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Estelle-Fleur Galateau

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The Atelier Climat, a French citizen consultation process set up to promote sustainable development: a local democratic innovation?

Estelle-Fleur Galateau

Doctor of sociology (PhD), Université Paris Descartes Sorbonne,
Researcher Laboratoire CERLIS - Centre de Recherche sur les liens sociaux / CNRS UMR 8070
ef.galateau@orange.fr

Abstract. Climate change is a global challenge that demands coordination at every level of action, raising new issues around the importance of the effective involvement of local populations who, in taking action, are no longer seen as being disconnected from politicians and academics. Citzens' juries known as "citizen workshops" or "citizen conferences"—drawing on the principle of community information and discussion—are mushrooming in France. But what are public institutions seeking to achieve by setting up participatory processes of this kind, which take the form of democratic innovations?

Study of the *Atelier Climat* (literally, "climate workshop")—a French participatory democracy mechanism focusing on environmental issues—highlights the need for community validation in order to ensure the legitimacy of actions undertaken at the local level. This process can be viewed as a form of local democratic innovation, in its form, in its duration, and in the consultation that takes place between citizens and representatives, but one that nonetheless calls for geographical decentering and for collaboration between all actors in society in order to spread and be effective. It is a step-by-step innovation, conducive to the adoption of new practices—providing it is reappropriated, disseminated and imitated by everyone involved.

Keywords. Citizen workshops, Citizens' juries, Citizen consultation, Democratic innovation, Participatory democracy, Changing behaviors, Environment, Efficient consumption, Waste, France

1. Introduction

Climate change is a global challenge that demands coordination at every level of action, raising new issues around the importance of the effective involvement of local populations who, in taking action, are no longer seen as being disconnected from politicians and academics. The international context, moreover, is markedly characterized by a resurgence of food crises: food shortages for poor countries, and food safety issues for emerging and developed countries. On either side, we are seeing rising competition for access to raw materials and energy between the developed countries and the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa). This context of risk, of crisis—and even of ecological and climatic catastrophe—has brought the topic of sustainable development to political and media prominence in France and around the world. Faced with the difficulty of the situation, and of implementing the solutions, new questions have come to the fore about the limits of representative democracy and about whether we should create alternative structures for delegating power to citizens in order to recognize the emergence of these new societal issues.

"Citizen workshops" or "citizen conferences"—drawing on the principle of community information and discussion—are mushrooming in France (D. Bourg & K. Whiteside, 2010). But what are public institutions seeking to achieve by setting up participatory processes of this kind, which take the form of democratic innovations? Our research chose to focus on the Atelier Climat, a series of climate-change workshops originally anchored in the *Plan Climat* adopted in 2007 by the Urban Community of Nantes (Nantes Métropole) in western France with the aim of halving the city's greenhouse gas emissions by 2025. Nantes Métropole piloted an experimental approach—the first in France with such a scope and duration—monitoring 150 local households over the course of one year. The workshops set out to measure the barriers and limitations preventing changes in people's habits, as well as the factors encouraging change; they also sought to test public

policies designed to support people in changing or adapting their habits. The first meeting between the selected households that agreed to take part was on June 26, 2010. Two types of involvement were proposed: the F3 formula (three climate-change meetings) and the F7 formula (the same, plus four meetings on other themes).

The goal of the Atelier Climat initiative was to shed light on people's practices in terms of consumption, waste, and travel—as well as in terms of energy and habitat—in order to see what could be done, in Nantes Métropole, to promote participation and integrate these practices into sustainable development. It was also expected to shed light on the main mechanisms of change, identifying the associated perceptions and margins for maneuver. For the participants, the end goal was to produce a citizens' response to four key questions: 1) What did participants plan to do, individually and collectively, towards achieving Nantes Métropole's climate objective? 2) What were the main obstacles they encountered for reducing their greenhouse gas emissions? 3) What would enable them to do more to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and how could Nantes Métropole help them in that? 4) How could the 600,000 inhabitants of Nantes Métropole, as a whole, be made to play an active part in cutting greenhouse gas emissions significantly?

In order to study this process, we needed to understand in what way the question of sustainable development might change, or not, people's everyday practices, and if so, how. Our objective was to assess the impact of the Atelier Climat initiative on participants, not only in terms of changing behaviors, but also to understand to what extent participants felt socially or ideologically empowered by their participation in this instrument of participatory democracy. We therefore started out from the postulate that we were, in the specific context of sustainable development, dealing with a democratic "*innovation*"[1]. And if innovation was there, the question remained as to how it might be disseminated, and what goals the various actors were trying to achieve through it. It was necessary to analyze the innovation's impact on the behavior of the participants and, indeed, on how the different stakeholders viewed the joint policy-making process.

2. Methodology

Our investigative work followed an inductive method, developing the principles of "*grounded theory*" as advocated by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm A. Strauss (1967, repr. 2010). In other words, we were seeking to explore the "reality" in the field without strong initial hypotheses and without presupposing the results. The aim of our approach was to understand how the actors themselves (workshop participants, local authority sponsors, and consultants involved in the project) framed the issue of the articulation between sustainable development and participatory democracy. We investigated the object presented by the actors and on how it could be interpreted sociologically. Our inquiries therefore focused on the three main instances that structure social life and model behaviors, namely the material instance (the place of objects, spaces and time), the social instance (notably power relations) and the imaginary instance (the symbols and representations that give meaning to everyday practices) (S. Alami, D. Desjeux & I. Garabuau-Moussaoui, 2009). The objective was to distinguish practices from representations: it was important, in our investigations, to differentiate effective practices (what people actually did), from their representations (value judgments and opinions), and indeed from their imaginary constructs (the meaning they gave to their practices and representations).

The Atelier Climat households were recruited by the survey institute TMO from a representative panel of 2,500 inhabitants of the Nantes conurbation. The panel was created at the start of the initiative. A second selection was then made, to bring the total down to 150 households (based on climate-related questions, awareness of environmental issues, motivations for joining the Atelier Climat, and refinement of the representation criteria), under the guidance of the consulting firm *Missions Publiques*[2]. We then interviewed 44 of these 150 households by means of direct semi-structured interviews. They were selected on six criteria: age, geographical situation (central Nantes versus outlying areas of the conurbation), number of children, residential status (owner or tenant), place of residence (collective or individual housing) and, finally, socio-economic category.

A number of observations were also carried out at Atelier Climat workshop sessions, using an analysis grid divided up into four sections, corresponding to the questions listed above. This was accompanied by an analysis of the discourse of Nantes Métropole representatives (mayors, deputy mayors, and "technical" managers of the Atelier Climat project), and a study of the actions initiated after the representatives had read the Citizens' Opinion, in order to understand which visions and challenges were or were not shared with regard to the citizen participation process.

3. The Atelier Climat, a new form of citizen consultation, aimed at making public environmental policies more "effective"?

In the 1960s and 70s, Western democracy came to be seen in a new light, notably when Pierre Mendès France, in 1962, defined his view of democracy as "*continual citizen action*" (L. Blondiaux, 2008). The social unrest of the 1970s, echoing the American protest movements, and the economic crisis (particularly the oil shortages of 1973 and 1979) marked the end of the "*Trente Glorieuses*", France's post-war boom. Economic difficulties brought successive governments into doubt and disrepute, and the popularity of the political class began to decline. This went hand-in-hand, over the following years—especially the 1990s—with a growing disinterest in modes of expression based on representative democracy. But other forms of expression have gradually gained in popularity; citizen participation is being considered anew.

[1] Recognized by the presentation of the innovation prize—at the Victoires award ceremony organized by the magazine Acteurs Publics—to Jean-Marc Ayrault, then deputy-mayor of Nantes Métropole, on July 6, 2011, for the Atelier Climat.

[2] Missions Publiques, a consulting firm that specializes in assisting people involved in public life, was tasked with organizing and facilitating the Atelier Climat.

The aptitude of "*ordinary*" citizens to question traditional forms of expertise by drawing on their own original forms of knowledge are seen as potentially "*useful*" to public action (U. Beck, 1986, repr. 2008). An injection of citizen knowledge would, in this view, revitalize the existing public institutions. "*Conventional*" representative democracy, despite the name, is no longer seen as a way of ensuring that the citizen's voice is heard. And it is from this particular context, linked to the outbreak of health and environmental scandals (the "mad cow" crisis and the Chernobyl catastrophe in 1986, the GMO debate in the early 1990s), that the idea emerged of a "*participatory imperative*" that would put flesh back on the bones of the system, and would again give "*ordinary*" citizens the opportunity for debate; this alternative being "*participatory democracy"* (L. Blondiaux, 2008). Moreover, to address the current environmental problems, the "*ecological challenge*" calls for us to "*rethink democracy itself*", in order to guarantee its "*effectiveness*" (D. Bourg, 2010).

The Atelier Climat follows in the participatory footsteps of the citizens' jury, although with its own specificities. The Atelier Climat differs from other citizen workshops by its size (150 participants) and duration (one year). It nonetheless follows the ternary rhythm peculiar to the mechanisms of participatory democracy. The original "citizens conference" method provided for the process to be divided up into three successive and clearly delimited phases: the "*preparatory training*" phase, the "*holding of the debate and writing of the debate report*" and its "*public presentation*" (J. Ferrando y Puig, 2007). However, these three different phases are not as strictly delimited as might appear, as each work session contains moments of training, but also of debate, and "*capitalization*" with a view to drafting the final version of the "Citizens' Opinion". While these three phases do indeed interlace in the Atelier Climat, the fact remains that one can distinguish different forms of work, and different types of interaction, operating alternately and in a complementary manner throughout the collective reflection process. We therefore adopt the time phases described above—using a "*three-stroke engine"* model—but restricting the final phase to the drafting of the opinion.

To stimulate participants' thinking about their own practices, but also to fulfill Nantes Métropole's promise to "*provide participants with a range of tools enabling them to obtain information or take action on climate change issues throughout the duration of the workshop"*[3], the workshop sessions were punctuated by discussions with outside speakers, who can be grouped into three main categories: elected representatives, inhabitants of Nantes Métropole, and voluntary groups or professionals.

Each Atelier Climat session was structured into timed discussion periods, with participants working in sub-groups. The debate was sparked by questions, defined in advance by the Nantes Métropole organizers and the consultants from *Missions Publiques*, which were put to the participants. The purpose of these questions was to prepare the ground for a "*citizen debate*" by inviting participants to think about their practices, about the changes they thought they might be able to undertake, and about the actions that Nantes Métropole could implement, or encourage, to facilitate those changes. Participants could record their ideas on a specially provided response sheet. Each group was asked to appoint a "*rapporteur*", tasked with noting down the fruit of the group's joint reflection. Their brief, however, was not to arrive at a general consensus at any price, but rather to reflect faithfully the different opinions and tensions that the questions might elicit.

After the second climate meeting (in the middle of the process), which was common to the different participation formulas, the *Missions Publiques* consultants, with the support of the Nantes Métropole organizers, turned their attention to the drafting of the Citizens' Opinion. The two remaining 'thematic' sessions were supposed to be focused primarily on the writing stage. Accordingly, at thematic meetings 3 and 4, in February and April, the formula 7 participants were asked to reflect, in sub-groups, on the main questions posed by the elected representatives around the themes of travel and consumption, in February, followed by habitat/energy and waste, in April.

Another specific feature of the Atelier Climat was the differentiation of participants into two distinct formulas. At the start of the Atelier Climat, participants were given the choice between two formulas, corresponding to different levels of involvement in the workshop. Formula 3 (F3) required participation in the three climate meetings (June 2010, January 2011 and June 2011). Formula 7 (F7) required more active participation and greater investment, with a total of seven meetings throughout the year (the three climate meetings plus four thematic meetings, in September, November, February, and April).

This differentiation into two levels of involvement stemmed from Nantes Métropole's wish to test the hypothesis that more sustained "*accompaniment*" of certain households would lead to a more significant change of behavior in those households. With regard to the group dynamics, there was, it should be said, a degree of "*difficulty*"[4] involved in maintaining the two groups for the duration of the project: the F3s had the feeling of being a "*sub-group*", while the F7s felt that the climate meetings served only as "*catch-up sessions*" [5] for the participants who did not attend the thematic meetings.

This notion of "catching up" strikes us as problematic. How could the F3 participants be expected to catch up with the discussions of the F7s, which were informed by the presentations of the various speakers? How can one ensure the same degree of "*maturity*" (L. Blondiaux, 2008) from participants when responding to the questions posed by Nantes Métropole? From an organizational viewpoint, the consultant-facilitators were pulled in two directions when putting together the general climate meetings. Each formula, it transpired, needed to have its own type of emulation. The formula 7 participants needed to have access to information following on from what they had previously learned at the thematic meetings, while the formula 3 participants needed to adhere to the process.

[3] From the mutual commitment document between the participants and Nantes Métropole, dated April 15, 2010

[4] Term used in the final analysis report submitted to Nantes Métropole

[5] Comments made by participants

4. The impacts of the Atelier Climat: effective awareness-raising, but easy backsliding

Our results focused, initially, on the citizen-participants' representations of current society, to understand what criticisms (if any) they had about it, and how the lifestyles that it conveyed might conflict with their values. It emerged that there is a clear link between an openly asserted environmental awareness and the decision to adopt a lifestyle that generates less greenhouse gas.

Society's current mode of consumption is fiercely criticized, as encouraging unbridled consumption. The consumer, disconnected from the real value of products, is described as constantly assailed by temptation in temples of consumption such as supermarkets, subjected to "*alluring*" offers by advertising, overwhelmed by an overabundance of goods, spurred on by low prices and easy credit, and forced to keep buying more and more stuff, due to planned obsolescence. The current consumption system is seen as a spiral, in which the possessor—the consumer—is in fact possessed: "[This is] *an ultra-consumer society. Just take a look at any supermarket at the moment: it's all over the place, it's dripping from the ceiling. Lights everywhere, toys everywhere, food everywhere. (...) It's the same every year, it's gross overproduction."* (E2, female, 37).

Standing in opposition to the current society of overconsumption, the sustainable city—as defined by our interviewees—is one that develops a different way of relating to consumption, to the environment, to social interaction and to governance. Purchases are planned, reasoned; lifestyles are slower, less subject to the "*dictatorship*" of "whatever I want, when I want it", or the "*shazamization"* that drives impulse buying (O. Badot & J.-F. Lemoine, 2011). Modes of production are more environmentally friendly. In this view, the society of overconsumption has reached its limits, notably in the exploitation of resources and raw materials, and needs to be rethought, or even redesigned. To do so requires prompt and firm measures by leaders, jointly decreed with the citizen-users, which may resemble forms of compulsion and restrictions on freedom, but would draw legitimacy from the urgency of the climate-change issue: "*I'm basically in favor of the 'you have to force people' approach (...) For example, if we want to be able to do without oil in thirty years' time, we can't go on having gas at 1 euro 50 a liter. It's ridiculous! One day, we'll be up against the wall, and all hell will break loose. We ought to plan ahead to prevent that! By compulsion!"* (E7, female, 35).

The survey observed a shared environmental awareness that drives citizen-participants to act in order to preserve the planet at different levels of action (from buying local, in-season produce, to joining voluntary groups, or participating in citizen consultation forums) to address the issue of climate change and put in place a society more conducive to the requirements of sustainable development. For the participants, their engagement with the Atelier Climat would enable them to adopt still more environmentally responsible behavior, in harmony with their own values. Their patterns of consumption are laden with symbolic implications. Their ethical, social, and above all ecological concerns seem to constantly refer back to the question of meaning in current consumption practices (N. Ozcaglar-Toulouse, 2009). It would also seem that the public authorities, through the notion of sustainable development, encourage and institutionalize a form of consumption that aims to be more "*sustainable*", open to the interplay between economic, ecological and social considerations. Such an institutionalization could also be achieved via the Atelier Climat, with incentives to adopt certain, more environmentally responsible, behaviors and the transmission of information about "*good*" and "*bad*" practices. This transmission is only seen as legitimate and effective, however, through the collaboration between inhabitants and representatives: "*They* [politicians and representatives] *have information available to them […] that they don't share… democratically!"* (E15, male, 60).

The **inhabitants' involvement in actions implemented at the scale of the conurbation seems to be a quasi-intrinsic necessity**; participants can no longer conceive of an effective environmental action being dictated and imposed by representatives without prior citizen consultation: "*Unity is strength; everyone should make their own small contribution, and it produces a big idea… Otherwise, it's always the politicians that decide, which isn't very good either: you feel cheated, and you get the impression you're not being listened to"* (E9, female, 63). And the current crisis in attitudes toward the political class is seen as being rooted in a growing awareness of the global dimension of issues, which calls for a reconciliation between citizens and political elites by setting up forms of international regulation deemed "*credible*" and "*effective*", in order to address global challenges collectively (R. Rochefort, 1995, repr. 2005). The participants in the Atelier Climat saw their action in this light: useful, necessary, effective and innovative, on the absolute condition that they are listened to, and that their action is broadened out, to be reproduced in other cities and regions.

From the viewpoint of political actors and local authorities, moreover, citizen participation plays an important role in ensuring appropriation, by individuals, of the actions implemented and services put in place. Three main expectations about citizen-participants were voiced at the start of the workshop, and confirmed afterwards: a critical reading of public policy; genuine citizen involvement to jointly initiate behavioral change; and mobilization by citizens and politicians alike to follow through on actions. The main idea resulting from the Atelier Climat is that the citizen, as a user of services (for example, water and waste), also has a role—a determining role—to play in designing public policy, notably by bringing simple or facilitative solutions to precise problems: "(…) *we really count on the citizens engaged in this approach to help us better adapt public policy, and to take citizen initiatives that will bring about the relevant changes of behavior*" (Fabrice Roussel, Mayor of Chapelle-sur-Erdre, at climate meeting 2 on January 22, 2011).

Finally, it is equally important to prolong the process of reflection by examining the choice made by the citizens of Nantes Métropole—who agreed to participate for a year in this innovative citizen participation process (with no remuneration or financial consideration)—and their experience of

the project. In deciding to reconnect with the "*freedom of the Ancients*", by participating in joint public decision-making, they also demonstrated a "*collective ethic of citizen experience"* (R. Barbier et al., 2009). This took the form of a time-investment, assiduous attendance of meetings (for the most committed), and great care taken in the wording of each opinion, to make sure that it reflected as closely as possible their own requests and demands. One of the core demands of these deeply committed citizen-participants, moreover, was that the representatives of Nantes Métropole lead by example and listen to what they had to say, so that the workshop was not looked upon as the "*hobby horse*"[6] of a few randomly chosen citizens, in an attempt at political *"manipulation*"[7].

Conscious of their role, and of its implications for the city's other inhabitants, the participants experienced the initiative as a new way of taking back local political power from representatives whom they saw as too removed from citizens' concerns. However, without seeking to minimize the value and importance of the work involved in the citizen opinion, it is worth asking to what extent the participants' recommendations (sometimes influenced by the representatives' expectations) were always relevant. We must also address the question of the possible dissemination of the Atelier Climat as a process of innovation.

5. A democratic innovation? Between uptake and the limits of the process: a step-by-step innovation

The Atelier Climat is certainly an innovative workshop in its form and duration relative to the usual citizen workshop or jury format (D. Bourg & D. Boy, 2005); but can we really describe it as an innovative process? Creativity may indeed be an "*inseparable component of the innovation process*", in the definition given by N. Alter (2001) and G. Gaglio (2011), but creativity does not subsume the innovation process. Bundling creativity and innovation together would restrict the process of innovation to the phase of generating new ideas, and, moreover, runs the risk of individualizing it. In the academic literature and in institutional reports, multiple criteria are used to define innovation. The first is usually that we are looking at an innovation whenever a design process gives birth to an "*artifact*" or a "*system*". The second is about bringing a novelty to market, or "*integrating*" it into production.

Following N. Alter, G. Gaglio prefers to opt for a "*more open criterion*": for him, innovation supposes "***the emergence of new social practices***". He starts out from the question: "*What usages are there?*" since "*novelty becomes innovation through the intermediacy of usage"*. It is also, in his view, through the emergence of new social practices that "***appropriation***" occurs. It is this "*appropriation*", then, that puts the seal of durability on a novelty, by transforming it, de facto, into an innovation. By granting it a place in daily life, "*appropriation*" implies "*becoming more familiar*"; it is, in Gaglio's words, "*the pivotal stage*" of any innovation process.

In the case of the Atelier Climat, it would be fair to say that local terrain was "*conducive*" to the emergence of a new form of citizen workshop, given the many participatory democracy workshops and other mechanisms already in place across the city. But although the process was hailed and appreciated, notably for its scope, its impacts remained limited. While there were indeed some changes in participants' daily practices, thanks to the Atelier Climat experiment, they tended to be modest, even marginal. There were no major turnarounds leading to drastic cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, through the adoption of a "*zero carbon*" lifestyle. Admittedly, the aim of the workshop was not to create anti-growth militants, but simply to initiate meaningful changes. However, in the two areas studied and analyzed most closely—consumption and waste management—the main changes observed concern the purchase of fresh, local, seasonal produce, and the introduction of selective waste sorting, which are nonetheless quite limited.

Although the results are difficult to analyze quantitatively, it would nonetheless seem that the F7 households made greater changes to their behaviors in certain areas of action. However, the stronger commitment of the F7s, and their involvement in the initiative, could account for their tendency to adopt lower-carbon behaviors, without the Atelier Climat being a determining factor.

The more sustainable practices adopted by the participants are therefore reflected essentially by a form of day-to-day commitment, but one that fluctuates over the long term and is, in reality, revocable. While the levers presented during the sessions did enable some participants to adopt new practices, the constraints (mainly financial, temporal, and spatial) are still, for most, simply too strong for them to make significant changes.

Finally, the question of the process's duration is also a key point. It seems that the main difficulty of the Atelier Climat was its ability to mobilize people for a citizen workshop over a long period (one year), leading to "*weakness of bonds*" (J. Ferrando y Puig, 2012). This "*weakness"* of bonds is echoed in the lack of exchanges between participants since the end of the workshop, and the paucity of feedback, by the representatives, on the proposals set out in the Citizens' Opinion. The prevailing sense was that the workshop had been useful and necessary, but that it had not followed through on its actions.

This would place the Atelier Climat upstream of "*the epidemiological curve*" of innovation, after H. Mendras and F. Forsé (1983), between the "*pioneers*" and the "*innovators*", or, in the curve as reinterpreted by D. Desjeux (2007), between the "*innovators*" and the "*early adopters*". While the results of this innovation may seem minimal, they are far from being insignificant. The process of innovating participatory democracy, as implemented in the Atelier Climat experiment, needs to be adopted and assimilated into practices and usages, but it also needs time to be disseminated and (re)appropriated. It also attests to a particularly strong desire for collaboration between politicians and citizens/inhabitants in an innovative citizen consultation process; one that calls out

[6] "Lubie"—a word used by participants during the interviews.
[7] An expression used by participants during the interviews.

to be extended beyond the local setting, for greater engagement with the wider world.

6. Conclusion

The individual (inhabitant-citizen-user) is now placed at the center of a new relationship between politicians and scientists. This new position seems to signal a determination to refocus environmental issues on the actions of individuals, henceforth seen as key actors in the development of a more sustainable society. They are also seen as participating in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and in the protection of the environment in general, through their adoption of more frugal practices. Inviting inhabitants to take part in local citizens' juries therefore recognizes, to a degree, a form of expertise specific to them. This expertise may manifest itself, as we saw during the Atelier Climat, in a willingness to co-design environmental action plans.

Following our study of the Atelier Climat, several determining factors can be highlighted regarding the design, implementation and monitoring of the process. Firstly, the **question of time** was a central point for the workshop. It seems that the main constraint of the Atelier Climat as the difficulty of mobilizing people over a long period (one year). From an organizational angle, the participants had to set aside Saturdays for the workshop sessions; while relatively simple in autumn and winter, this became much more difficult in spring and summer, outside of school term time. And while interest, from a theoretical viewpoint, in the Atelier Climat was sustained throughout the process, it tended to dissipate when faced with **day-to-day obligations**. Finally, it seems that the "*weakness of bonds"*, to quote Judith Ferrando y Puig—or the "strength of constraints", as we have called it—is due to the lack of appropriation of the tools set up to generate a group dynamic, such as the workshop extranet on the Nantes Métropole website, or the various visits proposed to sites around Nantes (notably waste processing sites). Being unable to maintain a shared dynamic, especially for formula 3 participants, the Atelier Climat lost in intensity. The "strength of constraints" is also evident in the lack of exchanges between participants since the end of June 2011.

The interviewees also underline a **lack of action by elected representatives** of Nantes Métropole, when it comes to implementing the proposals contained in the Citizens' Opinion: *"There were no really concrete actions following the Citizens' Opinion, just a string of well-meaning statements. The development of public transport, which has intensified, was in the Opinion… but that had been planned long before!"* (Interview in January 2013 n4, male, 53). This lack of action is shrouded in a sense of uncertainty, due to an absence of precise information as to which proposals had or had not been followed up: *"(…) it's very hard for us to know what concrete actions were taken following the Opinion… There's no denying that many projects have come into being since, and on the whole we are satisfied with the actions carried out… But we have the feeling that many of those actions were decided on beforehand, or in response to other, more detailed, consultations conducted just before the workshop"* (Interview in January 2013 n7, female, 35).

So, despite the feedback on the actions initiated at the meeting on October 22, 2011, regarding certain proposals in the Citizens' Opinion (principally, introducing new sorting instructions backed up by "sorting ambassadors", a twenty-euro subsidy for buying a composter, and a personalized nutrition guide for all inhabitants), the prevailing sense was that the workshop had been useful and necessary, but that it had not followed through on its actions. In light of that, **annual general meetings, following up on the Atelier Climat, but expanded and opened up to all inhabitants of Nantes Métropole**—and punctuated by participant interventions and representative responses on the actions resulting from the workshop—would give the process some continuity. Such meetings would also provide a detailed update on the actions undertaken following the citizen consultation, thereby demonstrating the value of the work done by the participants.

The fact that the citizen panel was made up of households that had already shown an interest in the topic could be construed as a limitation on the initiative. As it happens, in 2011, the Rhône-Alpes regional authority also organized a citizens' "Climate" jury, made up of 35 citizen-participants who had no special sensitivity to environmental issues. They were selected at random, and agreed to take part in the jury—meeting three times, in April, May and July 2011—for a payment of 200 euros. Their discussions were designed to "*inform*" the content of the various regional climate plans. Also in France, in Franche-Comté, four citizens' juries met twice (on September 29 and October 20, 2012) to discuss "*key issues*" in the regional planning and sustainable development scheme. Again, the citizen-participants were selected at random; each jury consisted of 15 to 16 citizens, who were not informed about, or sensitized to, the questions discussed. Finally, they were also paid for their time. It seems that some financial reward, even if only symbolic, makes it easier to reach out to individuals with no special inclination for environmental issues and participatory democracy, enabling them to discover new forms of citizen debate. A payment, based on attendance of sessions, might also offer a solution to the logistical problems encountered by participants, and encourage them to be more constant in their commitment.

On the innovative character of the process, it is worth underlining the **innovative adaptations** in the form of the citizens' jury by the Atelier Climat. These adaptations concerned the **total participant headcount** (150 at start, versus 25 to 30 for most citizens' juries (A. Vergne, 2013)), the **creation of two participant groups, F3 and F7** (which is innovative for the "conventional" format of citizen consultation processes), and the **overall duration** (one year, as opposed to a few days or a few months for other citizens' juries and programs). Additionally, the **changes in usage are real**, even if limited to a fraction of the population. Consequently, the process works, but there are heavy constraints on citizens in their daily lives. It is these constraints that need to be lifted, in order to ensure stronger and more continuous participant involvement.

In conclusion, our study of the Atelier Climat raises questions about the end objectives of setting up new participatory democracy processes on a local scale. If, as we saw, such processes are organized and called upon to ensure

"*effectiveness"* and legitimacy for public policy, then doubts may be expressed as to their "*effectiveness*" in driving the uptake of low-carbon practices, notably due to the constraints under which the participants operate.

There is a gap between the ideal models of participatory democracy, which see it as the most "*effective*" way to respond to our current environmental challenges, and the realities of putting these models into practice. On the one hand, the question remains as to how to generalize these mechanisms. Citizens' juries, anchored at the local scale, should be amenable to being generalized or rolled out on a larger scale, in order to have a wider impact, and to lead to the implementation of decisive, meaningful, and consistent solutions and action plans. On the other hand, at the citizen workshop sessions, participants are placed at the center point of environmental challenges, investing them with a role and a scope of action that may be out of their reach. If behavioral changes are to be initiated at the individual scale, they must also be accompanied by new, more appropriate, infrastructures, with public authorities and manufacturers leading by example.

The Atelier Climat is indeed a **form of local democratic innovation**, in the numbers involved, its division into two groups, its duration, and its goal of collaboration between locals and representatives; but it is one that calls for a continuity of approach, for geographical decentering, and for collaboration between all actors in society in order to spread and be "*effective*". It is a **step-by-step innovation**, conducive to the adoption of new practices—providing it is reappropriated, disseminated and imitated by everyone involved.

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