

**“End of the world, end of the month, same struggle”:  
On depoliticized transitions and emancipatory  
sustainability transformations**

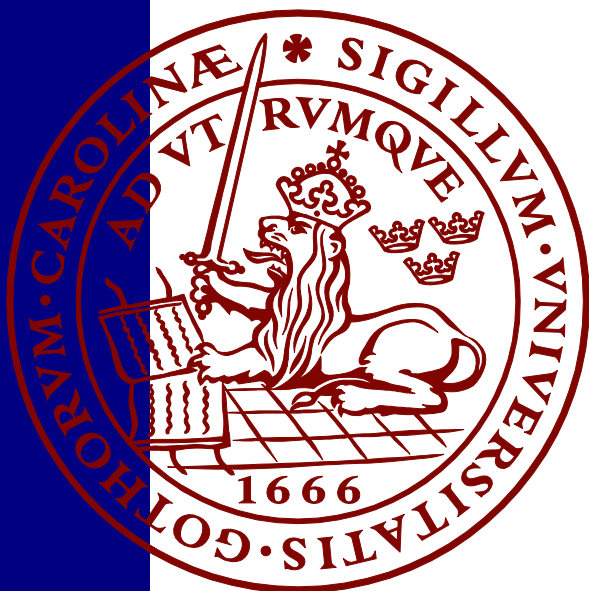
A case study of The French Citizens’ Convention on Climate

*Robin Denz*

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Lund University  
International Master’s Programme in Environmental Studies and Sustainability Science  
(30hp/credits)



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Lund University Centre for  
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Submitted May 11, 2021

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## **Abstract**

Reflecting an emerging trend in democratic innovation to tackle complex socio-ecological challenges, the French Citizens' Convention on Climate (CCC) was initiated in response to climate protests and the Yellow Vests movement to define measures for achieving a socially just 40% reduction in GHG-emissions. Approaching the CCC as both an outcome and site of hegemonic struggle, I apply social movements theory and document analysis methods to investigate its genealogy, policy proposals, influence on decision-making, and evaluate its potential for sustainability transformations. My findings show that while the CCC produced an ambitious set of measures, only a small fraction was transposed into legislation after systematic unraveling by powerholders. Whether similar citizens' assemblies can have transformative rather than system-reinforcing effects will largely depend on the degree of binding power they are endowed with, and the capacity of social movements to win significant concessions and leverage their positive social outcomes to build counter-hegemonic power.

**Keywords:** citizens' assembly; social movements; degrowth; sustainability; democratic innovation; yellow vests

**Word count: 11 994**

## **Abstract [French]**

La Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat (CCC) a été initiée en réponse aux mobilisations pour le climat et celles des Gilets jaunes afin de définir des mesures permettant d'atteindre une baisse d'au moins 40% des émissions de GES dans un esprit de justice sociale. Elle reflète l'émergence d'une nouvelle tendance à l'innovation démocratique pour faire face aux complexes défis socio-environnementaux. Dans ce mémoire, j'aborde la CCC comme résultat et champ de bataille d'une lutte hégémonique. J'étudie sa généalogie, ses mesures et son degré d'influence politique afin d'en évaluer le potentiel de transformation sociale et écologique. Alors que les membres de la CCC sont parvenus à produire un ensemble de mesures ambitieuses, seule une fraction a été reprise sans filtre à la suite d'un détricotage systématique par l'exécutif et sa majorité. Le potentiel transformateur d'assemblées citoyennes similaires dépendra du degré de pouvoir juridiquement contraignant dont elles seront dotées, ainsi que de la capacité des mouvements sociaux de tirer parti de celles-là pour obtenir des concessions et contribuer à la construction d'un bloc contre-hégémonique.

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To my parents for their unconditional love and support, and for showing understanding for this radicalized son of theirs. To my sisters, these two warriors I admire. And to my penguin for waddling this warming world with me.

*il est des sols arides qui enfantent l'étincelle  
et embrasent ces chiffons imbibés  
de l'ivresse de nos fronts  
où l'espoir et le dégoût se coulent en certitude  
celle d'un geste en arc de cercle  
d'une lueur qui traverse la nuit  
où chante au présent la chaussée éventrée  
de grands soirs en petits matins  
on ne cultive pas la terre sans se salir les mains*

## **Abbreviations**

CA	Citizens' assembly
CCC	Citizens' Convention on Climate
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CESE	Economic, Social and Environmental Council
CNTE	National Council for Ecological Transition
CR	Critical realism
DI	Democratic Innovation
GHG	Greenhouse gas emissions
HCC	High Council on Climate
ICA	Ireland's Citizens' Assembly
SMO	Social movement organization
WTR	Work time reduction
XR	Extinction Rebellion

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*It is better to imagine the end of capitalism than to imagine the end of the world.*  
Jason Hickel (2021)

*Do not run for the hills. Instead, study the apocalypse, map its terrain, and plan your intervention. It is selfish to jump ship when there are not enough lifeboats for everyone. We must conspire to take the helm.*

Jonathan Smucker (2017)

## 1. Introduction

Metastasis describes a process of uncontrolled growth and spread of pathogenic cells to new parts of the body, siphoning life-supporting energy from them until eventually, overwhelmed, the host dies. What cancer is to the human body, capitalist/growthist economies have become for this planet and its inhabitants, human and non-human alike. Symptoms of what O'Connor (1988; 1991) called the two contradictions of capitalism become harder and harder to ignore: recurring economic crises (Shaikh, 2017), persisting or increasing inequality and concentration of income and wealth (UNDESA, 2020), a global wave of uprisings against elite capture of politics that closed the last decade (Safi, 2019), the Covid-19 pandemic opening the new decade, all of this against the backdrop of looming runaway global warming (IPCC, 2018; Steffen et al., 2018) and ecological breakdown (IPBES, 2019). Clearly, we have entered an era of chronic emergency (Malm, 2020) that displays the incapacity of capitalist/growthist economies to meet the needs of all, let alone within planetary boundaries (Hickel, 2019). A radical and egalitarian transformation towards real sustainability is “no longer a ‘merely’ normative desideratum, but an existential question” (Hammond, 2020, p. 222).

In France, the simultaneous emergence of large-scale climate protests and the Yellow vests movement in late 2018 is a testimony of these contradictions. Created by President Macron in response to these escalating tensions, the Citizens' Convention on Climate (CCC) has been presented as an unprecedented experiment to address a twofold democratic and climate emergency (CCC, 2019). Representative of France's demography, the 150 randomly selected members of this citizens' assembly (CA) were called upon to elaborate a set of measures to achieve a 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by 2030 (compared to 1990) in a spirit of social justice. These measures, Macron (2019) pledged, would be “submitted unfiltered either to parliamentary vote, referendum, or direct regulatory application” (43:50). The CCC met for 7 weekend-sessions from October 2019 to June 2020, and eventually presented 149 proposals set out in a 460-page report (CCC, 2020).

As part of an emerging trend in participatory-deliberative democratic innovations (DI), the CCC is an example of the growing use of CAs to address climate change (e.g. Ireland, UK, Germany, Scotland) (Courant, 2020a; Giraudet et al., 2021; Newig et al., 2019). Two research gaps motivate this thesis. On a theoretical level, such approaches have long been promoted to improve environmental decision-making (Baber & Bartlett, 2018). However, little has been said on how such DIs fit into the context of sustainability transformations beyond current political-economic systems (Hammond, 2020). Second, on an empirical level, CAs can be studied along two lines: research on the procedure (structure and deliberation processes) and substance (content and impact) (Giraudet et al., 2021). Given that CAs addressing socio-environmental issues are a recent and still marginal trend in politics, few case studies have been produced to date, as noted by Devaney et al. (2020) for Ireland's Citizens' Assembly (ICA). In the case of the French CCC, procedural research has been published to some extent at the time of writing (Courant, 2020b, 2020a; Giraudet et al., 2021; Mellier, 2020). Substantial research however is still largely a blank sheet to be filled.

### **1.1. Aim, research question(s), and structure**

With this case study, I wish to address these two research gaps. By studying the French CCC in the context of social movements, my objective is to produce empirical knowledge on its substance (content and impact). Building on this, I aim to contribute to the theoretical discussion on the potential of CAs for sustainability transformations<sup>1</sup>. Hence my overarching research question:

*To what extent and under what conditions can citizens' assemblies such as the CCC steer sustainability transformations?*

To answer this question, I first align with scholars and activists who seek to re-politicize sustainability research and practice by building on a heuristic distinction between emancipatory 'transformations' and depoliticized 'transitions' (2. *Emancipatory sustainability research*). Notwithstanding these efforts, Goetz et al., (2020) found that such literature "remains largely silent about supporting theories of change, ontologies, methodologies, and principles—and/or the ways in which transformation, sustainability, and democracy are interrelated" (p.335). Hence, I develop a theoretical model grounded in a discussion of strategies for transformation and the role of democratic innovations for 'constructive deliberation' and of social movements for 'disruptive deliberation' (3. *Theoretical framework*). This model guides my analysis of the CCC as both an outcome and site of hegemonic struggle between (a) the government's attempt to restore consent for a depoliticized transition agenda, and (b) civil society's efforts to democratically build a counter-hegemonic project of emancipatory sustainability

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<sup>1</sup> Forsberg (2020) approached the ICA from a similar perspective.

transformation. Grounded in critical realism, the analysis is designed as an instrumental single case study using methods of document analysis and critical discourse analysis (4. *Methodology*). Three sub-questions structure my inquiry (5. *Analysis*):

- SQ1: *How did the CCC emerge?* (5.1)
- SQ2: *What is the transformative potential of the measures proposed by the CCC?* (5.2)
- SQ3: *To what extent did the CCC's propositions influence decision-making?* (5.3)

While not treated in a self-standing section, a fourth sub-question informed both my analysis and my discussion:

- SQ4: *How did environmental social movement organizations (SMO) strategically position themselves towards the CCC as part of their social-environmental commitment?*

Building on these insights, I formulate analytical generalizations to draw tentative lessons and recommendations (6. *Discussion*) regarding future CAs (6.2) and strategy for social movements as agents of transformation (6.1).

## **2. Emancipatory sustainability research: on transitions and transformations**

While the 1960-70s introduced ideas about ecological limits to growth, from the 1980s on a reformist sustainability discourse took hold (Riedy, 2020). As an empty/floating signifier (Brown, 2016), the concept of sustainability lends itself to contrasting interpretations spanning mere performative politics (Blühdorn & Deflorian, 2019), reformist efforts such as the Sustainability Development Goals, and visions for radical socioecological changes (Riedy, 2020). In practice, it has largely failed to deliver on its promises (Stirling, 2014). In this context, *transition* and *transformation* have emerged as new buzzwords (Blythe et al., 2018), in what Goetz et al. (2020) see as a strategic semantic shift to signify a fresh start. Their interchangeable use however obscures conflicting understandings about what exactly the problem is, what must be changed, and by whom (Brand & Wissen, 2018; Scoones et al., 2020). Several scholars hence build on a heuristic distinction between these terms to remedy this conceptual ambiguity and repoliticize sustainability research and praxis (Pelenc et al., 2019). In the absence of such distinction, Stirling (2014) argues, discourses become vulnerable to systematic subversion by dominant actors.

### **2.1. Depoliticized sustainability transitions as modernization**

The vast body of research on sustainability transitions importantly highlights the need for system-wide changes as opposed to sectorial applications of sustainability thinking (Loorbach et al., 2017). Yet, Temper et al. (2018) found that much of that literature remains largely depoliticized. This is

(unintentionally) confirmed by Horcea-Milcu et al.'s (2020) meta-study, whose semantic network analysis is conspicuous by the absence of terms like growth, neoliberalism, let alone capitalism. Transition management for instance (Frantzeskaki et al., 2012; Rotmans & Loorbach, 2009) understands the relationship between transitions and existing regimes in market terms, instead of power-laden political struggles between competing visions for society (Kenis et al., 2016). In failing to critically engage with capitalist/growthist root causes of unsustainability (Asara et al., 2015; Feola, 2020), such research often perpetuates the post-political accounts of dominant ecological modernization discourses and politics.

Conceived as ecological modernization, *transitions* do not aim for fundamental changes in existing socio-economic structures, only at adapting these to new constraints through technological innovations, market mechanisms, and behavioral change (Adloff & Neckel, 2019). Governance is conceived as top-down policy implementation, management, and control within the scope of existing actor configurations and power relations (Stirling, 2014; Trantas, 2021). Instead of pursuing democratization as both an end and a means of change (Goetz et al., 2020), universalist narratives (“we are all in this together”) are used to justify the technocratic administration of socio-ecological matters according to presumptively consensual goals. Symptomatic of a post-political/democratic order, “the conflict is posed as one of society versus CO<sub>2</sub>” (Swyngedouw, 2011, p. 195): instead of referring to specific structures, practices, and social actors, the enemy remains externalized and vague. As aptly put by Kenis and Lievens (2014), “the CO<sub>2</sub> emitted by a steel factory is rendered equal to that emitted by a hospital, by a wild camel in the remote regions of Australia, or by a tree being cut down” (p.514). To fix concerns about “‘the elephant in the room’ also known as economic growth” (Menton et al., 2020, p. 1633), such transition approaches rely on the concept of green growth. Based on the hypothesis of an absolute (vs. relative) decoupling of GDP growth from energy/matter throughput and carbon emissions, green growth has been adopted as the main strategy by institutions like the OECD, the United Nations, the World Bank, or the EU (Hickel & Kallis, 2020; Samper et al., 2021). “Conceived of as modernization”, Adloff and Neckel (2019) conclude, “sustainability thus mostly serves the renewal of capitalism and its adjustment to changed conditions” (p. 1019).

## **2.2. Radical sustainability transformations as emancipation**

In contrast, activists, researchers, and practitioners have intended to re-politicize the debate and called for *radical transformations*. In a synthesis of existing knowledge and recommendations from the scientific community, Wiedmann et al. (2020) identified worldwide increases in affluence and its underlying root cause, capitalism’s structural growth imperative, as the main systemic driver of ecological destruction. Importantly, recent research has “debunked” green growth by showing that

not only is there no empirical evidence for absolute decoupling currently happening anywhere near the scale needed, but also that it is highly implausible to happen in the future, let alone be sustained at rates necessary to prevent global warming over 1.5°C or 2°C (Haberl et al., 2020; Hickel & Kallis, 2020; Parrique et al., 2019). Asara et al. (2015) stress that unless sustainability research explicitly and effectively addresses the capitalist/growthist roots of social-ecological degradation, it is unlikely to meaningfully contribute to the transformations needed in our current conjuncture.

Unlike transitions then, transformations involve more diverse, bottom-up, and unruly political reconfigurations (Stirling, 2014). Here, social movements and civil society play a central role in bringing about deep changes in economic, social, and cultural structures and patterns (Goetz et al., 2020; O'Brien, 2018). Transformation discourses include post-capitalism, ecofeminism, human development, degrowth, *buen vivir*, post-development, eco-socialism, and eco-anarchism (Beling et al., 2018; A. Escobar, 2015; Wiedmann et al., 2020). Comparative meta-discursive analyses (Adloff & Neckel, 2019; Riedy, 2020) found strong normative agreement across these strands: all seek to transform a “political economy dominated by neoliberal capitalism with increasing authoritarian tendencies” (Temper et al., 2018, p. 751) into one that is at least growth agnostic, focused on delivering human wellbeing within planetary boundaries (Hickel, 2019), and committed to more direct forms of democracy for individual and collective emancipation and autonomy (Büchs & Koch, 2019; Pelenc et al., 2019). Riedy (2020) however also identified fertile tensions related to the question of adequate strategies.

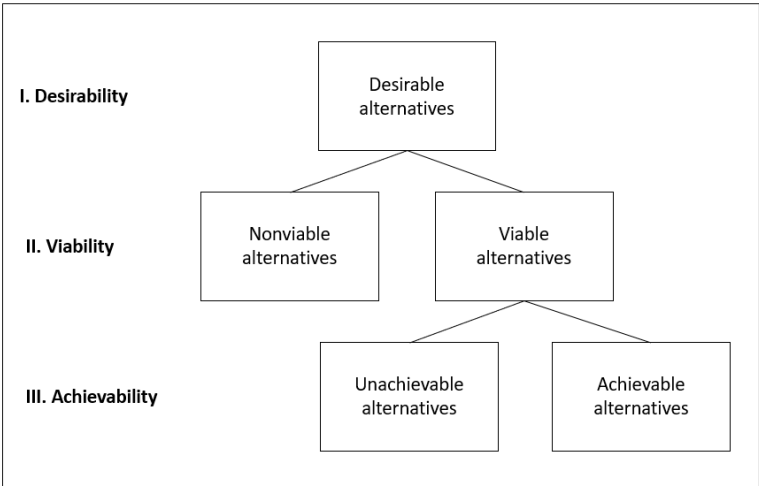
With this thesis, my goal is to conduct *emancipatory* sustainability research (Harnesk & Isgren, 2021), understood as an attempt to work towards such transformations by producing transdisciplinary critical problem-solving knowledge (Jerneck et al., 2011; Lang et al., 2012) primarily aimed at informing social movements as agents of change (Isgren et al., 2019).

### **3. Theoretical framework**

#### **3.1. Theory of change and strategies for transformations**

As a general framework, I use the work of Marxist sociologist E.O. Wright on transformations beyond capitalism. According to Wright (2010), emancipatory social science must fulfill three tasks (Fig. 1). First, diagnose and critique (chapter 2.1). Second, propose coherent alternatives according to desirability, viability, and achievability. To investigate how CAs can contribute to such alternatives, i.e. emancipatory sustainability transformations (chapter 2.2), I adopt a definition largely based on degrowth, informed by eco-socialism, and adapted to a global North context: *pathways for rich countries to achieve a decrease in material and energy throughputs through a democratic,*

redistributive and equitable downscaling of production and consumption aimed at improving human wellbeing and ecological conditions, regardless of its effect on GDP (Hickel, 2020; Kallis, 2019; Löwy, 2015; Schneider, Kallis, & Martinez-Alier, 2010). As a benchmark for assessing the transformative potential of the CCC-measures (5.2.2), I draw in particular on Parrique’s (2019) landmark policy agenda proposal and his 15 principles for provision (i.e. extraction, production, allocation, consumption, and excretion ) in a desirable and viable degrowth economy (appendix n°1).



**Figure 1.** The three criteria for evaluating social alternatives, adapted from Wright (2010).

Achievability is linked to the third task, which is to propose a theory of change and strategies for transformation. Wright (2010) emphasizes that trajectories of large-scale social change emerge out of the combination of the “cumulative unintended by-products of the actions of people operating under existing social relations” and the “cumulative intended effects of conscious projects of social change by people acting strategically to transform those social relations” (p.298, emphasis in original).

**3.1.1. Logics of transformations, hegemony, and the state**

The final element of Wright’s (2010) approach is to identify which strategies for collective action are most likely to succeed. He describes three basic logics of transformation informing these strategies. The *ruptural* logic implies revolutionary direct confrontation to break with existing structures and seize state power. The *interstitial* logic is to bypass the state and multiply alternatives in the cracks of capitalist society, where they seemingly do not pose any direct threat to dominant classes. The *symbiotic* logic is to use and deepen existing institutional forms of empowerment through reforms that also solve practical problems faced by elites.

Building on Wright’s framework, D’Alisa and Kallis (2020) highlight the relevance of a Gramscian perspective on hegemony and the state to conceptualize transformations. In contrast with common

definitions of the state as governmental institutions, Gramsci (1971) developed in his *Prison Notebooks* a theory of the *integral state* as the combination of political society institutions (e.g. government, army, police, judiciary system, etc.) and civil society institutions (e.g. schools, families, trade unions, etc.). The integral state is “the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 244). Indeed, it is not enough for elites to maintain themselves by the sole exercise of direct force and coercion. They must equally create an ideological hegemony through which subaltern classes consent to the legitimacy of their rule (Berberoglu, 2017). The integral state is thus “hegemony protected by the armour of coercion” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 263).

### **3.1.2. Strategy and non-reformist reforms**

In complex modern democracies, Gramsci (1971) argues, the institutions of civil society function as “trench-systems of modern warfare” (p.235), making strategies based solely on the ruptural takeover of the government apparatus (*war of maneuver*) unlikely to succeed. A transformation of society requires instead the gradual capture of positions within the integral state (Callinicos, 2016). This *war of position* seeks to change everyday practices, ideas, needs, and desires within the structures of civil society (interstitial) and political society institutions (symbiotic) (D’Alisa & Kallis, 2020). An analysis of the CCC-measure’s transformative potential must thus pay attention to whether they cover such structural breadth and depth (5.2.2).

For Gramsci, an appropriate strategy finds the right balance between war of position and war of maneuver in a given conjuncture (Keucheyan, 2012). Similarly, Wright (2019a) advocates for the idea of *eroding capitalism*, as both a bottom-up and top-down “strategic orientation organized around the interplay of interstitial and symbiotic strategies, with perhaps periodic episodes involving elements of ruptural strategy” (Wright, 2013, p.21). The goal is to build more democratic, egalitarian, participatory, and sustainable structures with the potential to become so central to communities as to eventually dislocate capitalism from its hegemonic role in the system (Wright, 2019a). Wright (2013) sums up the appropriate orientation towards strategy with the following principle: “to do things now which put us in the best position to do more later” (p.21).

Democratic innovations like the French CCC operate according to a symbiotic logic of transformation. To contribute to holistic transformation strategies, they must aim and succeed at pushing through *non-reformist reforms* as opposed to *reformist reforms* (Wright, 2019b): while the latter can be equated with incremental change and “reject those objectives and demands—however deep the need for them—which are incompatible with the preservation of the system” (p.7), non-reformist reforms are



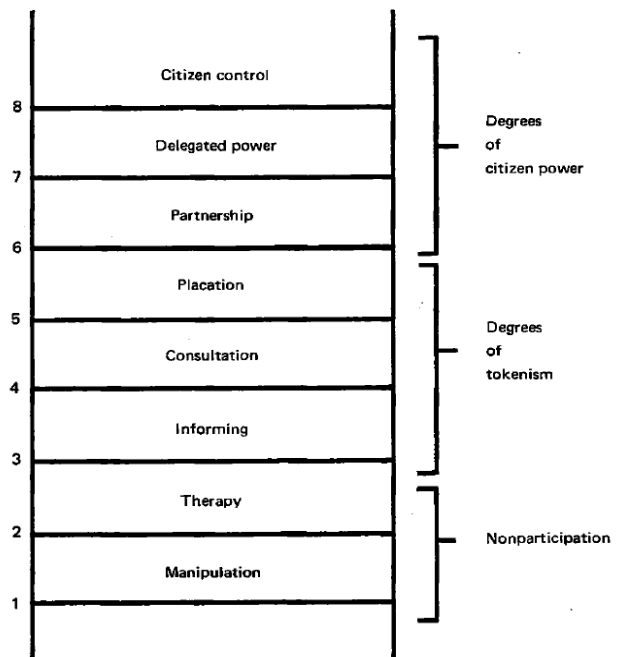
“determined not in terms of what can be, but what should be” and “advance toward a radical transformation of society” (Gorz, 1964, pp. 6–7).

### 3.2. Democracy, but in what state?

Proponents of emancipatory sustainability transformations argue for democratization as both an end and a strategic means of change (Hammond, 2020). While there are different definitions of democratization, participatory-deliberative approaches have been prominent concerning environmental governance (Backstrand, 2010; Dryzek, 2013; Fischer, 2017; Smith, 2003). CAs such as the CCC are a particular form of democratic innovation (DI) designed according to participatory-deliberative principles (Elstub & Escobar, 2019). I define these terms in the following sections.

#### 3.2.1. Towards participatory-deliberative democracy

While deliberative ideals can be traced back to the Antiquity, modern theories of deliberative democracy emerged over the past half-century out of different traditions (Cohen, 1989; Habermas, 1984; Rawls, 1993). They are based on the idea of reaching the common good through dialogue, consensus, and the recognition of the better argument within a coercion-free environment (Bächtinger et al., 2018). While deliberative democracy is often confused with participatory democracy (Elstub, 2018), the former is primarily about public political reasoning and the latter about breadth and depth of participation (Cohen, 2009). For participatory democrats, voting in elections as



**Figure 2.** Arnstein's eight rungs ladder of citizen participation (Arnstein, 1969, p.217).

the main form of political involvement is insufficient. They argue for more diverse and direct opportunities for citizens to determine collective decisions according to the idea of 'rule by the people' (Elstub, 2018). The goal, Cohen (2009) writes, is for citizens to “engage with the substance of law and policy, and not simply delegate responsibility for such substantive engagement to representatives” (p. 248). Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation (Fig. 2) provides me with eight categories to analyze the degree of nonparticipation, tokenism, or citizen power of the CCC (5.3). Going beyond the prevalent

aggregative liberal model, participatory-deliberative democracy claims that citizens should govern through deliberation (Della Porta, 2013; Elstub, 2018) (Fig.3).

Decision-makers ( <i>who</i> )	Mode of decision-making ( <i>how</i> )	
Representatives	Majority vote <i>Aggregative liberal democracy</i>	Deliberation <i>Liberal deliberative democracy</i>
Participation	<i>Aggregative participatory democracy</i>	<b><i>Participatory deliberative democracy</i></b>

**Figure 3.** Four ideal types of democracy based on Elstub (2018) as adapted from Della Porta (2013).

**3.2.2. Democratic innovations, mini-publics, and citizens’ assemblies**

DIs are processes or institutions specifically designed to facilitate the integration of participation and deliberation and deepen the influence of citizens on decision-making (Bächtiger et al., 2018; Elstub & Escobar, 2019). Mini-publics for instance are composed of lay citizens recruited through a stratified random selection process. They come in different variants: smaller citizens' juries, planning cells and consensus conferences, or larger CAs and deliberative polls (Harris, 2019; Smith & Setälä, 2018). CAs are generally composed of 150 or more participants to achieve a representative sample of a given public. They are structured in thematic sessions with facilitated group discussions based on balanced information materials and expert input (Smith & Setälä, 2018). CAs usually conclude with a report and recommendations to advise decision-makers, "whether the citizens themselves in a referendum or ballot initiative, elected representatives, or appointed administrators" (Bächtiger et al., 2018, p. 14). In contrast with Extinction Rebellion’s (XR) (2019) third demand that “calls on the government to create and be led by a citizens’ assembly on climate and ecological justice” (p.5), conventional CAs and other mini-publics are usually confined to an advisory role (Smith & Setälä, 2018). In rarer cases, politicians commit themselves to follow the recommendations, as was initially the case with the CCC and Macron's (unkept) promise.

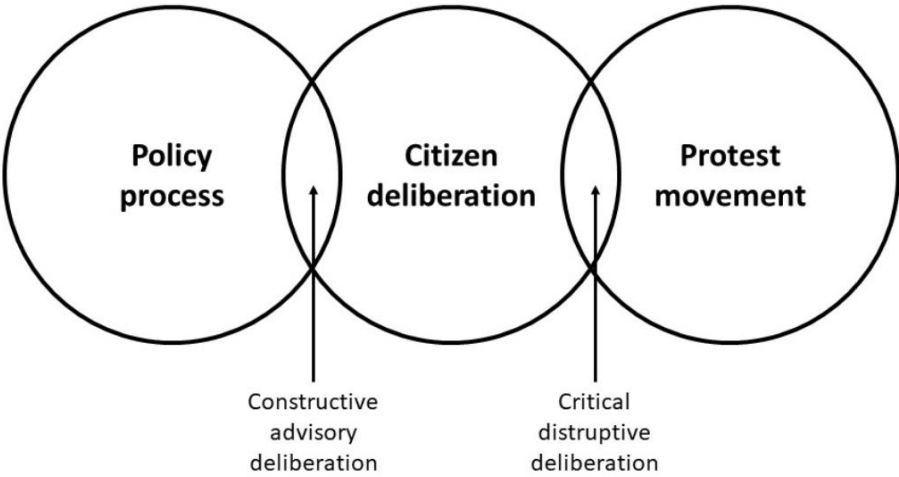
Empirical material tends to show that (1) well-designed mini-publics yield high levels of deliberative quality and decision-making support, but (2) often fail at effectively influencing decisions (Smith & Setälä, 2018). In answering RQ2 and RQ3, my analysis will test these two theoretical propositions.

**3.2.3. Between constructive and disruptive deliberation**

Since CAs are subject to limitations set by their designers (Bächtiger et al., 2018), they can align with both emancipatory transformations and depoliticized transitions. Indeed, agonist democrats have

warned about the inherently power-laden nature of deliberative situations and that consensus-building might repress the plurality of perspectives inherent to politics (Mouffe, 1999, 2005; Wenman, 2015). While recognizing the importance of moving beyond liberal aggregative democracy (Kenis et al., 2016), they argue that conflict is both inevitable and necessary to disrupt the status quo, transform existing power relations, and establish a new hegemony (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014; Machin, 2020). Dissent expressed by insurgent mobilizations, social movements, and the like is a necessary component of democracy (Swyngedouw, 2014) and an important driver of DIs (Talpin, 2019), e.g. the recent impact of XR’s third demand.

Incorporating this critique, Hammond (2020) argues that deliberation in the service of transformation can *contain* but not *be contained* within institutionalized DIs. She contrasts such policy-oriented and advisory ‘constructive deliberation’ with ‘disruptive deliberation’, which is ignited and owned by social movements instead of authorities. To match the transformative challenges ahead, Hammond argues, deliberation is needed both in its emancipatory function of disrupting the ideological status quo and in its constructive function of inclusively channeling public debates to construct normative alternatives (Fig. 4). From a transformation perspective, the function of the CCC should thus be to articulate various dissenting forces into a viable (counter-)hegemony (Carroll, 2009).



**Figure 4.** Deliberation at the intersection of policy making and protest. Adapted from Hammond, 2020.

**3.3. A toolbox for analyzing social movements**

Besides being a means to repoliticize sustainability research (Stuart et al., 2020), social movement theory provides the necessary tools to analyze the interactions between the CCC (constructive deliberation) and mobilizations for social/environmental justice (disruptive deliberation).

I build on Tarrow's (2011) relational approach to the broader concept of contentious politics and how these intersect with institutional politics. Contentious politics occur "when collective actors join forces in confrontation with elites, authorities, and opponents around their claims or the claims of those they claim to represent" (Tarrow, 2011, p.4). This includes protests, riots, strikes, social movements, rebellions, and revolutions. Tarrow (2011) identifies four powers that activate claims into action: (1) *repertoires of contention*, i.e. how collective actors engage in contentious politics through repertoires and performances including contained, disruptive and violent forms of action; (2) *mobilizing structures*, i.e. how they build (on) and appropriate social networks and organizations; (3) *construction of meaning*, i.e. how they combine identities, emotions and frames to make meaning for collective action; (4) *political opportunities and constraints*, i.e. how opportunities trigger and threats limit contention, and how collective actors attempt to seize and transform these.

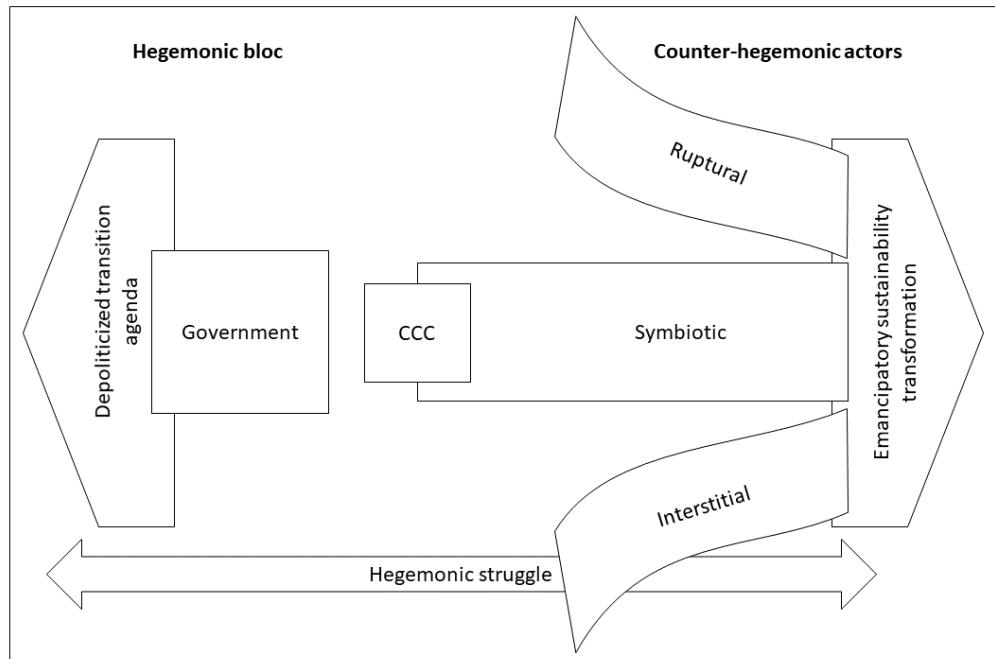
I further use Kolb's (2007) distinction between *institutional* outcomes, which change the procedures by which policies are developed, adopted, and implemented, and *substantive* outcomes, which are measured according to their effect on agendas as well as policy content and adoption. I further draw on Kolb's five mechanisms of political change to analyze how outcomes are won or lost (p.277):

- *Public preference mechanism*: "governments respond to shifts in public opinion mobilized by social movements."
- *Political access mechanism*: "social movements can cause political change by gaining access to the policy making process."
- *Judicial mechanism*: "social movements can use the leverage of courts to achieve political change."
- *International politics mechanism*: "movements can cause political change by mobilizing the support of outside political actors such as nation states and supranational organizations."
- *Disruption mechanism*: "governments might offer concessions to social movements in order to restore public order."

This toolbox informs in particular my analysis of how the CCC emerged (5.1) and my discussion of strategies for SMOs (6.2).

### **3.4. The model**

Integrating these different theoretical lenses, the remainder of this thesis approaches the CCC as both an outcome (5.1) and site (5.2; 5.3) of hegemonic struggle between (a) the government's attempt to restore consent for a depoliticized transition agenda, and (b) civil society's efforts, driven by disruptive social movements, to democratically build a counter-hegemonic project of emancipatory sustainability transformation (Fig. 5).



**Figure 5.** A simplified model of the CCC as symbiotic site of hegemonic struggle. Own creation.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. A note on metatheory and positionality

As a pluralistic and normative research field bridging the natural and social sciences, sustainability science does not presuppose a specific onto-epistemological stance (Isgren et al., 2017). Critical realism (CR) however seems particularly suited for *emancipatory* sustainability research, as it challenges common assumptions of both natural and social science (Sayer, 2010) in an attempt to “combine and reconcile ontological realism, epistemological relativism, and judgmental rationality” (Bhaskar, 1998, p. xi). In plain language, this means that there is a world that is independent of our experience of it (‘intransitive dimension’), but different ways of gaining knowledge of it (‘transitive dimension’), while it is still possible to judge between different accounts. CR distinguishes between the *real* (all existing objects/structures/mechanisms/powers), the *actual* (effects/events happening when these powers and mechanisms are activated), and the *empirical* (experiences we make of these) (Sayer, 2010). This stratified ontology recognizes the possibility of powers to exist unexercised and pays attention to how causal mechanisms could produce different consequences in other contexts (Sayer, 2010). CR thus carries emancipatory potential for ‘reclaiming reality’ (Bhaskar, 2011). This thesis is an attempt to identify such enabling or disabling conditions influencing the outcomes of CAs and how social movements can make use of them.

In writing this thesis I am both a researcher striving for valid knowledge, and an activist involved in the social movements I study, motivated by values, interests, and the realization of certain outcomes. Marx famously wrote that “philosophers have hitherto only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it”. Yet, Keucheyan (2014) observes that contemporary critical thinkers often produce hermetic knowledge with no direct relevance to political strategy. Earlier critical thinkers on the contrary were political leaders. As strategists confronting concrete political problems, they needed empirical knowledge to make decisions. As critical thinkers, their analyses were informed by hands-on experience. Hence, “the 'experience' and the 'writing' of revolution were inextricably linked” (Keucheyan, 2014, p. 10). More modestly but in the same spirit, my aim here is to generate critical problem-solving knowledge to inform social movements as catalyzers and agents of emancipatory sustainability transformations (Isgren et al., 2019; Stuart et al., 2020), balancing the dialectic relation between activist-led science and science-led activism (Martinez-Alier et al., 2011).

## **4.2. Research design**

Given my object of study is the CCC as a phenomenon embedded in the real-world context of social movements, my research design naturally took the form of an instrumental single case study (Yin, 2018). Case studies are particularly suited to study contemporary events, processes, or decisions and to ask why they happened (SQ1), how they unfolded, and with what result (SQ2, SQ3), to then formulate analytic generalizations. The latter aspect is especially relevant for instrumental case studies, where the case functions as a means to better understand a broader issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018), here the potential of CAs to steer sustainability transformations. Single-case studies are valuable if they fulfill at least one of five characteristics: having a critical, unusual, common, revelatory, or longitudinal case (Yin, 2018). The present case qualifies as revelatory since CAs dealing with socio-environmental issues are still marginal in politics. It further qualifies as a critical case for testing the theoretical propositions that CAs produce better decision-making on socio-environmental issues but tend to have a mixed record in effectively influencing policy.

### **4.3.1. Method pluralism**

Bevir and Bowman (2018) argue for problem-driven (rather than method-driven) approaches to empirical studies of participation/deliberation. While qualitative approaches are particularly suited to study how DIs emerge, unfold, and impact policymaking (Talpin, 2019), most questions “require attention to both patterns and depth, statistics and narratives, numbers and words” (O. Escobar & Thompson, 2019, p. 501). Hence, while my approach is mostly qualitative, I used quantitative

techniques when this seemed appropriate. This hybrid approach is further reflected in the different methods I used to answer my sub-questions (Table 1, p.17).

#### **4.3.2. Document analysis**

Case study evidence can come from various sources, e.g. interviews, direct observation, or documents (Yin, 2018). Document analysis imposed itself as my main method since two sub-questions entailed dealing with policy documents (SQ2&3). As a method for systematically evaluating documents, document analysis allows to produce empirical knowledge and rich descriptions of phenomena in case studies (Bowen, 2009). Documents can be defined with Tight (2019) as “texts or data sets, printed or hand-written, quantitative and/or qualitative, physical or online, personal or official, closed or open, visual or representational” (p.10), or briefly with McCulloch (2017) as “a record of an event or process” (p.210). To interpret and elicit their meaning, document analysis comes in different genres and techniques (e.g thematic or content analysis) (Tight, 2019).

Bowen (2009) identifies several functions of document analysis, of which two are particularly relevant for this thesis. First, providing context and insight into root causes of, and conditions affecting the phenomena being investigated, especially when it is no longer available for direct observation (SQ1). Second, it allows to track change and development. In this case, evaluating the transformative potential of the CCC-measures (SQ2) and analyzing the extent to which these are translated into legislation (SQ3). While document analysis offers many advantages (e.g. time and cost-effectiveness, availability, and accessibility, data stability), it is important to remain source-critical and bear in mind the original purpose of the document (Bowen, 2009).

#### **4.3.3. Critical discourse analysis**

While document analysis constitutes the methodological backbone of this thesis, I draw on critical discourse analysis (CDA) to embed it in a broader context of hegemonic struggle. Power is exercised by actors whose agency is embedded in enabling or disabling political-economic structures and discursive formations (Svarstad, Overå, & Benjaminsen, 2018), and CDA studies the power relations underlying the latter. Instead of adopting one particular approach, I follow Jørgensen and Phillips’s (2010) advice to “create one’s own package by combining elements from different discourse analytical perspectives” (p.4). Hence, I loosely draw on Fairclough’s (2013) three-dimensional model of *texts* (written or spoken) as embedded in *discourse practices* which themselves are nested in broader *sociocultural practices*. While coming from a critical realist position, or in the vein of Elder-Vass (2012) a “socially constructionist realism” (p. 7), I borrow from Laclau and Mouffe (2014) a more abstract perspective on discourses as struggling with one another over hegemony. The CCC is a prime example

of how discursive power manifests and has material effects in the world. As an outcome and site of hegemonic struggle, the CCC is saturated with discursive power relations: a *deliberative* arena where *debates* nurture *recommendations*, which in turn are intended to inform the drafting of *legislative texts*.

#### **4.4. Procedure and material**

To answer how the CCC emerged (SQ1), I aimed for a causal explanation that is both valid from a critical realist standpoint focusing on necessary conditions (Sayer, 2010) and useful from the perspective of social movement strategy. To create this narrative of events, I built on direct observations and material garnered over 3 years as a byproduct of activism and academia, triangulated with targeted research. Primary material includes presidential speeches, government documents, SMO documents, and media coverage. Secondary material includes investigative journalism and academic articles.

To evaluate the transformational potential of the CCC (SQ2), I conducted a directed content analysis of the CCC-report (CCC, 2020). I first coded the 149 measures according to their target and method, then according to Parrique's (2019) 15 degrowth principles (appendix n°1, n°2). To evaluate the extent to which the measures were translated into legislation (SQ3), I analyzed the draft Law on Climate and Resilience (Assemblée Nationale, 2021) and conducted a scoping review of various institutional impact assessments. In both cases, my evaluation is further informed by secondary material such as academic articles, investigative journalism, and SMO documents. I further used presidential speeches and media coverage to embed this analysis in its broader discursive context.

To gain insights into how environmental SMOs positioned themselves towards the CCC (SQ4) I chose a purposive sample of 6 SMOs: On est prêt; Alternatiba/ANV-COP21; Greenpeace France; Youth for Climate France/Paris-IDF; XR France; Désobéissance Écolo Paris. I used Nvivo 12 to retrieve, code, and analyze tweets from October 2018 to April 2021, and triangulated them with other digital material like blogposts, press releases, video clips (appendix n°3).

#### **4.5. Limitations**

Since this thesis explores an ongoing case and for which academic sources are still scarce at the time of writing, it might suffer from relying heavily on grey literature and investigative journalism as secondary material. My initial idea, which I had to abandon because of the Covid-19 pandemic, was to conduct fieldwork in Paris as an immersed form of activist research within the SMOs I study. Besides stronger triangulation, this would have allowed me to gather insights into their strategy beyond official positions displayed on social media. Evaluating the transformative potential of the CCC-



recommendations proved particularly challenging. Indeed, I found the field of DI-studies to suffer from an imbalance in terms of research focus, with most methods designed to analyze procedure instead of substance. While I did my best to construct my own approach, it is important to acknowledge limitations related to the subjective nature of the evaluation process, and the incredibly broad *and* specialized knowledge required to assess such wide-ranging policies, which vastly exceeds the capacity of any single researcher. Finally, investigating the potential of CAs to steer transformations based on the CCC-case required a broad set of sub-questions to study its emergence (SQ1), measures (SQ2), and outcomes (SQ3), and its relation to SMOs (SQ4), rather than focusing on any of these aspects. Despite the inability to explore these in-depth within the limits of this thesis (word- and timewise), I contend that such broad scope is justified by the exploratory nature of my inquiry and because it allows me to draw tentative lessons regarding movement strategy.

**Table 1.** Research design overview.

<b>Overarching research question</b>	<b>RQ: <i>To what extent and under what conditions can citizens' assemblies such as the CCC steer emancipatory sustainability transformations?</i></b>		
<b>Sub-questions</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>Primary material</b>	<b>Secondary material</b>
<b>SQ1:</b> <i>How did the CCC emerge?</i>	Narrative of events based on document analysis + CDA	Direct observations over a 3-year period as a byproduct of activism and academia; presidential speeches; government documents; SMO documents; media coverage	Investigative journalism; academic articles
<b>SQ2:</b> <i>What is the transformative potential of the measures proposed by the CCC?</i>	Directed content analysis + CDA + Secondary data analysis	CCC-report (CCC, 2020); presidential speeches; media coverage;	Investigative journalism; academic articles; SMO documents
<b>SQ3:</b> <i>To what extent did the CCC's propositions influence decision-making?</i>	Directed content analysis + CDA + Secondary data analysis	Law on Climate and Resilience (Assemblée Nationale, 2021); presidential speeches; governmental documents; media coverage	CCC opinion report (CCC, 2021); Institutional impact assessments; academic articles; Investigative journalism; SMO documents
<b>SQ4:</b> <i>How do environmental SMO strategically position themselves towards the CCC as part of their social-environmental commitment?</i>	CDA (mixed thematic and directed content analysis)	CCC-related digital media communication from October 2018 - April 2021 (tweets retrieved, coded, and analyzed using Nvivo12; blogposts; press releases; video clips) of a purposive sample of 6 SMOs (On est prêt; Alternatiba/ANV-COP21; Greenpeace France; Youth for Climate France/Paris-IDF; Extinction Rebellion France; Désobéissance Écolo Paris)	Investigative journalism; academic articles

## 5. Analysis

### 5.1. The genealogy: From disruptive deliberation to constructive deliberation

Reconstructing the genealogy of the CCC is the starting point of my inquiry (SQ1). Talpin (2019) identifies four main causes for the emergence of DIs: a general background of democratic deficit in representative systems (1) and the influence of transnational networks circulating innovation (2), coupled to the more case-specific pressure of social movements (3) and the role of key actors (4). I focus on the two latter. Change in history doesn't occur gradually but is shaped by the political reverberations of disruptive outbreaks and bursts (Engler & Engler, 2017; Piven & Cloward, 1979) and the following narrative starts with such a burst, or rather with two.

"The political cannot be suppressed indefinitely," Swyngedouw (2015, p. 91) writes, but returns invariably through the (re-)appropriation of voice and space by the democratically dispossessed to "become visible and perceptible, and perform the capacity to govern" (Swyngedouw, 2014, p. 128). On September 8<sup>th</sup> 2018, 130 000 people took to the streets all across France in the hitherto largest climate protest (Dollberg, 2018) as a reaction to the unexpected resignation of the highly popular environment minister Nicolas Hulot. Hulot justified his resignation by an "accumulation of disappointments" over the government's "obsession with economic growth", "lack of adequate and systemic measures to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss, and other environmental threats", as well as the persistent "presence of lobbies within circles of power" (France Inter, 2018). Bouquerel and Esnault (2018) have documented the pivotal role of environmental SMOs in using this political opportunity to mobilize new networks around the narrative of proving Hulot wrong, who defiantly asked: "Do I have an organized society that takes to the streets to defend biodiversity? [...] The answer is 'no'." (France Inter, 2018). Less than a month later, on November 17<sup>th</sup>, and amid ongoing weekly climate protests, 300 000 people from largely different demographic groups took to the streets, in what retrospectively would be called "Act I" of the Yellow vests: a movement sparked by a massively shared online-petition and various calls for nationwide protests against a planned carbon tax increase and simultaneous cutting of the solidarity tax on wealth (Pironet, 2019).

Government officials, elites, and mainstream media were quick in making theirs an '*End-of-the-world versus end-of-the-month*' framing to justify supposedly inevitable trade-offs between environmental goals and social justice, and paternalistically portray the Yellow vests as at best unconcerned by environmental issues or even resolutely reactionary (Masse-Stamberger, 2018). Empirical research however challenged these simplistic assumptions (Collectif d'enquête, 2019), showing that many

Yellow vests instead displayed a form of ‘popular ecology’ with demands such as taxing kerosene and maritime fuel (Joumard, 2018). Sociologist Magali Della Sudda hence concludes that “the argument of end of month vs. end of the world is thwarted” (in Leclerc, 2019, §3).

Although arguing from a social justice perspective, research on the Yellow vests as resistance to sustainability (Martin & Islar, 2020) risks perpetuating paternalistic accounts when speaking of a “dialogue of the deaf” (p.8) that incapacitates sustainability discourse and paralyzes effective climate action. On the contrary, as early as December 2018, climate protestors and Yellow Vests were rallying under the slogan ‘*End-of-the-world, end-of-the-month, same struggle*’, initiating an important case of movement cross-fertilization<sup>2</sup> (D’Allens, 2019c; Gaborit & Grémion, 2020; Verkamp & Mastini, 2018) and carving the very possibility for emancipatory transformations. Rather than revealing a “conflict of temporalities between an immediate end against a long-term vision” (Martin & Islar, 2020, p. 9), the simultaneous bursts of climate protests and Yellow vests are a testimony of the government’s unwillingness to steer such a socially just and ambitious ecological transformation. For not only was it an anti-redistributive carbon tax but moreover one likely to be inefficient in terms of energy transition (Combes, 2018). More broadly, it reveals the failure of environmental governance as mere technocratic administration (Swyngedouw, 2011), as displayed in Macron’s avowal: “It [the carbon tax] was voted before I got elected. When I arrived, we implemented it as if there was nothing more to it” (Macron, 2020a).



**Figure 6.** Yellow vests on 16/02/2019 with a sign saying: End of the world, end of the month, same struggle. Source: Reuters

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<sup>2</sup> Here I must acknowledge that, like many in the broader environmental movement, I was myself skeptical of the movement’s orientation during the first days of its emergence.

Faced with escalating Yellow vest protests, the government not only resorted to direct coercion to restore order – through increased repression, police violence, and unmatched use of so-called non-lethal weapons (Rigouste, 2020; Rocher, 2020) –, but also organized the “Grand National Debate” in early 2019 as a first attempt to restore hegemonic consent. Including participatory-deliberative elements, this initiative invited citizens to express their opinion on the topics of taxation, state organization, public administration, ecological transition, and citizenship and democracy (Gouvernement français, n.d.a). Corresponding to Arnstein’s (1969) level of consultation, it “offer[ed] no assurance that citizen concerns and ideas will be taken into account” (p. 219). Warning against such tokenism, the *Gilets citoyens* collective (composed of environmentalists, Yellow vests, and advocates of DI) addressed an open letter to the President on January 23<sup>rd</sup> calling for more transparency, clear commitments, and the creation of a CA (Gilets citoyens, 2019a). During his closing speech of the Grand National Debate on April 25<sup>th</sup>, Macron (2019) committed to the creation of the CCC, presented by Prime Minister Philippe (2019) as a “change of method and governance” (§2).

It is however crucial to highlight the underground work pursued by influential representatives of the *Gilets citoyens* with access to circles of power (d’Allens, 2019a), who from February on repeatedly met and negotiated with the executive (Gilets citoyens, 2019b). Confirming Elstub’s (2018) claim that “participatory opportunities have to be seized by citizens” (p.189), the CCC should be read as an *institutional outcome* wrested from the government by the *Gilets Citoyens* by leveraging three of Kolb’s (2007) mechanisms of political change:

- (1) The extraordinary bargaining power created by the Yellow vests’ sustained insurrectionary confrontation and ruptural dynamics, which allowed to force concessions from the government (*disruption mechanism*). With the CCC, Macron (2020a) later admitted, the hope was to “take the anger out of the streets”;
- (2) A shift in public opinion on environmental issues mobilized by SMOs, and made visible through recurrent large-scale climate protests (*preferences mechanism*) and broadening support for more radicalized forms of climate activism (*disruption mechanism*) (Gaborit, 2020b);
- (3) The “Case of the century” legal campaign launched in late 2018 by a coalition of NGOs to sue the French state over climate inaction (*judicial mechanism*) and the associated online petition which became the most signed in French history with over 2 million signatories in just two months (*preferences mechanism*) (d’Allens, 2019a).

The procedural change gained through this institutional outcome fostered the *political access mechanism*, which should in theory facilitate substantive outcomes. Reconstructing how the CCC emerged as an outcome of hegemonic struggle – i.e. as a governmental concession underpinned by opportunism and strategic incentives (Bua, 2019) – rather than genuine political commitment is a prerequisite for analyzing its substantive outcomes.

## **5.2. The measures: a citizens' assembly to transform society?**

On June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020, during their seventh and last session, the CCC-members voted on an initial set of 150 proposals, of which only a measure for a 28h work-time-reduction (WTR) was rejected. The 149 final measures were set out in a 460-page report (CCC, 2020) and structured in five clusters: consumption (measures C1.1 to C6.2); production and work (PT1.1 to PT12.4); mobility (SD-A1.1 to SD-E7); housing and living (SL1.1 to SL3.13); food and nutrition (SN1.1.1 to SN7.1).<sup>3</sup>

### **5.2.1. Discursive context: the degrowth-spectre haunting France**

“A spectre is haunting our society: the spectre of degrowth”, degrowth scholars Liegey et al. (2020) wrote in response to how the term (*décroissance*) was recurrently used “with fear and loath” (§1) in the public debate surrounding the CCC-report’s publication. In his address to the CCC-members, Macron co-optively praised their supposed willingness to “turn their back on degrowth”, stating:

“I believe, like you, that this would not be an answer to the challenge we face. [...] if we produce less, work less, we will no longer be able to finance the social model that we have. [...] A model of degrowth is also a model of degrowth of our social model” (Macron, 2020b, 51:35).

Instead, he argued for “individual responsibility”, “change of behaviors” and “consumer choices” (1:09:20), as well as for technological progress as “the prime pillar that reconciles economy and ecology, which you are endorsing and in which I believe” (53:10). He concluded this perfect rendition of ecological modernization doxa with the credo: “I believe in the growth of our economy, I believe in a model that innovates” (56:02). Meanwhile, conservative commentators paradoxically decried a “logic of degrowth, of constraints and punishing” (Garric & Barroux, 2020, §11) “with an incredibly unfortunate timing, at a time when the strongest recession ever seen in France is being announced” (Beaufils, 2020, §4), perpetuating misleading tropes about degrowth (Hickel, 2020). While drawing seemingly opposed conclusions, these discourses constitute two sides of the same coin, namely an

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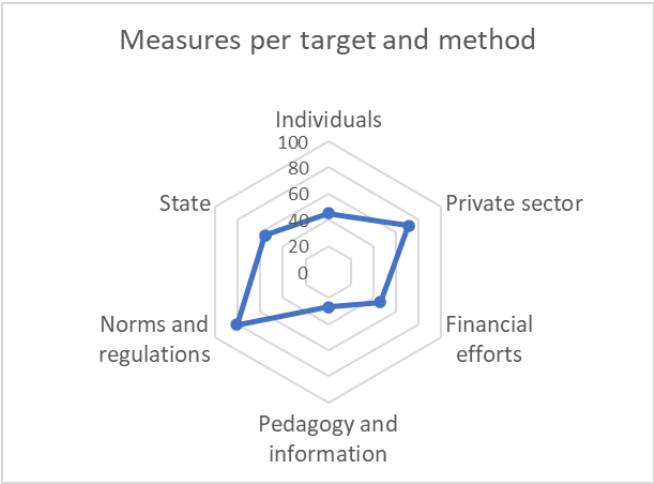
<sup>3</sup> The measure codes refer to the French cluster titles: *Consommer* (C); *Produire et Travailler* (PT); *Se Déplacer* (SD); *Se Loger* (SL); *Se Nourrir* (SN). A table containing all measures can be found in the appendix n°2.

effort at disarming measures perceived as threatening the status quo and preparing the terrain for their systematic unraveling (5.3).

**5.2.2. Assessing the transformative potential of the CCC-measures**

**5.2.2.1. A systemic overview: targets and methods**

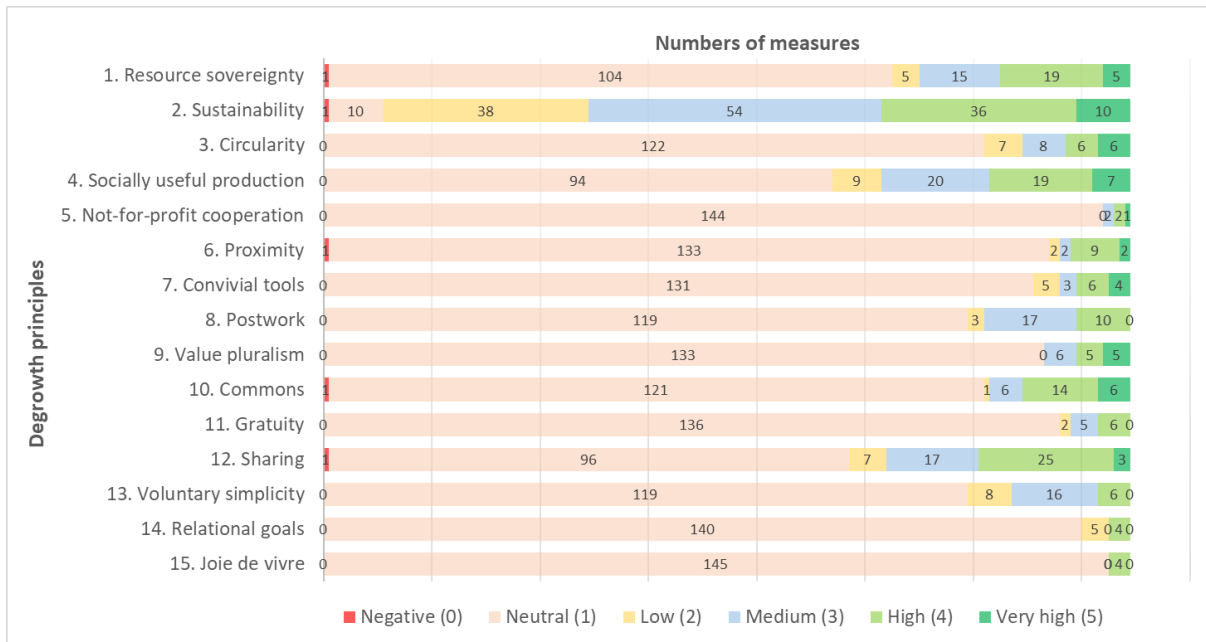
To understand the measure’s general orientation in terms of structural breadth and depth, I built on the approach of Mandard et al. (2020) who analyzed the bulk of the measures from the perspective of their target (*individuals, private sector, state*) and their method (*norms/regulations, pedagogy/information, financial efforts*). Systematizing this approach, I coded each of the 149 measures, allowing for multiple attributions (appendix n°2). For example, the flagship energy efficiency measure foreseeing the mandatory renovation of buildings by landlords and homeowners (*SL1.1*) uses norms/regulations to target individuals, the private sector, and the state, and is coupled to the financial effort of a gradual system of aid packages (*SL1.4*). This heuristic approach revealed a clear focus on structural changes (Fig. 7), contrasting with Macron’s (2020b) praise for accommodationist measures targeting individuals through pedagogy/information (5.2.1), e.g. the carbon score for goods and services (*C1.1*).



**Figure 7.** An overview of the 149 initial measures proposed by the CCC. The categorization of measures (following Mandard et al., 2020) reveals a focus on the private sector and the state as targets, and norms/regulations, and (to a lesser degree) financial efforts as methods. This indicates a structural orientation. Own creation.

**5.2.2.2. Scoring on 15 degrowth principles**

To engage more in detail with the recommendations and assess their transformative potential, I used Parrique’s (2019) 15 guiding principles for provision in a degrowth economy coupled to a simple scoring system (from 0 = negative to 5 = very high) and coded the measures accordingly (Fig.8; appendix n°2):

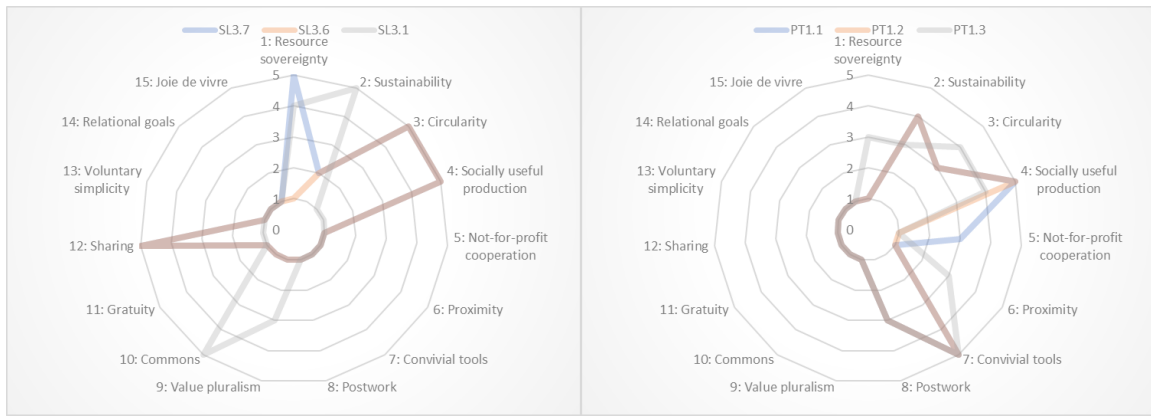


**Figure 8.** Distribution of the 149 measures in terms of scoring on the 15 degrowth principles. Own creation

The report provides rough estimates of the measures' impact in terms of emission reduction (low, medium, high). My evaluation in terms of *Sustainability* builds on these but is informed by a more holistic perspective (including biodiversity). Unsurprisingly, the recommendations scored mostly in terms of *Sustainability* and achieve somewhat satisfactory results in terms of *Socially useful production* and *Sharing* but score low on most other principles.

Nonetheless, the report contains many ambitious measures, several of which might qualify as transformational non-reformist reforms. *SD-E3* aims at "limiting the growth of air traffic" (CCC, 2020, p. 255) by prohibiting the construction of new airports and the extension of existing ones. Other measures on land use aim at halving soil artificialization by defining caps on the number of hectares that can be developed (*SL3.1*), facilitating the requisitioning of vacant housing and offices (*SL3.6*), and the expropriation, recovery, and rehabilitation of wasteland (*SL3.7*) (Fig.9). Classic concerns of degrowth such as convivial technologies are addressed by a three-measure bundle (Fig.9): increase product longevity and reduce pollution resulting from waste (*PT1.1*), enforce the law prohibiting planned obsolescence (*PT1.2*), and make compulsory the possibility of repairing products sold in France (*PT1.3*).

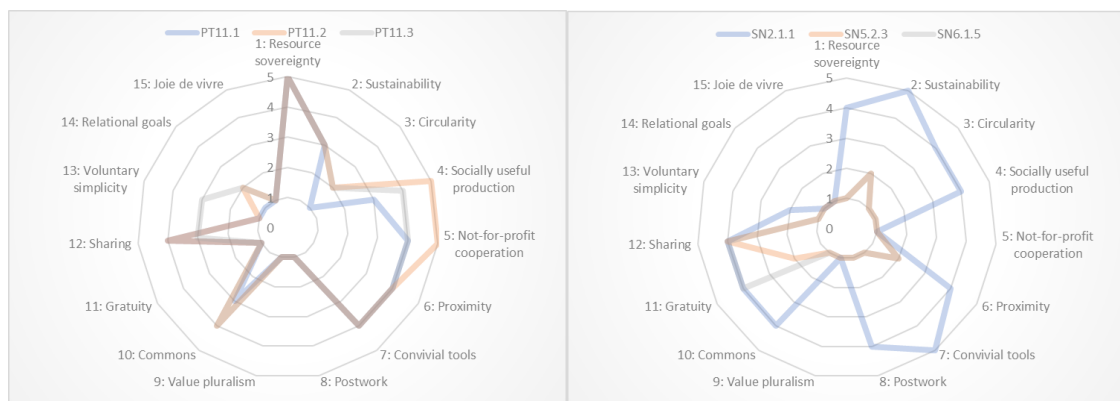




**Figure 9.** Measures related to land use (left) and the policy bundle for convivial technologies (right) score high on several of the degrowth principles. Own creation.

The measure-bundle for community energy (Fig.10) aims at: improving decentralized governance (*PT11.1*) and recognizes that “localities have better knowledge of capacities and opportunities for renewable energies” (p.141); strengthening the participation of citizens and local businesses, associations, and authorities in renewable energy projects through small production units and cooperatives (*PT11.2*); and thus, foster self-production and self-consumption (*PT11.3*). According to the CCC-members, these measures shall “contribute to the change of societal model that we want, while raising everyone's awareness for the stakes relating to energy sufficiency” (p.141).

Finally, transformational measures can be found concerning food production and distribution (Fig.10). Measure *SN2.1.1* aims at reaching 50% of farms in agroecology by 2040. It further recommends banning genetically modified seeds by 2025 and legalizing the recovery, sale, and free exchange of local heirloom seed varieties to increase crop resilience and reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizers. *SN5.2.3* promotes “designing a new national food solidarity to enable low-income households to have access to sustainable food” (p.377), and *SN6.1.5* more concretely suggests food vouchers for purchasing products from small-scale farms.



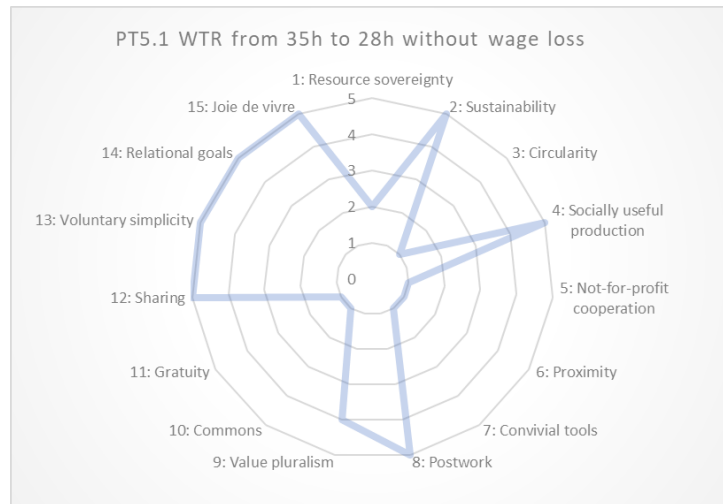
**Figure 10.** From a degrowth perspective, transformational measures can be found in the policy bundles for community energy (left) and food production and distribution (right). Own creation.

### **5.2.2.3. Some sympathetic critiques**

As stressed i.a by members of XR (2020), a major limitation is the cruelly insufficient 40%-target set in the CCC's mandate. In what could be called self-censorship, the CCC-members avoided thorny issues such as the role of nuclear power in the French energy mix, or a truly comprehensive carbon tax which was left unaddressed after some strongly opposed discussing it for fear of cautioning the government (Giraudet et al., 2021). Mellier and Wilson (2020) note the absence of measures for removing fossil fuel subsidies or forcing pension funds to divest. While measure *PT3.2* intended to implement a 4% tax on dividends for companies that distribute more than €10mio/year to finance the "transition budget" (CCC, 2020, p. 88), the report lacks proposals for a radical redistribution of income and wealth, which are fundamental across degrowth policy-proposals (Cosme et al., 2017; Parrique, 2019). And while *SN1.3.1* proposes using public procurements to promote re-localization of production it lacks measures for monetary diversity (e.g. local currencies), which would be key to reach that goal (Parrique, 2019). The food solidarity proposal (*SN5.2.3*) moreover remains vague regarding other mechanisms than vouchers. An oft-cited measure for sustainable welfare beyond growth (Bohnenberger, 2020), food vouchers are certainly a step in the right direction but were criticized by the food sovereignty collective ISF Agrista (2021) for their insufficient scope and stigmatizing potential. Instead, a truly transformational measure would be a social security for food provision as universal basic service, which would allow shifting the agricultural sector towards agroecology (ISF Agrista, 2019).

### **5.2.2.4. A digression on work-time-reduction (WTR)**

It is especially the negative vote on the WTR-measure (*PT5.1*) that dampens the transformative potential of the CCC-report. As a striking example of self-censorship, the measure was rejected by 65% of CCC-members out of fear of discrediting their work in the eyes of the broader public with a measure deemed "totally disconnected from reality and [...] indefensible in the current context [of recession]" (Le Monde avec AFP, 2020, §3). It originally proposed a 20% WTR from 35h to 28h, with a 20% increase in the hourly rate of the minimum wage to maintain the same level of pay. The justification was that to shape a society based "on sobriety, sharing, social justice [...] where profits and growth are no longer the driving forces [...] we must consume less, produce less, and therefore work less" and "accept a decrease in growth" (CCC, 2020, pp. 441–442). A generalized WTR is a typical example of a non-reformist reform since it requires other systemic changes to be operationalized and carries the seeds of a radical transformation of society. It would (1) enable job sharing, i.e. redistributing working hours between employed and unemployed people to fight inequality; (2) reduce production and thus environmental pressures; (3) liberate time for beneficial activities such as voluntary care work or political commitment (Parrique, 2019) (Fig.11).



**Figure 11.** As one of the most common policy proposals for degrowth, a WTR scores high on several of the 15 principles. Own creation.

### 5.2.2.5. Concluding remarks

An in-depth analysis of the CCC-proposals is beyond the scope of this thesis, but this overview suffices to draw a more nuanced picture than the aforementioned caricatures (5.2.1). While the CCC-report cannot be considered a fully-fledged transformation program, Liegey et al. (2020) rightly claim that the members generated “149 initial proposals that could be part of a degrowth project” (§8). Several measures go against growth and profit imperatives and in the spirit of non-reformist reforms would, if implemented, put us in a much better situation to ‘do more later’. In conclusion, the CCC lends empirical support to the claim that CAs produce high-quality decision-making support for socio-environmental issues.

## 5.3. The outcomes: “a downright sabotage of the CCC measures”

### 5.3.1. From unfiltered to exfiltered

“What comes out of this convention, I pledge, will be submitted unfiltered either to parliamentary vote, referendum, or direct regulatory application” claimed Macron (2019, 43:50) when he first announced the CCC. Analyzing subsequent speeches reveals a gradually loosened definition of *unfiltered*. On January 10, 2020, he claimed that “the more precise, clear and detailed it is, the more unfiltered it can be”, but already warned that “there might be cases in which I’ll say: ‘I don’t agree’” (Macron, 2020a, 16:07; 2:24:22). On June 29, reacting to the report publication, Macron claimed to transmit “all proposals except for 3 of them<sup>4</sup> - the 3 jokers that we talked about in January” (Macron,

<sup>4</sup> The 4% tax on dividends (PT3.2), a 110 km/h speed limit (SD-A3.1), and a modification of the preamble of the constitution.

2020b, 43:50). In the following months, the government was widely criticized for unraveling further measures (d'Allens, 2020d, 2020e; Réseau Action Climat, 2020; appendix n°3). Reacting to these accusations Macron claimed: "These are not topics where one can say: take it or leave it. [...] I won't say that because these 150 citizens have written a thing: 'this is the Bible', or the Quran, or whatever" (France Info, 2020, §17). This evolution confirmed early warnings of environmental law scholar Arnaud Gossement, who stressed that the CCC had no legal grounding: "the whole architecture of this convention, all its credibility, rests on trusting the word of Emmanuel Macron. It is profoundly monarchical" (in d'Allens, 2020b, §16).

### **5.3.2. Half a climate law**

Corresponding to the *co-governance* level of power and influence of DIs (Elstub & Escobar, 2019), environment minister Barbara Pompili initially promised that the drafting of the Law on climate and resilience (LCR) would occur in dialogue with the CCC-members. These however deplored an untransparent and one-sided process (d'Allens, 2020c) when on January 8<sup>th</sup> 2021 the government finally unveiled the draft (Assemblée Nationale, 2021). Alongside the recovery plan and the budget bill for 2021, the LCR was presented as one of the means to implement "more than hundred measures proposed by the CCC" (Assemblée Nationale, 2021, p. 3) and claims to steer an "unprecedented transformation" (p.5). Composed of 6 titles and 69 articles based on the clusters of the CCC-report, the draft claims to implement 46 of its measures (Gouvernement français, n.d.b). According to the government's own impact assessment, it will help secure only between one-half and two-thirds of the -40% target (Gouvernement français, 2021).

The LCR draft was met with widespread and harsh criticism from civil society and SMOs (Reporterre, 2021; appendix n°3). With most structural proposals simply removed, unraveled, rewritten, and emptied of their original meaning and scope (appendix n°2), SMOs called it "half a climate law" and "a downright sabotage of the CCC measures" (D'Allens, 2021, §1). Despite ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, 110 000 people took to the streets on March 28<sup>th</sup> 2021 to call for a "true climate law" (Guitton-Boussion & Génon, 2021). As one of many examples pointed out by SMOs, the advertising-ban on the most GHG-intensive products (C2.1) aiming at curbing artificial "need generation" (CCC, 2020, p. 25) was turned into the merely symbolic prohibition of fossil fuels advertising (Assemblée Nationale, 2021, Article 4). Largely confirming Garric et al.'s (2021b) minimally more optimistic findings, the more recent and in-depth evaluation by d'Allens et al. (2021) found that only 15 measures had been taken up 'unfiltered' (10%), while 55 were adopted with less ambitious goals, limited scope and/or deferred implementation periods (37%), and 79 rejected or not taken up (53%) (see appendix n°2).

The draft was further met with unusually severe criticism from several consultative state bodies. The Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE, 2020) found that while the measures were generally relevant, they “often remain limited, deferred, or subject to conditions making their implementation in the near future uncertain” (p.65). The CESE further criticized a “lacking fundamental reconsideration of the growth model of recent decades, which has shown its social and ecological limits” (p.65). The National Council for Ecological Transition (CNTE, 2021) expressed similar concerns about the “insufficient reduction in GHG brought about by this law” (p.2). Both bodies stressed that the LCR was insufficient to meet the -40% target, let alone the now more ambitious European -55% target. Similar conclusions were reached by the High Council on Climate (HCC, 2021), who further criticized the lack of social justice commitments and a methodologically opaque governmental impact assessment. The latter point was also raised by the Council of State (Conseil d’État, 2021), alongside further criticism of the text’s legal quality. Finally, in their opinion report (CCC, 2021), the CCC-members evaluated how the government translated their proposals within the draft LCR and other legislation, using a scoring system from 0 (very unsatisfying) to 10 (very satisfying). The verdict was without appeal, with a 3,3 assessment of the government's consideration of the CCC-proposals and a 2,5 for whether the government's decisions were considered sufficient to reach the -40% target. Like the HCC, the CCC-members criticized the “disappearance of social justice concerns” (p.172), accusing the government of “contempt” towards their work (p.193).

### 5.3.3. Democratic short-circuiting

Exterior influence was strictly regulated during the deliberation process. In their investigative journalism report, the Observatory of Multinationals (Observatoire des multinationales, 2021) however show how industries systematically tried to undermine the work of the CCC once published and influence the shaping of the LCR through revolving door politics, lobbyists, think tanks, employer’s federations, astroturfing organizations, and media campaigns.



**Figure 12.** Macron’s Janus-faced environmental politics: "I give you my **speech** on ecology... and at the same time... I give you my **word** that nothing will be implemented." Source: (D’Allens, 2020f).

This democratic short-circuiting was extended by the governmental majority during parliamentary debates in March 2021. Indeed, amendments taking up CCC-proposals not already within the article scheme of the draft were rejected based on the abusive use of Article 45 of the Constitution (Carrette, 2021). With an exceptionally high inadmissibility rate of 25% and with regressive efforts of far-right and conservative MPs, the governmental majority effectively curtailed any efforts by progressive MPs to reintroduce CCC-recommendations (Garric et al., 2021a). Only through longitudinal tracking of the legislative process until final adoption can the impact of CCC-proposals on policymaking be evaluated with certainty. It is nonetheless already possible to assert that the CCC's extent of power and influence was retrograded from what Elstub and Escobar (2019) call *co-governance* to *advice and consultation* or, at best, *communicative influence*. Tumbling down Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation from somewhere between *partnership* and *placation* to a mix of *consultation*, *therapy*, and *manipulation*, the CCC confirms Smith & Setälä's (2018) findings on the sobering track record of DIs in terms of effectively influencing decisions.

## **6. Discussion: from deliberation to (counter-)hegemony**

What lessons can be learned from the CCC regarding emancipatory sustainability transformations? Here I discuss the implications of my findings from two perspectives: first in terms of design and implementation of future CAs (6.1), and second in terms of their potential as part of comprehensive transformation strategies (6.2)

### **6.1. Lessons for future citizens' assemblies**

#### **6.1.1. Diagnosis**

This case study was informed by two main theoretical propositions: CAs and other mini-publics yield high-quality deliberation and decision-making support (n°1) but have a mixed record in terms of effectively influencing decision-making (n°2). Courant's (2020b) ethnographic research on the procedure of the CCC has documented a technically less rigorous deliberative process than that of Irish CA. In terms of substance, however, citizens have in both cases elaborated "far more ambitious policies than politicians have ever come up with" (Mellier & Wilson, 2020, p. 2). This corroborates proposition n°1. Although the CCC-recommendations cannot be considered a truly transformational program several of the measures would, if implemented, call for further transformations in the spirit of non-reformist reforms (5.2).

This however is a big 'if', as my analysis of substantial outcomes has shown (5.3). Contrary to the advisory ICA, the CCC was designed for its members to co-create policy measures with input from experts and legal advisors (Mellier & Wilson, 2020). In theory, the CCC thus presents a clear improvement compared to most DIs. Giraudet et al. (2021) argue that comparing outcomes of the CCC with that of other CAs will yield insights into the relevance of this co-constructive approach. There are however no clear conclusions to be inferred from the actual policy-outcomes, since the proper work of co-governance during the legislation drafting process was bypassed by the government, retrograding the CCC's extent of power and influence. The result, a dramatic unraveling of its original measures, corroborates theoretical proposition n°2.

### **6.1.2. Between emancipation and status quo**

For Elstub and Escobar (2019), DIs tend to reflect a compromise between a logic of emancipation and of accommodating status quo imperatives. In the case of the CCC, Courant (2020b) accurately notes that the supposedly impartial framing of the organizers arbitrarily delimited a space for 'what is thinkable', legitimate, or rational, thus dissuading deliberation on "profond and controversial paradigm shifts [...] going beyond capitalism or globalization" (p.504). While this is true, the CCC-members succeeded in somewhat loosening this straightjacket and shaping the deliberation process by discussing measures going beyond the CA's original remit (Mellier & Wilson, 2020) – e.g. renegotiating the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (*SN4.1.1*), passing an ecocide law (*SN7.1*) or the 28h-WTR (*PT5.1*).

The eventual self-censoring vote on the latter is a case in point in terms of the contradictory logic of CAs (emancipation vs. status quo). Rejected precisely based on 'what can be' rather than accepted for 'what should be', it highlights the non-reformist character of a WTR-reform. Stronger backing was probably impeded by the fact that only a fraction of CCC-members deliberated on the measure as part of the *Production & Work* cluster before it was submitted to the general vote (Giraudet et al., 2021). This self-censorship draws attention to the importance of framing. Indeed, while the measure mentioned the goal of "reducing unemployment" through an "equitable sharing of working time so that everyone can work and be paid" (CCC, 2020, p. 442), the focus was on its environmental dimension. Acceptability might be strengthened if combined with a job-guarantee scheme and framed primarily as a common-sense social justice measure for sharing work in a conjuncture where full employment will otherwise remain a pipedream (Parrique, 2019; Unti, 2018). Here, targeted campaigns by social movements could help to shift public preferences.

This self-censorship further reflects the CCC-members' tendency to mistrust the broader public, which paradoxically reproduces the very elitism of conventional politics CAs are supposed to subvert. Courant (2020b) observed that during the votes on whether to submit the measures to a referendum, all but one (*SN7.1* ecocide law) got rejected with the argument that the French people "will inevitably say no" and that they "won't understand the proposals because they haven't spent nine months working on them" (p.502). Polls however suggested that 70% of citizens had heard of the CCC (ELABE, 2020), and that a majority supported most of the proposals (62%) and was in favor of a referendum on the main measures (81%) (ODOXA, 2020). Hence, we can hypothesize with Courant (2020b) that the maxi-public might have adopted the mini-public's proposals.

### **6.1.3. Strengthening accountability**

Drawing lessons from the CCC and ICA, Mellier and Wilson (2020) argue that future CAs need to go much further in addressing "underlying systemic drivers" (p.4) of unsustainability, involving that facilitators and experts support citizens in understanding the difference between transformative and incremental change. While there is little to object to that, it remains unclear to which drivers they refer. Moreover, no matter how transformational and devoid of self-censorship, this would likely remain of little effect without stronger safeguards in terms of the government's legal accountability. While Mellier and Wilson (2020) indeed note that the primary constraint of CAs is "politics as usual", their assessment that this happens "even if an assembly has the support of decisionmakers [...] such as Macron" (p.5) seems overly naïve. As I have shown, the CCC should not be understood as political commitment. If there is a "change of method", as vaunted by the executive, it is not in doing democracy differently but solely in terms of the strategic balance between force and consent to impose a predefined transition agenda. Drawing a witty parallel between the simultaneous increase in police repression and participatory procedures, a commentator noted that "the government's ecological smokescreen recently took the subtlety of a cloud of tear gas, and incidentally is aiming for the same dispersal effect" (in d'Allens, 2019b, §10).

Smith and Setälä (2018) argue that given their deliberative qualities but poor track record in terms of substantive outcomes, mini-publics should be endowed with more binding power over collective decisions. Such recommendations, the authors note, are however surprisingly rare to find. This absence is conspicuous in Mellier and Wilson's (2020) ten design principles to make future CAs more impactful. CCC-members on the contrary have expressed their wish to see future CAs having legally clearly defined mandates and transmission mechanisms (D'Allens, 2021a). As for now, in the absence of more binding power, the sobering outcomes of the CCC make it tempting to side with skeptics who argue that democratic innovations, "far from facilitating transformation, may in fact already have



become complicit in cementing a governance of unsustainability that merely simulates participation and democratization” (Hammond, 2020, p. 224).

## **6.2. Lessons for social movements**

Whether this pessimistic assessment proves accurate or not will depend on how social movements working towards sustainability transformations succeed in leveraging what Newig et al. (2019) call *positive social outcomes* of DIs. So far, the CCC has proven to be an ambivalent procedural change, which nuances the positive relation between institutional and substantive outcomes.

### **6.2.1. Diagnosis**

SMOs effectively used the public preference mechanism, with some success in introducing more radical perspectives into the deliberative arena of the CCC (Gaborit, 2020a), i.e. channeling disruptive deliberation into constructive deliberation. Furthermore, as a powerful use of the judicial mechanism, the landmark outcome of the “Case of the century” found the State guilty of climate inaction in early February 2021 (Baudouin, 2021). Yet, SMOs have been incapable of mounting and sustaining the amount of *disruptive* collective power needed to force significant concessions during the legislative process. This is largely due to the political constraint of Covid-19 restrictions which strongly impeded traditional repertoires and tactics. Until the recent March 28<sup>th</sup> protests, mobilization was largely confined to little impact online-protest or petition-signing. Importantly, the pandemic dampened the emergent dynamic of both radicalizing modes of actions (Gaborit, 2020b) and intersectional alliance building between environmental, social, and anti-racist networks and organizations (Kokabi & NnoMan, 2019).

Failure to mount sufficient power might also be partly due to differences in the way environmental SMOs construct meaning and strategically positioned themselves towards the CCC. As shown by my discourse analysis (appendix n°3) and similar findings by Gaborit (2020a), environmental SMOs navigate between the roles of what Hendriks (2019) calls *legitimizers* and *agitators* as part of different types of ecological citizenship (Kenis, 2016): *communitarians* who fully endorse the CCC emphasize consensual dialogue and appeal to the rationality of power-holders; *agonists* who emphasize struggle, express (nuanced) support to criticize the government and pursue their own agendas; and *revolutionaries* who reject simulative participation and call for a shift from addressing transition demands to decision-makers to a ruptural ecology. While the disinterest of the revolutionaries might lead to what Hendriks (2019) calls an exclusionary challenge – i.e. the systematic exclusion of certain perspectives from DIs either because they fear co-optation or are considered too radical –, the

communitarians' focus on moral suasion can be seen as strategic impasse that only recently gave way to more agonistic positions (appendix n°3).

Given Macron's increasingly authoritarian neoliberalism (Amable, 2021; Rocher, 2020) and bearing in mind the insurrectionary power needed to win an institutional outcome such as the CCC, gaining significant substantial outcomes in the form of non-reformist reforms would likely require mounting similar levels of confrontation. Early co-optation of democratic innovations by elites can however be undone (Baber & Bartlett, 2018). For this, success depends on a combination of contextual and strategic factors (Tarrow, 2011). I here turn to the latter.

### **6.2.2. Strategic ways forward: transforming failure into opportunity**

In a strategy for long-term hegemonic struggle, a successful tactic "is better understood as one move among many in an epic game of chess, [...] one that sets us up to eventually achieve gains that we are not presently positioned to win" (Smucker, 2017, p. 36). Although broad organizing principles such as Wright's (2010) categories are necessary to think strategically, strategy itself can only be conjunctural, i.e. situated in a particular historical and political setting. The following considerations are thus particularly aimed at the current French context, although I believe that (*mutatis mutandis*) they can be of use in similar contexts.

Early on, members of XR (2020) observed that CAs like the CCC could hardly play the role of counter-power in the locked French political system of "presidential monarchy" (§7). This prediction has since been confirmed. At present, wresting significant concessions from *this* government would require levels of confrontation that largely exceed current resources of environmental SMOs. A symbiotic program of non-reformist reforms, Gorz (1968) tells us, cannot "constitute the *setting in motion* of a revolutionary process" (p.114, emphasis in original) but would already require a sufficiently powerful collective actor capable of seizing power. What then is to be done? Malm's (2020) three strategic principles for an ecological Leninism<sup>5</sup> provide a useful starting point to suggest ways forward in the present conjuncture: (1) *turning the crises of symptoms into crises of the causes*; (2) *leap at any opportunity to wrest the state in the right direction*; (3) *speed as a paramount virtue* (pp.148-151).

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<sup>5</sup> In an article titled *It Takes Organizers to Make a Revolution*, Nunes (2017) notes: "This article was at one point called 'What We Might (Still) Learn from Lenin,' and it opened with a disclaimer [...]. I decided that even that was not enough; merely having 'Lenin' in the title risked turning some readers off. This little story illustrates how much Lenin's name can function as a territorial marker signaling belonging and exclusion; but also, given my belief that much of what is said here would be perfectly acceptable to people who identify as 'anti-Leninists,' it says something about what that territoriality might be making us miss" (§1). I believe the same applies here.

With shrinking opportunities to shape the LCR, it is time to stop addressing current power holders. The first strategic principle entails converting the CCC's failure in terms of policy-outcomes into a decisive blow against the current climato-cynical government and deepen the crisis of legitimacy for the elites it represents. To do so, SMOs might mobilize new networks with a narrative framed around the idea of betrayal (Gaborit, 2020a), a feeling expressed by most CCC-members (CCC, 2021). As argued by a collective of SMOs (Collectif, 2019), the true legitimacy of the members stemmed not from their demographic representativity but from the situation of democratic dispossession they shared with all the rest. Instead of fulfilling its promise of addressing this deficit, the government not only exposed the depth of this dispossession but added yet another layer to it. SMOs need to emphasize this betrayal in contrast with the broad endorsement of the CCC-recommendations by the public, which not only creates a powerful mandate for change (Mellier & Wilson, 2020) but also provides progressive forces with a legitimized agenda and concrete measures to build on.

This blow must be used as a basis to leverage the two other principles, that is concentrating on seizing power in the 2022 presidential elections as the next best symbiotic opportunity to wrest the state in the right direction. According to Mathilde Imer of the *Gilets citoyens* collective, the absence of legal accountability was a known weakness during negotiations. This was however a risk to be accepted to build power through experience, prove that CAs composed of ordinary people yield better results, and make democratization a central aspect of the next elections (personal communication, March 30, 2021). In France, like elsewhere, a fragmented field of progressive forces faces an incipient convergence of center-right and far-right forces under an emerging authoritarian "green" nationalism (Benoist, 2020; Zetkin Collective, 2020) – a capitalist Climate Leviathan in the making (Mann & Wainwright, 2018). Such "morbid symptoms", Gramsci (1971) wrote, occur when "the old is dying and the new cannot be born" (p.276). In this interregnum-conjuncture, SMOs must put their wariness of party-politics aside and build on the CCC-measures to create common ground with, and between various struggles, disenfranchised social groups, and progressive parties, and push for a (counter-)hegemonic alliance (Carroll, 2009; Trantas, 2021) capable of winning the elections. Sectarianist and purist delay would be fatal.

Whether the CCC will have transformative rather than system-reinforcing effects (Goetz et al., 2020) will depend on the capacity of SMOs to leverage its positive social outcomes to work towards a (counter-)hegemonic bloc. A democratic innovation like the CCC might then in hindsight prove a successful *symbiotic* tactical move to capture positions within the integral state, as part of a necessarily broader strategy using the full spectrum of resistance (McBay, 2019). This includes *interstitial* tactics, e.g. building alternatives that increase autonomy and embody post-capitalist economies (Monticelli,

2018), and *ruptural* tactics, e.g. targeting fossil fuel infrastructure through direct action or leveraging insurrectionary moments such as the Yellow vests (Malm, 2021).

## 7. Conclusion

The CCC emerged as an institutional outcome of hegemonic struggle between the government's attempt to restore consent for a depoliticized transition agenda, and civil society's efforts, driven by disruptive social movements, to democratically build a counter-hegemonic project of emancipatory sustainability transformation. This struggle unfolded within the deliberative arena of the CCC, where ordinary citizens succeeded in elaborating an ambitious set of measures which, despite shortcomings, contains several potentially transformative non-reformist reforms. Building on a lack of legal accountability, a hegemonic bloc composed of the governmental majority, conservatives, and industry lobbies succeeded in unraveling this set of proposals with only a small fraction transposed into legislation. In the absence of more binding power, future CAs are likely to yield similar shallow substantial outcomes and be co-opted by opportunistic regimes to cement the governance of unsustainable transitions. In and of themselves, CAs are unlikely to steer transformations. Applying Wright's framework however proved useful to situate the CCC, and CAs more generally, within a broader strategic context. Depending on the ability of social movements to wrest these in the right direction, CAs could constitute useful symbiotic tactical moves as part of comprehensive transformation strategies based on the principle of diversity of tactics (including interstitial and ruptural).

A clear limitation is that for Wright any strategy for transformation requires a long time horizon: "There is simply no short-term strategy that could plausibly work" (Wright, 2010, p. 300). While this may be true, the short-term existential urgency induced by climate and ecological breakdown calls for immediate transformations: "The reformist calendar is shredded, [...] the time for gradualism is over" (Malm, 2020, p.121). While interstitial alternatives must constitute the backbone of any transformation strategy, this urgency calls for SMOs to intensify symbiotic and ruptural efforts. Changing the world without taking power (Holloway, 2002) is an obsolete slogan in times of chronic emergency. Emancipatory social movements must move from critiquing and contesting power to learning how to seize, wield, and exercise it. Institutionalized CAs cannot substitute for strategies aimed at taking the helm. They should however be used to inspire a desire for self-governing and reappropriating collective control over provision, and spark a proliferation of popular assemblies in all parts of society to deliberate on wellbeing and need satisfaction as the necessary soil on which an urgently needed democratic and ecological planification must blossom.

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## Appendices

### Appendix n°1: 15 principles for provision in a desirable and viable degrowth economy

<b>15 principles for provision in a desirable and viable degrowth economy</b> (Parrique, 2019, p.316-317)	
<b>(1) Resource sovereignty:</b> Be a steward of nature.	Those making decisions about resource extraction should be the communities who are most directly impacted by these decisions, who are knowledgeable about ecosystems, and who assume the responsibility of stewards towards nature.
<b>(2) Sustainability:</b> Never deteriorate supporting ecosystems.	The economy's throughput should remain within the regenerative capacities of renewable natural resources, within the stocks of non-renewable resources that one has morally allowed oneself to consume, and within the assimilative capacities of nature.
<b>(3) Circularity:</b> Waste not, want not.	The flow of energy and materials within the economy should remain as circular as possible with the goal of minimising the extraction of virgin resources and the excretion of unrecyclable and unassimilable waste.
<b>(4) Socially useful production:</b> What is not needed should not be made.	Being only a means to an end, production should satisfy needs and contribute to well-being.
<b>(5) Not-for-profit cooperation:</b> People and planet, not profit.	Businesses should be centred around the pursuit of a social benefit (including ecological missions), be small enough as to allow a directly democratic governance, and take the form of a cooperative.
<b>(6) Proximity:</b> Produce local, consume local.	The shorter the distance between producers and consumers the better.
<b>(7) Convivial tools:</b> Technology as a tool, not a master.	Technology should be fit for a purpose determined outside of itself. Technology should be democratically manageable, controllable, reversible, and easily intelligible.
<b>(8) Postwork:</b> Work less, play more.	The ultimate purpose of economic organisation is to liberate time for non-economic purposes. The time and effort dedicated to activities of provision should be determined autonomously, constitute only a small part of social life, and take place in decent settings, both regarding the condition of work and its finality.
<b>(9) Value pluralism:</b> Wealth is nothing but stories.	The process of economic valuation should always be informed by social and moral values. What is considered "valuable" can vary in from one context to the next, with different values being fundamental incommensurable with each other.
<b>(10) Commons:</b> Decide together.	Strategic resources should be managed as commons.
<b>(11) Gratuity:</b> Communities instead of commodities.	The provision of goods, services, and amenities determinant for the satisfaction of needs should remain outside of the market domain and be organised politically.
<b>(12) Sharing:</b> Sufficiency for all, excess for none.	Any surplus should be treated with caution because it bears the possibility of inequality. When in doubt, liquidate the surplus in a way that benefits the worse off.
<b>(13) Voluntary simplicity:</b> Outwardly simple, inwardly rich	People should regain autonomy over their needs and wants and reflect on the consequences of their consumption. They should pursue non-materialistic sources of satisfaction and meaning and adapt their relation with possessions accordingly.
<b>(14) Relational goods:</b> Less stuff, more relationships.	People should consume with, and not against, each other. Consumption should focus on the ends (feelings, friendship, love, etc.) and not on the means (products).
<b>(15) Joie de vivre:</b> If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your economy.	There is no wealth but life. Economic organisation should be a means to guaranteeing joie de vivre and life should be lived by enjoying the abundance of nature and culture.

## Appendix n°2: Table of CCC-measures

CCC measures	Target			Method			15 degrowth principles (Scoring scale: very high 5, high 4, medium 3, low 2, neutral 1, negative 0)															Average	Status in draft LCR (d'Allens et al., 2021)
	Individuals	Private sector	State	Pedagogy and information	Norms and regulations	Financial effort	1: Resource sovereignty	2: Sustainability	3: Circularity	4: Socially useful production	5: Cooperation	6: Proximity	7: Convivial tools	8: Postwork	9: Value pluralism	10: Commons	11: Gratuity	12: Sharing	13: Voluntary simplicity	14: Relational goals	15: Joie de vivre		
<b>Consumption</b>																							
C1.1 Develop and then implement a carbon score on all consumer products and services.	1				1		1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1,2	Yellow
C1.2 Make it mandatory to display greenhouse gas emissions in retail and consumer places and in advertisements for brands.	1				1		1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1,2	Red	
C2.1 Effectively and efficiently prohibit the advertising of the products that emit the most greenhouse gases, in all types of advertising.		1				1	1	4	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1,53333	Yellow	
C2.2 Regulate advertising to strongly limit the daily and non-chosen exposure to incentives to consume		1				1	1	3	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1,4	Yellow	
C2.3 Putting in place labels to encourage people to consume less.	1				1		1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1,26667	Red	
C3.1 Gradually introduce an obligation to introduce bulk buying in all stores and impose a percentage on central buyers.		1				1	1	3	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,33333	Yellow	
C3.2 Gradual implementation of a glass deposit systems (washable and reusable) until a generalised implementation in 2025.	1					1	1	3	4	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,4	Red	
C3.3 Promote the development of compostable bio-based packaging to ensure the transition before the end of single-use plastic packaging.		1				1	1	3	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,33333	Red	
C3.4 Replace a significant part of the Household Waste Disposal Tax (TEOM) by more fair and eco-responsible modalities.	1					1	3	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1,46667	Red	
C5.1 Modifying the education programme to generalise education for the environment and sustainable development in the French school system	1				1		1	2	2	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	3	2	1	1,46667	Green	
C5.2 Strengthen environmental education and sustainable development by making it a cross-cutting task for teachers.	1				1		1	2	2	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	3	2	1	1,46667	Yellow	
C5.3 Raising the awareness of the entire French population by linking understanding of the climate emergency and actions to take.	1				1		1	2	2	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	3	2	1	1,46667	Red	
C6.1 More effective and rapid monitoring and sanctioning of infringements of environmental regulations			1			1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,13333	Yellow	
C6.2 Strengthen and centralize the evaluation and monitoring of government policies on the environment			1			1	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,2	Red	
<b>Production and work</b>																							
PT1.1 Design: Increasing product longevity and reducing pollution		1				1	1	4	3	5	3	1	5	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	2,13333	Red	
PT1.2 Enforce the law on the prohibition of planned obsolescence		1				1	1	4	3	5	1	1	5	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	Red	
PT1.3 Make it compulsory to make it possible to repair manufactured products that are sold in France (1), the availability of original spare parts for a defined period of time (2 ). Set up local repair facilities and workshops, and make after-sales services accessible (3)		1				1	3	3	4	4	1	3	5	3	1	1	1	3	1	1	2,33333	Yellow	
PT 1.4 Make recycling of all plastic objects mandatory from 2023, eliminate all single-use plastics from 2023 and increase recycling of other materials.		1				1	1	3	5	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,53333	Red	
PT1.5 Strengthen and enforce regulations on waste from economic activities, household non-hazardous waste (NHW) and inert non-hazardous waste (INW)	1	1	1			1	3	2	5	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,6	Red	
PT2.1 By 2025, any financial aid for innovation must be part of a process moving away from a carbon-based model.		1				1	1	3	3	5	1	1	4	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1,86667	Yellow	
PT3.1 Regulate the use of regulated savings managed by CDC and banks to finance green investments - Evolve CDC's governance to support this rationale		1				1	3	3	1	4	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	1,66667	Red	





SD-D2.2 Develop a project for the unification of transport tickets or multimodal cards	1			1		1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,06667	Yellow
SD-D3.1 Integrating citizens into mobility organising authorities at all levels (AOM)	1	1	1	1	1	5	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,6	Yellow
SD-E1 Adopt an enhanced eco-contribution per kilometre	1					11	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	1,33333	Red
SD-E2 Gradually organise the end of air traffic on domestic flights by 2025, only on routes where there is a low-carbon alternative that is satisfactory in terms of price and time (on a journey of less than 4 hours).			1		1	4		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1,33333	Red
SD-E3 Prohibit the construction of new airports and the extension of existing ones.		1		1	1	4		1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,33333	Red
SD-E4 Increasing fuel taxes for recreational aviation	1				11	2		1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1,33333	Green
SD-E5 Promoting the idea of a European eco-contribution	1				13	3		1	1	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,46667	Yellow
SD-E6 Ensuring that all emissions that cannot be eliminated are fully offset by carbon sinks.		1		1	0	1		1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0,73333	Yellow
SD-E7 Support, in the medium term, R&D in the development of a biofuel industry for aircraft.		1			11	0		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0,93333	Green
<b>Housing &amp; living</b>																							
SL1.1 Forcing homeowners and landlords to renovate their properties in a comprehensive manner	1	1	1		1	5		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1,4	Red
SL1.2 Require the replacement of oil and coal-fired boilers in new and renovated buildings by 2030.	1			1	1	4		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,2	Green
SL1.3 Deploy a harmonized network of one-stop-shop public support services for households having to undertake renovations	1	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	4	1	1	1	1	1,6	Yellow
SL1.4 Gradual system of aid packages for renovation, with loans and grants for the most needy	1				11	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	1,2	Yellow
SL1.5 Train construction professionals to meet the demand for global renovation and ensure a transition of all building professions to eco-responsible practices.		1		1	1	1		1	3	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,33333	Yellow
SL2.1 To force public spaces and commercial and industry buildings to reduce their energy consumption through strong measures.		1	1		1	3		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,13333	Green
SL2.2 Make a major change in behaviour by encouraging individuals to reduce their energy consumption.	1			1	1	2		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	1,26667	Yellow
SL2.3 Encourage limiting the use of heating and air-conditioning in housing, public spaces and those open to the public, as well as in commercial and industry buildings (maximum average temperature of 19°, no air-conditioning below 25°).		1	1		1	3		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,13333	Red
SL3.1 Define a restrictive envelope of a maximum number of hectares that can be developed, reducing by 2 the development of artificialised soils and make the PLUI and PLU (Local Urban Planning Strategy) conform to the SCOT (Scheme for Territorial Coherence) (instead of compatible).			1		1	4	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,86667	Yellow
SL3.2 Prohibit any development of land as long as commercial, artisanal or industrial rehabilitation or wasteland is possible within the existing urban area.		1	1		1	3	5	5	1	1	1	1	1	4	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	2,13333	Green
SL3.3 Take immediate enforcement measures to halt the development of space-intensive suburban commercial zones.		1			1	1	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,73333	Red
SL3.4 Firmly and definitively protect natural areas, suburban agricultural areas and suburban forests. Ensure sustainable management of all private and public forests. Ensure the creation of vegetable cultivation belts around the urban centres.			1		1	3	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,93333	Red
SL3.5 Facilitate the conversion of unoccupied developed land to other uses.			1		11	3		5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,4	Yellow
SL3.6 Facilitate requisitioning of vacant housing and offices			1		1	2		5	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	1	1	1	1	1,86667	Red







SN4.1.2 Ask the French Government to defend a reform of European trade policy: include the precautionary principle in trade agreements, make compliance with the commitments of the Paris Agreement binding objectives, put an end to private arbitration tribunals, guarantee transparency and allow democratic control of negotiations.				1		1		4	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,6	Red
SN4.1.3 Ask the French Government to defend positions at the WTO: take the Paris Agreement into consideration in trade negotiations, put in place sanctions for recalcitrant states, include environmental clauses in trade agreement negotiations.				1		1		4	4	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	3	1	1	1,93333	Red
SN5.2.1 Better inform consumers by strengthening communication around the PNNS and reforming the PNNS into PNNSC	1					1			3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1,26667	Yellow	
SN5.2.3 Prohibit advertising of products banned by the PNNS				1				1	3	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1,46667	Red	
SN5.2.3 Design a new national food solidarity to enable low-income households to have access to sustainable food.	1						1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	1,26667	Yellow	
SN5.3.1 Reforming the functioning of labels by abolishing private labels and introducing a label for products derived from agro-ecological agriculture.	1					1																	1,4	Red	
SN6.1.1 Inform consumers of the degree of processing of products, in particular through compulsory labelling and the introduction of an agro-food ethical charter that provides information on and qualifies technical auxiliaries (colorants,...) and food additives in terms of greenhouse gases. Providing rapid and compulsory information on food accidents.	1					1			2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1,26667	Red	
SN6.1.2 Prohibit the importation of products that are composed of technical auxiliaries banned by the European Union.				1				3	3	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,46667	Red	
SN6.1.3 Phasing out the use of technical auxiliaries and food additives within 5 years.				1				1	3	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,26667	Red	
SN6.1.4 Taxing highly processed products with a high carbon footprint and low nutritional intake				1				1	1	3	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	1	1	1,53333	Red	
SN6.1.5 To set up food vouchers for the poorest to be used in the AMAPs (Association for the Maintenance of Peasant Agriculture) or for organic products.	1						1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	4	4	1	1	1	1,53333	Yellow	
SN7.1 To adopt a law that penalizes the crime of ecocide within the framework of the 9 planetary limits, and that includes the duty of vigilance and the crime of imprudence, whose implementation is guaranteed by the High Authority of Planetary Boundaries.				1				4	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	1	1	1	1	1	2	Red	
<b>Constitutional amendments</b>																									
Strengthening the monitoring of environmental policy, i.a by the creation of an "environmental defender"				1				1	4	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	1,6	Yellow	
Reform of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE)				1				1	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	1,4	Yellow	
Changing the preamble of the Constitution to add "The reconciliation of the resulting rights, freedoms and principles must not compromise the preservation of the environment, the common heritage of mankind"				1				1	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	4	1	1	1	1	1	1,73333	Red	
Changing Article 1 of the Constitution: "The Republic guarantees the preservation of biodiversity, the environment and the fight against climate change."				1				1	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	4	1	1	1	1	1	1,73333	Green	
<b>Sum/Average</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>56</b>			<b>81</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>1,7449664</b>	<b>2,966442953</b>	<b>1,4362416</b>	<b>1,8926174</b>	<b>1,09395973</b>	<b>1,268456</b>	<b>1,295302</b>	<b>1,449664</b>	<b>1,3154362</b>	<b>1,52349</b>	<b>1,20134</b>	<b>1,8725</b>	<b>1,38255</b>	<b>1,114094</b>	<b>1,0805</b>			
<b>Rejected</b>																									
PTS.1 Reduce working time without loss of wages with the objective of sobriety and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	1	5	1	1	1	5	4	1	1	5	4	5	5	3	Black	

### Appendix n°3 : SMO discourse analysis

Discourse analysis of purposive sample of 6 environmental SMOs: On est prêt; Alternatiba/ANV-COP21; Greenpeace France; Youth for Climate France/Paris-IDF; Extinction Rebellion France; Désobéissance Écolo Paris. I used Nvivo 12 to retrieve, code, and analyze tweets from October 2018 to April 2021, and triangulated with other digital media communication (blogposts, press releases, video clips).

	<i>Type of ecological citizenship<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>Repertoires of contention</i>	<i>Mobilizing structures</i>	<i>Construction of meaning</i>	<i>Strategic positioning towards CCC</i>
<b>On est prêt</b>	Communitarian	Pop culture media campaigns, organizing large peaceful demonstrations	<p>“reaching the widest possible audience [...] and take the whole of society towards new narratives [...] by infusing these values into popular culture”(On est prêt, 2020b)</p> <p>“ready for politicians and industrialists to adopt the deep and rapid measures called for by scientists” and they explicitly state that “[they] work</p>	<p>“change will come through the union of all forces and visions” (On est prêt, 2021b)</p> <p>Recent material displays a shift in framing: using footage of Extinction Rebellion, Ende Gelände, and other civil disobedience actions, a recent video clip asks: “how do we change the world?”. The answer: “by deviating, by refusing, we have no other option than to act, now and radically, [...] let's acquire voice and keep it, [...] let's make our actions converge” (On est prêt, 2021a).</p>	<p>Campaign “Imagine on le fait” (Imagine we do it) to support the measures of the CCC and informs the public about its procedures and content (On est prêt, 2020a):</p> <p>Frames the CCC as a way of “reinventing democracy” against the empty promises and depoliticizing electoral cycles of representative democracy. Highlights that the CCC-members have “looked for solutions which would respect everybody” and “stimulate the economy, without endangering the planet” by auditioning “scientists, economists, bankers, farmers, jurists, unionists, urban planners, business executives, ministers”</p> <p>Most active in tweeting about the CCC. Focus on informing the public, e.g. on the selection process<sup>2</sup> or the content of the measures to “allow everyone to appropriate and understand them”<sup>3</sup>. Some tweets emphasized the CCC-members’ learning process, some moving from ignorance or even denialism to committed citizens<sup>4,5,6</sup>. Significantly, ONP presented the CCC as an outcome of the “Case of the Century” campaign<sup>7</sup> without mentioning the disruptive role of the Yellow Vests. Emphasizing the ‘proper’ channels of change, this framing is representative of ONP’s consensus-seeking approach and rationalist</p>

<sup>1</sup> In her study of grassroots environmental movements, Kenis (2016) found that these usually share a common focus on collective rather than individual change but differ in “how they conceive of the collectivity – the ‘we’ they want to build to take common action” (p.950). She identified two types of commitment: communitarian ecological citizenship, which seeks the common good through dialogue and consensus, and an agonistic ecological citizenship, which posits the common good as an object of struggle. While my directed content analysis was guided by these two categories, a third one emerged along the way: revolutionary ecological citizenship.

<sup>2</sup> <https://twitter.com/onestpret/status/1274638176322232323>

<sup>3</sup> <https://twitter.com/onestpret/status/1281537195854135296>

<sup>4</sup> <https://twitter.com/onestpret/status/1253364451597783041>

<sup>5</sup> <https://twitter.com/onestpret/status/1253369615788511233>

<sup>6</sup> <https://twitter.com/onestpret/status/1311337020468473857>

<sup>7</sup> <https://twitter.com/onestpret/status/1207184677863383040>

			with and for all” (On est prêt, 2020b)		<p>depiction of the CCC process: a group of people receiving expert input to design “realistic, just, sustainable” and “directly applicable measures” to be “proposed to the president [who] would accept them as is”<sup>8</sup>.</p> <p>Whereas until July 2020 ONP tweets were politely appealing to Macron to keep his promise and “respect his commitment to the CCC”<sup>9</sup>, emphasising that the “French count on [him]”<sup>10</sup>, the tone shifted since October 2020. In a clear denunciation of a “refractory government”<sup>11</sup> and its “many renunciations, contradictory announcements and unravelling of measures”<sup>12</sup>, ONP now called for “putting pressure on decision-makers”<sup>13</sup> to obtain a more ambitious LCR.</p>
<b>Alternatiba/ ANV-COP21</b>	Agonist	Grassroots alternatives, civil disobedience			<p>Focused their communication less on explaining the procedures and content of the CCC than on expressing support to pursue their own agendas. Messages of support towards the CCC are almost systematically coupled with a critique of the government’s social and environmental politics:</p> <p>Write that “while the 150 presented a project for the transformation of society, ‘not an à la carte menu’, of Emmanuel Macron sets aside certain measures and stubbornly adheres to the dogma productivist growth”<sup>14</sup>. Supporting the claim that participatory-deliberative procedures yield better results, they argued that “the CCC shows us one thing: when 150 citizens get together [...] they succeed in proposing measures and dare opening debates that go beyond what a pseudo eco/climate-friendly government does”<sup>15</sup></p>
<b>Greenpeace</b>	Agonist	Media campaigns, civil disobedience			<p>Focused their communication less on explaining the procedures and content of the CCC than on expressing support to pursue their own agendas. Messages of support towards the CCC are almost systematically coupled with a critique of the government’s social and environmental politics:</p>

<sup>8</sup> <https://twitter.com/onestpret/status/1274700533144735745>

<sup>9</sup> <https://twitter.com/onestpret/status/1277231090537844736>

<sup>10</sup> <https://twitter.com/onestpret/status/1274981704353136640>

<sup>11</sup> <https://twitter.com/onestpret/status/1318175257916809216>

<sup>12</sup> <https://twitter.com/onestpret/status/1318174729627459585>

<sup>13</sup> <https://twitter.com/onestpret/status/1333734992116146176>

<sup>14</sup> [https://twitter.com/Alternatiba\\_/status/1277567231963140096](https://twitter.com/Alternatiba_/status/1277567231963140096)

<sup>15</sup> [https://twitter.com/Alternatiba\\_/status/1275071089245188104](https://twitter.com/Alternatiba_/status/1275071089245188104)

					Write that “unsurprisingly, citizens are ready for a change of system matching the climate emergency” <sup>16</sup> , proving that “ambitious climate measures can integrate social justice, thus going against governmental politics” <sup>17</sup> Criticizing the government’s co-optation of the CCC <sup>18</sup> and unravelling efforts to please industry lobbies <sup>19</sup> , Greenpeace stresses that “the majority has not stopped rejecting measures that were promoted by the CCC. The gap between words and deeds is becoming increasingly glaring” <sup>20</sup> . Denounces that the government co-opts the CCC by “making the 150 citizens play a role that is not theirs” <sup>21</sup> and that “the government gives in to lobbying by the MEDEF” <sup>22</sup> , France’s largest employer federation.
<b>Youth for Climate</b>	Agonist	Climate strikes, civil disobedience			<p>Focused their communication less on explaining the procedures and content of the CCC than on expressing support to pursue their own agendas. CCC-related communication of YFC focussed less on criticizing the government than on expressing support to the CCC, typically through protest actions “in the streets”, sometimes conjointly organized with XR<sup>23</sup>. Support is however expressed in nuanced ways:</p> <p>After claiming that the “credibility of the CCC’s process [was] seriously undermined” by the controversial nomination of Catherine Tissot-Colle (senior executive at the mining multinational Eramet) as member of the Governance Committee<sup>24</sup>, YFC finally officially endorsed the CCC in March 2020, further stating that “should our leaders fail to live up to their responsibilities, YFC will mobilize to ensure that these proposals are implemented as the government has pledged”<sup>25</sup>.</p> <p>In a more threatening tone, the local chapter YFC Paris/IdF stresses that “the CCC is the last chance we give the government. If it is not listened to, nothing will hold us back anymore”<sup>26</sup>, possibly referring to the much</p>

<sup>16</sup> <https://twitter.com/greenpeacefr/status/1274692727461105664>

<sup>17</sup> <https://twitter.com/greenpeacefr/status/1274691209068531712>

<sup>18</sup> <https://twitter.com/greenpeacefr/status/1287731071321341953>

<sup>19</sup> <https://twitter.com/greenpeacefr/status/1310635382359371783>

<sup>20</sup> <https://twitter.com/greenpeacefr/status/1280131755148808192>

<sup>21</sup> <https://twitter.com/greenpeacefr/status/1287731071321341953>

<sup>22</sup> <https://twitter.com/greenpeacefr/status/1310635382359371783>

<sup>23</sup> <https://twitter.com/xrFrance/status/1274249856677294080>

<sup>24</sup> <https://twitter.com/Youth4Climatefr/status/1180899370956312576>

<sup>25</sup> <https://twitter.com/Youth4Climatefr/status/1247484617759875072>

<sup>26</sup> <https://twitter.com/ParisYFC/status/1274064787098554369>

					discussed occupation and degradation of the French headquarters of the world's largest asset manager BlackRock they initiated on February 10th, 2020 (d'Allens, 2020a) and similar confrontative tactics.
<b>Extinction Rebellion</b>	Agonist/revolutionary	Mass civil disobedience		Stressing that the aim of finding solutions that could satisfy all parties lead to the internal rejection of polarising proposals such as a 28h work-time reduction, they highlight the impossibility of consensus on such a complex issue as climate change, arguing instead that “we’re not all in the same boat”. Pointing to the risk that the “reasonable” consensus of the CCC could be used to discredit the “unreasonable” disobedient masses XR hopes to see emerge (Extinction Rebellion, 2020).	<p>Focused their communication less on explaining the procedures and content of the CCC than on expressing support to pursue their own agendas. CCC-related communication of XR focussed less on criticizing the government than on expressing support to the CCC, typically through protest actions “in the streets”, sometimes conjointly organized with YFC<sup>27</sup>.</p> <p>Without surprise, XR’s CCC-related communication is often used to promote their demand for CAs. The fact that CCC-proposals “go further than 20 years of governmental measures”<sup>28</sup> is proof, they claim, of “the need to set up Citizens Assemblies at the local, national and European level”<sup>29</sup>. While the measures of the CCC are still considered “insufficient to counter climate &amp; social emergency”, XR welcomed that “this initiative opens up the topic of Citizens Assemblies”<sup>30</sup>. XR’s working group on CAs (Extinction Rebellion, 2020)<sup>31</sup> however highlighted the ambivalent character of the CCC and similar institutional innovations, which contrary to XR’s sovereign form of CA are “entirely dependent on the final decision of elected representatives” and “aim to complete the representative regime, rather than transcend or subvert it” (§5). Such regime-sanctioned processes, they write, “can hardly play a role of counter-power when the rules of the game are constantly being redefined by the power in place” (§7). Especially when locked into the French “regime of ‘presidential monarchy’”, such CAs run the risk of “restoring the legitimacy of power to carry out its own projects” (§7). The CCC’s focus on ‘reasonable’ consensus, they argue, risks being co-opted to discredit the ‘unreasonable’ disobedient masses XR hopes to see emerge. Hence, the authors stress that it is not enough for CAs to “solely address the political power, like the CCC has done with Emmanuel Macron” (§16), but that citizens instead need to free themselves from capitalist representative regimes, concluding with the question: “when is revolution?”</p>

<sup>27</sup> <https://twitter.com/xrFrance/status/1274249856677294080>

<sup>28</sup> <https://twitter.com/xrFrance/status/1274966908257910784>

<sup>29</sup> <https://twitter.com/xrFrance/status/1274737886961819652>

<sup>30</sup> <https://twitter.com/xrFrance/status/1281257688442306562>

<sup>31</sup> The working group stresses that “the following article in no way represents a general position of the movement. It only commits its authors, who wish to share their own reflections on the Convention with the general public.”

<p><b>Désobéissance Écolo Paris</b></p>	<p>Revolutionary</p>	<p>Autonomous alternatives, civil disobedience, riots, sabotaging</p>		<p>Consensus, they write (Collectif, 2019), is a “camouflage operation” to hide the “social, political and economic root causes of planetary and social disaster” (§10). The solution lies instead in a “major struggle against the concentration and monopolization of wealth by a minority” (§8).</p> <p>DEP et al. (2019) write that the Yellow vests have “triggered a vast desire to democratically take our lives back into our own hands [through] popular assemblies, direct democracy, solidarity, self-organisation” (§12), they conclude: “we ask nothing from the state because we expect nothing from it. We ask nothing but we want to take back everything [...]. We call on everyone to organise themselves collectively to regain power, to enter into resistance, to build a common front” (§13). Accordingly, DEP’s (2020a) manifesto <i>Ecology without transition</i> calls for a shift of strategy for the environmental movement: no more “transition demands to decision-makers”, but an “ecology of rupture” (p.9).</p>	<p>Sparse in tweets on, and support for, the CCC. Their interventions call for going beyond both representative and participatory-deliberative models. Most of DEP’s tweets on the CCC occurred in reaction to Macron’s speech at the CCC on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to deconstruct his discourse which emphasized consumer responsibility<sup>32</sup> and green growth: “All ‘solutions’ proposed by Macron are based on technical innovations. When it comes to ‘reducing’ energy consumption, it must be compatible with growth objectives. And he still believes in ‘decoupling’ economic growth from pollution LOL”<sup>33</sup>.</p> <p>In a blogpost called <i>Requiem for the boldness of the CCC</i>, DEP (2020b) welcomed the discussion of a 28h WTR, but strongly criticized that the CCC-members self-censored out of fear of discrediting their work in the eyes of the broader public. DEP co-signed a critical opinion piece (Collectif, 2019) that asked how to “save this unprecedented attempt of collective democracy from becoming a tool of self-promotion for a government whose <i>real</i> politics have been [...] massively anti-ecological” (§5). Stressing that the legitimacy of the CCC-members stems not from their demographic representativity, but from “the situation of democratic dispossession” (§6) they share with all the rest, DEP urged them to refuse the leadership of the Governance Committee, which being appointed by the government is devoid of such democratic legitimacy. Hence, the CCC-members are called upon to subvert the pre-imposed working program and self-determine the nature and purpose of deliberations: “An assembly that does not first seize the power to set its agenda, to decide what it wants to debate and what it does not want to debate, is not a free or democratic assembly: it is an assembly under trusteeship” (§7).</p> <p>This rejection of both representation and participation is echoed in another of DEP’s (2019) opinion pieces: “the authorities repress our mobilisations and call for simulated ‘citizen participation’: ‘ Grand Debate’, ‘CCC’, etc., [which] only serve to gain time” (§3).</p>
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<sup>33</sup> [https://twitter.com/ecolo\\_paris/status/1215716236052566017](https://twitter.com/ecolo_paris/status/1215716236052566017)