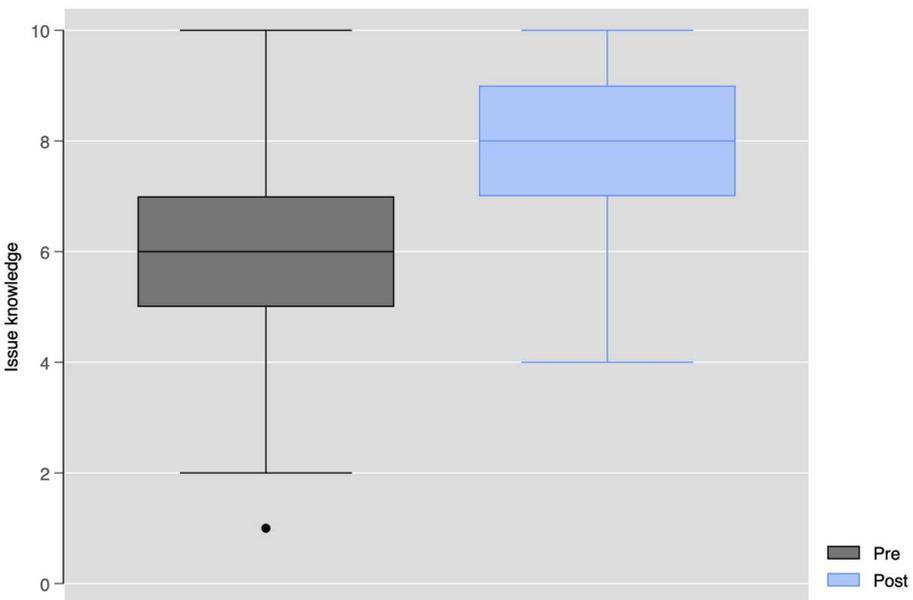


Figure 1. Issue knowledge: pre- and post-event measures' distribution.

Table 1. Pre-and post-measures comparison.

Attitudes towards ...	Min.	Max.	Pre	Post	Δ	T test p value*	Effect size (d)
... the debated issue							
Knowledge about energy poverty	0	10	5.9	7.6	+1.7	.000	1.0
... politics							
Political interest	1	4	2.7	2.9	+0.2	.058	.35
Individual efficacy	1	5	3.0	4.0	+1.0	.000	1.0
Collective efficacy	1	5	2.7	3.1	+0.4	.031	.51
... deliberative democracy							
Support for mini-publics	1	5	4.0	4.5	+0.5	.000	.98

*Two sided.

distribution of the pre- and post- measures of knowledge and highlight that the median value shifted from 6 at the beginning of the process to 8 at the end.

As shown in Table 1, the results of the paired t-test indicate that the mean difference between the beginning and the end of the event is statistically significant. As expected, participants perceive that they have learned about energy poverty during the event and declare feeling more informed about it at the end. Indeed, they scored higher at the end (7.6) compared to the start (5.9), and this difference of 1.7 is statistically significant ($p = .000$, $d = 1$). The results align with the first hypothesis regarding increased knowledge (H1.1). Supporting more broadly the theories and findings by deliberative scholars, participation in the deliberative event seems to have greatly increased the citizens' subjective feeling of being informed about the policy issue that was discussed. Yet, it is worth noting that we show that people feel better informed about the issue they deliberated about, perceiving this experience as a learning process, which makes them think that they are better equipped for the topic at hand. However, it would be interesting to see if this also applies to their objective level of knowledge and to what extent they might be aware of this change.⁵⁹

The same analysis is replicated for the other measures considered by the first hypothesis. Regarding participants' interest in politics, the boxplots displayed in Figure 2 do not indicate any major change. The median value remains relatively high throughout the process (3). However, the mean slightly increased between the start (2.7) and the end of the process (2.9). The t-test reveals that this difference of 0.2 is just close to statistical significance ($p = .058$), while the effect size is much smaller than for the previous measure ($d = .35$). In fact, as illustrated by the graph of individual observations' pre-post differences in Appendix Figure 1, most respondents reported the same level of interest before and after the event. A first take on this may be that the deliberative experience has some impact on the feeling of being informed on the topic but did not affect the level of interest in politics more broadly, which is a very stable attitude⁶⁰, and more difficult to change in such a short deliberation period. More importantly, this may signal that deliberation in a mini-public is designed to inform and engage participants, but those who are already well-informed and engaged may not experience a significant change in their interest in politics. Indeed, for those participants where we observed an increase, it was generally from 3 to 4 on the scale of interest. We believe that this ceiling effect also emphasizes a major recruiting issue for CAs: the fact that people who agree to participate in DMPs generally express an interest in political matters. This corresponds to an "engaged" profile of citizens, already predisposed towards participation.

To shed further light on this aspect, Appendix Table 3 compares the participants' profiles to the general population. It shows that 67.7% of respondents reported being fairly or highly interested in politics, whereas the last wave of the World Value Survey conducted in Poland indicates that only 41.7% of the Polish population fell in these same two categories. At the same time, there were almost no participants in the citizens' panel who were not interested in politics at all, with only one participant falling into this category at the beginning of the process. This gap indicates that politically interested citizens were over-represented in the pool of participants. This may partly explain why there was little observable effect from DMP participation on political interest (Figure 2). Moreover, it illustrates the frequent difficulty faced by mini-public organizers in enrolling individuals who are more disengaged from politics, a pattern also seen in previous CAs.⁶¹ This recurrent discrepancy underscores the challenge of achieving inclusiveness and representativeness, as low-educated or younger citizens were underrepresented in the panel. These patterns of skewness require careful consideration of the right incentives to attract a broader demographic. It is indeed a challenge that is crucial for future events, as the Western context shows that the legitimacy of deliberative processes can be affected by this type of recruitment bias.⁶²

In the next step, we examined the impact on internal and collective feelings of efficacy as baseline political attitudes. In theory, it was hypothesized that participants should feel more competent with politics in general at the end of the process and that they should also perceive other citizens to be more efficacious. From the boxplots in Figure 3 and the descriptive statistics in Table 1, we can see that the average position among the participants in the pre-survey was around the middle of the scale (neutral position) for their feeling of self-competence (mean and median values of internal

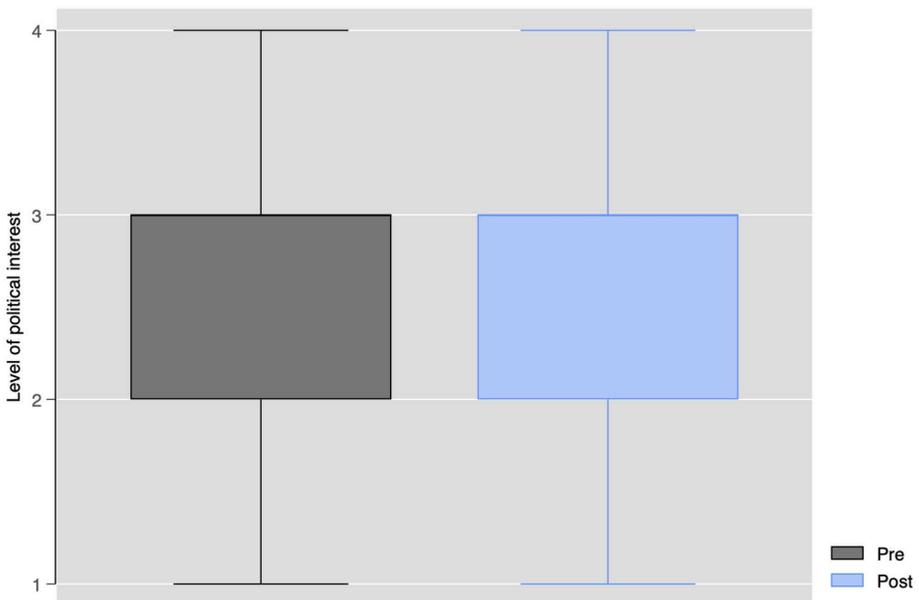


Figure 2. Political interest: pre- and post-event measures' distribution.

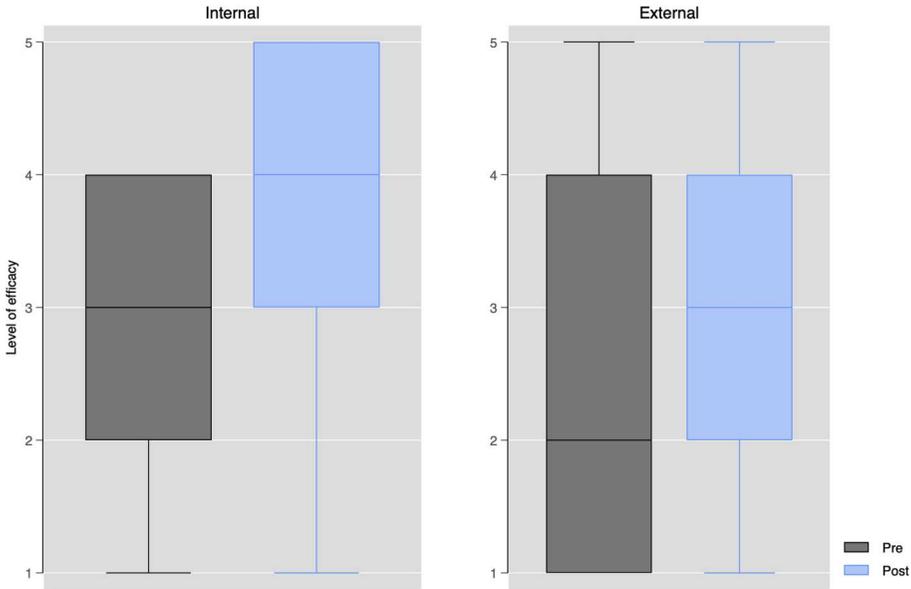


Figure 3. Internal and collective efficacy: pre- and post-event measures' distribution.

efficacy = 3.0), while they were, on average, relatively sceptical towards the competence of others (mean = 2.6, median = 2.0). However, we can observe a substantial increase in both measures between the two waves. Internal efficacy moved to median and mean values of 4 in the post-survey. The t-test revealed that the mean difference of 1 point between the two time points is statistically significant ($p = .000$, $d = 1$). For collective efficacy, the median position turned more positive, though still neutral, after the event (median = 3, mean = 3.1). The t-test indicated that the mean difference of 0.4 between the pre- and post- measurement is statistically significant, but to a lesser degree ($p = .031$) and with less power ($d = .51$). This finding emphasizes that participants tended to increase their level of trust regarding their fellow citizens' political skills, which is crucial if DMPs are to be replicated more often and eventually integrated into the political system. This section of the analysis provides evidence supporting our first hypothesis regarding individual and collective feelings of political efficacy (H1.3) – but not regarding political interest (H1.2).

Finally, regarding participants' support for DMPs, we found that the median value of the scale slightly increased between the start (4.3) and the end of the process (4.7), as illustrated by the boxplots in Figure 4. The t-test showed that the mean difference between the two time points is statistically significant, with an increase of 0.5 over the process ($p = .000$, $d = .98$). This indicates that participants became overall more supportive of deliberative democracy after the event, which aligns with our first hypothesis (H1.4). However, it is worth noting that while Polish public opinion typically shows lower average support for deliberative processes compared to other EU countries,⁶³ the initial attitude among the participants was highly positive. This suggests that individuals who accept to participate in such participatory process already hold confident opinions about them, and their participation mainly reinforces this initial predisposition.

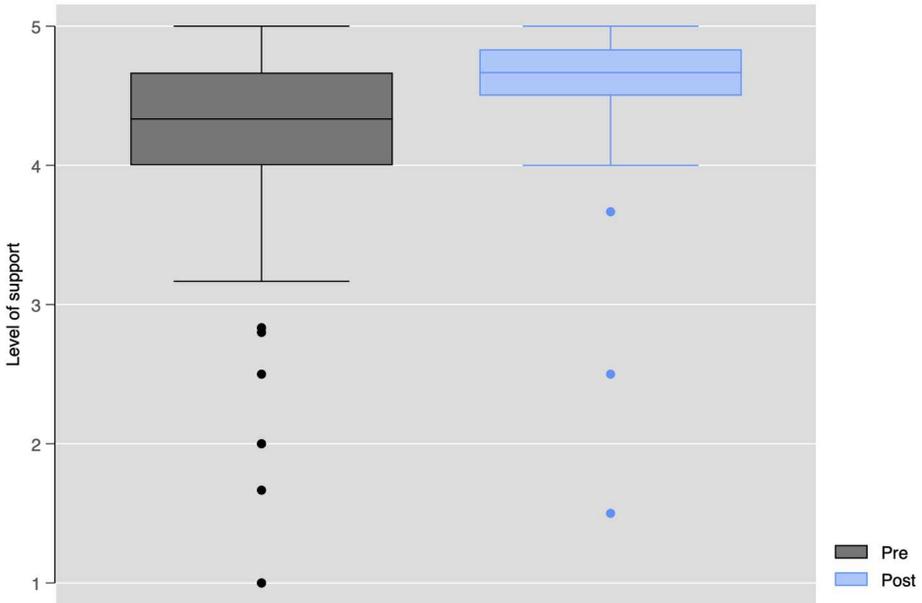


Figure 4. Support for deliberative mini-publics: pre- and post-event measures' distribution.

All in all, aside from political interest, the results all support the first hypothesis. They emphasize the democratic potential of mini-publics, particularly in contexts where democratic standards are lower and sometimes described as backsliding, as in the case of Poland. Despite this environment, the learning effect of deliberation seems universal in empowering citizens, making them feel better informed and equipped for politics. Deliberative processes indeed emerge as important moments in which citizens can learn about politics and democracy. However, as noted, there was less of a pre–post increase in political interest since participants exhibited high scores on this attitude from the start. This either reflects that interest in politics is a stable political attitude difficult to modify via a one-shot mini-public deliberation, which, in this case, lasts only two days, or it is probably more related to a common recruitment bias in the profiles of citizens who accept to participate in participatory processes and a difficulty in reaching citizens less interested in politics via the sortition mechanism. We argue in favour of the second explanation. Moreover, while noting the expected positive evolution, we found that the recruited participants were particularly positive about mini-publics from the start. This could mean that, similar to more established democracies, in Poland these events act as a school for democracy but primarily for people who might actually “need” this type of learning exercise less, as they already pay much attention to politics and are sensitive to democratic challenges and participation. A key question is whether we would observe the same learning evolution if the sample of participants were more balanced in terms of interest in politics or attitudes towards deliberative democracy, potentially including individuals more distant from politics and/or sceptical about participatory instruments.

To address the last two hypotheses and assess whether radical and dissatisfied respondents were more likely to change their attitudes as a result of their involvement

Table 2. Comparison of difference scores based on political (dis)satisfaction and placement.

Variables	Group	N	Pre	Post	Δ	P value within group	P value between groups
Issue knowledge	Satisfied	43	5.9	7.4	+1.5	0.000	0.126
	Dissatisfied	25	5.8	8.0	+2.2	0.000	
	Moderate	38	5.8	7.7	+1.9	0.000	
	Radical	16	5.6	7.4	+1.8	0.003	
Political interest	Satisfied	43	2.6	2.8	+0.2	0.035	0.831
	Dissatisfied	25	3.1	3.1	=	0.287	
	Moderate	38	2.7	2.8	+0.1	0.127	
	Radical	16	3.1	3.2	+0.1	0.290	
Individual efficacy	Satisfied	43	2.8	3.8	+0.9	0.000	0.539
	Dissatisfied	25	3.2	4.2	+1.0	0.000	
	Moderate	38	2.9	3.9	+1.0	0.000	
	Radical	16	3.2	4.3	+1.1	0.004	
Collective efficacy	Satisfied	43	2.7	3.1	+0.4	0.084	0.331
	Dissatisfied	25	2.4	2.9	+0.5	0.039	
	Moderate	38	2.4	3.1	+0.7	0.004	
	Radical	16	2.6	2.9	+0.3	0.193	
Support for mini-publics	Satisfied	43	4.0	4.5	+0.5	0.004	0.620
	Dissatisfied	25	4.2	4.6	+0.4	0.010	
	Moderate	38	4.0	4.5	+0.5	0.005	
	Radical	16	4.1	4.6	+0.5	0.059	

in deliberation, we further explored the results of the two-sample t-tests (Table 2). These tests compare the mean change scores on the five measures between satisfied and dissatisfied participants and between radical and moderate participants. This analysis did not corroborate the expectations (H2 and H3). We did not find any evidence to support that deliberation might have a stronger impact on the attitudes of dissatisfied or radical respondents. Regardless of the measures under scrutiny, the mean post-pre differences between satisfied and dissatisfied participants, or between moderate and radical participants, were never statistically significant. This seems to confirm once again a rather universal effect of deliberation, as these groups changed their views similarly to those they were compared to (same direction and amount of change).

Still, Table 2 brought some interesting nuances within the groups. In particular, there is no significant difference in pre- and post- measurements of political interest among dissatisfied and radical respondents. The data reveal that these “enraged” citizens who participated in the CA were also particularly “engaged”, as they were very interested and felt competent to handle politics. Before the deliberation, they scored higher on average on these two measures than the satisfied and moderate participants. This means that, even more among dissatisfied and radical citizens, the sample of participating citizens was biased towards individuals interested in politics, highlighting the difficulty of engaging those who might feel more distant and pay less attention to politics. Additionally, this indicates less room for any positive impact of deliberation on these aspects. This ceiling effect is particularly striking when looking at political interest, with the group of dissatisfied participants remaining with an equal (and high) mean value before and after the deliberative process. However, despite a higher value at the start compared to opposite groups, dissatisfied and radical participants still experienced a significant increase in individual efficacy from pre- to post-measurements. This increase is proportionally similar to that of satisfied and moderate participants, meaning that the gap in efficacy feeling remains at the end of the process. Regarding collective efficacy, dissatisfied participants experienced a statistically

significant increase from pre- to post- CA participation, but not the satisfied ones (who were and remained overall more positive about the competence of others). Normatively, this might be important. If dissatisfied citizens gain trust in the political competence of others through deliberation, one could hope that the implementation of such decision-making instrument in the existing political structure might eventually help restore their confidence in institutions more generally, as they will probably trust decisions made by citizens in other similar processes. In contrast, participants who placed themselves at the extremes of the political space (radical) did not show a statistically significant change in collective efficacy. The positive impact of deliberation in this regard seems to be confined to the moderate. This finding raises more concern, as we know that radical voting patterns are highly connected to how much these individuals (do not) trust their fellow citizens.⁶⁴ Deliberation might not be helpful in this regard. Nevertheless, this must be taken with caution given the small sample size caused by voluntary survey responses. Moreover, even among the 68 respondents, 14 refrained from answering questions about left-right political placement – which is yet less constraining than party identification, perhaps due to the difficult political situation in Poland in 2022 under right-wing populist rule.

Discussion

To conclude, our study has yielded valuable insights into the potential of DMPs as tools for democratic learning in the context of democratic backsliding. Firstly, we confirmed our baseline hypothesis (H1) on four out of the five measures examined. Participants in the Citizens' Panel on Energy Poverty felt more informed about energy poverty by the end of the process. They also felt more competent to handle politics and believed that others were similarly capable. Furthermore, their participation made them more positive about deliberative democracy, even in a context where such support may not initially be widespread. However, a limitation worth stressing is that we don't know exactly and empirically why people change the attitudes; we just assume some theoretical mechanism. Additionally, we don't know to what extent people are really aware that they update their attitudes, which yet could be crucial in terms of "democratic learning". Moreover, participants were recruited with an already very positive evaluation of deliberative processes, leading to a reinforcement rather than a deep transformation in this attitudinal aspect. Finally, although we observed a slight increase in participants' interest in politics, this change was not statistically significant. This finding underscores the challenge of recruiting participants with a more diverse range of political engagement, as most participants already expressed a relatively high interest in politics. It could also be that a one-shot event like the citizen panel does not have the power to significantly alter a more stable attitude like political interest in just a few days.

Regarding Hypotheses 2 and 3, the results were inconclusive, leading us to reject them. This can be attributed to the fact that (a) deliberation affects individuals similarly across the different political groups we scrutinized and (b) dissatisfied and radical respondents had already highly positive attitudes towards politics that were much less likely to change as a result of the process. Nonetheless, we found that engaging in deliberative discussions and contributing to policy recommendations may have particularly bolstered the confidence of dissatisfied participants in the political competence of other citizens. This could be crucial, because they might then in turn be

more confident in future CAs, meaning that more frequent and institutionalized uses of this policymaking instrument may eventually help improve their evaluation of the political system. However, deliberation in the assembly did not significantly affect the views of radical participants on the competence of others. This is potentially concerning as radical voting behaviours are highly related to a lack of trust in fellow citizens, suggesting that deliberation may not be an effective counterstrategy in this regard.

The profile of dissatisfied and radical participants (often labelled as “enraged”) was also interesting because it matched the “engaged” (interested in and feeling competent with politics). This observation further emphasizes the need to consider the level of politicization of participants recruited in mini-publics. In contexts where such attitudes are exacerbated and prevalent, these events must find ways to reach the less engaged population and those who feel more distant from the political realm. This is crucial for the tool to gain broader popularity and legitimacy, including among policy makers.

Finally, acknowledge the limitations of our study, particularly its focus on a single mini-public, with a small sample size. We hope to encourage further research on this topic that expands the number of observation and uses comparative design for participants’ surveys, for example, as well as considering individual-level analyses. This could help better identify what exactly triggers attitude change and whether participants are aware of these changes. Another avenue for research could be to analyse the impact of the occurrence of DMPs on the wider population,⁶⁵ especially those with extreme political views or report negative evaluations of representative institutions, in real-life or in an experimental setting.

Conclusion

This study aimed to contribute to the vibrant field of research on deliberative democracy by examining the development of new deliberative instruments and processes in Central and Eastern European countries. Specifically, we intended to assess the impact of DMPs on their participants, focusing broadly on the effect for the entire cohort of selected citizens and then specifically on those holding negative political attitudes (political dissatisfaction and radical placement). We began with the argument that DMPs could serve as learning schools for democracy and investigated whether they could shape citizens’ perceptions in a polarized political environment like Poland. To do this, we drew on the Citizens’ Assembly on Energy Poverty held in 2022, where a representative sample of the Polish population deliberated on strategies to address energy crisis-induced poverty.

We conducted pre- and post-surveys among 68 participants on three different sets of measures: their subjective level of knowledge about energy poverty, their attitudes towards DMPs, and more generic political attitudes, namely political interest, and efficacy. To analyse pre- and post- differences in these measures, we relied on paired t-tests. The results first revealed that the participants in the assembly significantly improved their perceived knowledge about energy poverty over the course of the event. Second, they also became more confident in their self-competence to address political issues, i.e. their sense of internal efficacy. Despite some increase after the event, we found less significant and powerful differences in the levels of political interest and collective efficacy (political competence of others). Third, we found that their participation positively impacted their attitudes towards DMPs, making them more supportive of deliberative democracy overall.

All in all, our study confirms well-established findings in the literature that deliberative instruments hold transformative potential. Our findings align with existing literature regarding the impact of DMPs on participants. However, this is the first study conducted in the context of Central and Eastern Europe, allowing for more robust generalizations. Therefore, we are pleased to contribute to this literature by demonstrating it in the case of Poland, which has engaged in deliberative practices since 2016, shedding light on their role in shaping perceptions about democracy and indirectly suggesting their potential to contribute to democratic renewal.

Given the context of Poland, where dissatisfaction with representative democracy is coupled with polarization and radicalization, particularly evident during the eight years of right-wing populist rule, we investigated whether new forms of civic participation and deliberative processes, such as CAs, could have a stronger impact on the attitudes of dissatisfied and radical participants. The results suggest that deliberation has a notable effect on these two groups. However, the effect is in the same direction and proportion that seen in satisfied and moderate participants, indicating no statistical differences that could reveal a larger transformative impact. Deliberation seems to provide universal benefits. Nonetheless, when examining all groups separately, we found no impact of deliberation on dissatisfied and radical participants' political interest, as they were and remained more politically engaged than the satisfied or the moderate, leaving little room for improvement. Furthermore, while the collective efficacy of dissatisfied participants significantly increased over the two time points, this was not the case for radical participants.

We believe our findings have important implications for various stakeholders, including governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations involved in organizing deliberative initiatives in Poland. While we uncovered the positive impact of deliberation, this study also highlights a common bias in the recruitment process of participatory programmes. These “schools of democracy” may be reaching citizens who need them less, as they already held positive attitudes towards politics, deliberation, or the issue under debate when enrolled, indicating they are already engaged. Given the Polish context, characterized by a growing deliberative democracy amid dissatisfaction with democracy, polarization and radicalism, it is crucial for future participatory events to carefully consider, not only the design of the process to ensure high-quality deliberation, but also the recruitment strategies to engage a broader and more diverse segment of the population. This approach is essential if these events are to meet normative hopes and contribute effectively to democratic renewal.

Notes

1. Ferrin and Kriesi, *How Europeans View and Evaluate Democracy*; Foa et al., *The Global Satisfaction*; Linde and Ekman, “Satisfaction with Democracy”; Norris, *Democratic deficit*.
2. https://www.cam.ac.uk/system/files/report2020_003.pdf
3. Lührmann and Lindberg “A Third Wave of Autocratization”; Merkel and Lührmann “Resilience of Democracies”; V-Dem, *Democracy at Dusk?*; V-Dem, *Democracy for All?*; V-Dem, *Democracy Facing Global Challenges*; V-Dem, *Autocratization Surges*.
4. Deliberative democracy, rooted in the notion that democratic legitimacy derives from processes of mutual justification, encompasses various mechanisms and deliberative mini-publics represent just one way for nurturing such processes, albeit their role also is contested

- within the deliberative democracy discourse (see e.g. Bächtiger et al, “Deliberative democracy” ; Parkinson and Mansbridge, *Deliberative systems*; Lafont “Deliberation, participation”).
5. Bächtiger et al., “Towards a New Era of Deliberative Mini-publics”.
 6. Dryzek, “Rhetoric in Democracy”; Niemeyer, “Scaling up Deliberation”; Smith and Wales, “The Theory and Practice”.
 7. Fishkin, “Deliberative democracy and constitutions.” Fishkin et al. “Is deliberation an antidote to extreme partisan polarization? Reflections on “America in one room” Fishkin, *When the people speak: Deliberative democracy and public consultation*; Smith, *Can democracy Safeguard*; OECD, *Innovative Citizen Participation*.
 8. Bächtiger and Parkinson, *Mapping and Measuring Deliberation*; Gastil, “The lessons and limitations”; Grönlund et al., “Deliberation and Civic Virtue”; Luskin et al., “Considered Opinions”; Muradova, “The Norm-Diffusing Potential”; van der Does and Jacquet, “Small-Scale Deliberation”; Suiter et al., “Measuring Epistemic Deliberation”.
 9. Bernhard, “Democratic Backsliding in Poland.”
 10. Kotwas and Kubik, “Symbolic Thickening.”
 11. Bustikova, *Extreme reactions*; Molnár, “Civil Society, Radicalism”; Mudde, *Populist Radical Right*.
 12. Ferrin and Kriesi, *How Europeans View and Evaluate Democracy*.
 13. Norris, *Critical Citizens* 1999; Norris, *Democratic Deficit*.
 14. Dalton, *Democratic Challenges*; Hendriks, “Democratic innovation beyond deliberative reflection: the plebiscitary rebound and the advent of action-oriented democracy,” Linde and Ekman, “Satisfaction with Democracy” ; Pharr and Putnam, *Disaffected Democracies*.
 15. Dahlberg et al., “Democratic discontent”; Nye, “In government we don’t trust”.
 16. Curato et al., *Deliberative Mini-publics*; Dryzek et al. “The crisis of democracy”; Fishkin et al., “Is Deliberation an Antidote”; Opitz, “Democratic innovations beyond the deliberative paradigm: a re-conceptualization based on Luhmann’s systems theory;” Smith, *Democratic Innovations*.
 17. Curato et al., “Twelve Key Findings”.
 18. Paulis et al., The POLITICIZE dataset.
 19. Curato et al., *Deliberative Mini-publics*; Smith, *Democratic Innovations*.
 20. Fishkin et al., “Is Deliberation an Antidote”; Setälä and Smith, “Mini-publics and Deliberative Democracy”.
 21. Boulianne, “Building faith in democracy”; Knobloch et al., “Emanating Effects”; Fung, “Deliberative Democracy”; Geissel, “Democratic Innovations”; Grönlund et al., “Deliberation and Civic Virtue”; Grönlund et al., “Does Enclave Deliberation Polarize”; Smith and Setälä, “Mini-Publics and Deliberative Democracy”.
 22. Curato et al., “Twelve Key Findings”; Niemeyer and Dryzek, “The Ends of Deliberation”; Warren and Pearse, *Designing Deliberative Democracy*.
 23. Paulis et al., The POLITICIZE dataset.
 24. Carson et al., *The Australian Citizens’ Parliament*.
 25. Warren and Pearse, *Designing Deliberative Democracy*; Hansen, “Deliberation and Forgiveness”; Gastil et al., *The Jury and Democracy*; Knobloch et al., “Emanating Effects.”
 26. Gherghina et al., “Deliberative Democracy and Political Parties.”
 27. OECD, *Innovative Citizen Participation*.
 28. Gerwin, *Citizens’ Assemblies*; Podgórska-Rykała, *Deliberative Democracy, Public Policy*; Ufel, “The First Wrocławian Citizens’ Assembly”.
 29. Pospieszna and Pietrzyk-Reeves, *Democratic Innovations*.
 30. Bustikova and Guasti, “The Illiberal Turn”; Hanley and Vachudova, “Understanding the Illiberal Turn”.
 31. The Marshal (Szymon Hołownia) of the Lower Chamber of the Polish Parliament has referred to the citizens’ assembly many times. For example, there have been discussions about the citizens’ assembly regarding abortion: <https://oko.press/na-zywo/dzien-na-zywo-najwazniejsze-informacje/holownia-chcemy-referendum-ws-aborcji-pytanie-powinnismy-ustalic-w-panelu-obywatelskim> (Accessed on April 2nd, 2024).
or on public media <https://oko.press/jak-idzie-organizacja-panelu-obywatelskiego-o-mediach-pytamy-sejm> (Accessed on April 2nd, 2024).

- See also <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75968,30644851,panele-obywatelskie-na-ratunek-demokracji.html> (Accessed on April 2nd, 2024).
32. Gastil et al., *The Australian Citizens' Parliament*; Warren and Pearce, *Designing Deliberative Democracy*; Rose, "Institutionalizing Participation".
 33. Grönlund et al., "Deliberation and Civic Virtue"; Rose, "Institutionalizing Participation".
 34. Curato et al., "Twelve Key Findings".
 35. Grönlund et al., "Disagreement and Deliberation"; Newton and Geissel, *Evaluating Democratic Innovations*:
 36. Luskin et al., "Considered Opinions".
 37. Gastil et al., *The Jury and Democracy*.
 38. Boulianne, "Building Faith in Democracy"; Knobloch et al., "Emanating Effects".
 39. Fishkin, *When the People Speak*; Luskin et al., "Considered Opinions".
 40. Rojon and Pilet, "Engaged, Indifferent, Skeptical or Critical?"
 41. Grönlund et al., "Deliberation and Civic Virtue"; Knobloch and Gastil, "Civic (re) Socialisation".
 42. Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side*; Grönlund et al. "Deliberation and Civic Virtue".
 43. Fung and Wright, *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance*; Luskin, et al., "Considered Opinions: Deliberative Polling in Britain." Luskin et al., "Deliberating across Deep Divides"; Pilet et al., "Public support for Deliberative Citizens' Assemblies"; Walsh and Elkink, "The Dissatisfied and the Engaged".
 44. van Dijk et al. "Voters of populist parties".
 45. Bowler, Donovan, and Karp, "Enraged or Engaged?," Walsh and Elkink, "The dissatisfied and the engaged: citizen support for citizens' assemblies and their willingness to participate."
 46. Jacobs, "Have a Little Faith in Deliberation?"
 47. Buzogany et al., "Evaluation Report"; Paulis et al., *Evaluation Report*.
 48. Bächtiger and Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy for Diabolical Times*
 49. Paulis and Ognibene, "Satisfied Unlike Me?"
 50. Fishkin, "Deliberative Democracy and Constitutions"; Niemeyer and Dryzek, "The Ends of Deliberation"
 51. Grönlund et al., "Does Enclave Deliberation Polarize"; Smith and Setälä, "Mini-Publics and Deliberative Democracy". However, for an opposite view see Sunstein "The Law of Group Polarization." Sunstein discusses the impact of deliberation on polarization, emphasizing that deliberation tends to move groups and individuals towards more extreme positions aligned with their pre-deliberation views. Yet, the negative findings related to group polarization in deliberations could be influenced by several factors, including the lack of skilled facilitators and the non-random selection of participants, which are present in citizens' assemblies. Of course, even in citizens' assemblies, facilitators might not be professional and might not create a conducive environment for productive deliberation, however the process usually has clear rules for discussion, emphasizes equal speaking opportunities, and mechanisms to ensure that all viewpoints are considered.
 52. Neblo et al., "Who Wants to Deliberate—and Why?"
 53. It has been organized by the Stocznia Foundation, an NGO with extensive experience in creating and supporting effective solutions for social issues, engaging citizens in public decision-making. From the CAs' materials and education phase, which we observed, we learned that Energy poverty is a situation in which we are unable to heat our homes and use electrical appliances to a sufficient extent. It is an important issue that directly affects up to 11% of the Polish population, and the indirect consequences of this phenomenon – such as poor air quality or the burden on the healthcare system – affect a much broader group of people in Poland. Energy poverty arises at the intersection of low income, high energy expenditures, and poor building condition. This problem primarily affects people living in old buildings outside the district heating network, mainly in individually heated single-family homes and in small rural areas. It is also more severe among retirees and individuals with low incomes. For more information about the topic and assembly see <https://naradaoenergii.pl/o-panelu/o-panelu/>
 54. The recruitment process for the nationwide citizens' assembly was guided by four principles. Firstly, the aim was to select a group of panelists that could be considered a faithful representation of Polish society, ensuring that their experiences and opinions could be seen as

reflective of the wider population. Secondly, the recruitment process aimed to be random, providing equal chances for all members of the general population to be invited to the assembly. Thirdly, the selection process aimed to be simple and transparent, ensuring that all interested parties could easily understand it. Lastly, the selection process aimed to be rational in terms of time and cost, avoiding excessive expenditure while ensuring representativeness. Despite challenges, including a relatively low initial interest and unforeseen withdrawals from participation, the final panel composition closely mirrored the initial objectives, with slight variations. Additionally, comparisons between the opinions of potential panelists and a broader sample showed no significant differences, indicating that the CA composition accurately represented societal diversity in opinions and experiences related to energy poverty. For more information also see <https://naradaoenergii.pl/jak-losowalismy-uczestnikow-i-uczestniczki-czyli-o-naborze/>

55. Please see the summary of the Polish nationwide citizens' assembly along with voting results, available at: <https://naradaoenergii.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/podsumowaniepanelobywatelski.pdf>
56. We opted for a subjective assessment of issue knowledge, measuring how people feel informed about the topic, instead of using a quiz-based approach that captures the objective level of knowledge. Although providing more accuracy, the latter could have extended the length of our questionnaire, implied some gender bias in the face of uncertain questions, or even some discomfort and distrust among respondents who might feel evaluated by the research team on the field. In contrast, the self-evaluation reflects participants' confidence in their understanding and provides insight into their perceived learning and awareness. It is also less issue or context-dependent and can be replicated and compared with other cases.
57. See Appendix Table 1 for operationalization and description of variables.
58. Jennings and Cribbie, "Comparing pre-post change across groups."
59. Himmelroos and Serup, "Awareness of opinion change: evidence from two deliberative mini-publics."
60. Prior, "You've either got it or you don't?"
61. Buzogany et al., "Evaluation Report"; Paulis et al., "Fair Enough?"
62. Pow et al., "It's Not Just the Taking Part that Counts"; Paulis et al., "Fair Enough?"
63. Pilet et al., "Public support for deliberative citizens' assemblies".
64. Berning and Ziller, "Social Trust and Radical Right-wing".
65. van der Does and Jaquet, "Small-Scale Deliberation"; Suiter et al., "Scaling Up Deliberation."

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