

**Introduction to Political Ideologies: Contexts, Ideas, and Practices**  
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**Republicanism and Citizenship - problems and conclusion. Worked examples. 57:58**

Well, good afternoon everyone. We're continuing with our twelfth and final topic on this NPTEL Ideologies course 2019-20. This will probably be our concluding session, and at the start I would like to express my thanks to the two teams in which I have been involved or one team divided into two, I suppose that is my teaching assistance, PhD students here in the Humanities Department at IIT Madras, Nishtha and Ankur and Suresh, who - particularly over the last few weeks - have done a very great deal of background work to keep this course going. They've really been invaluable.

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Well, we can continue with the topic. We'll, we have a little more to do on republicanism and citizenship, and then some documents to look at - recent ones - about the exercise of citizenship and the ways in which that might be changing in our times; there's a lot going on. We'll have a look at some recent material around that. Well, we wound up by, last time by considering the ways in which citizenship understood as both a status and a practice is inherently egalitarian.

Let's go briefly back over that; we are all reasoning beings and in that regard we are all equal, and we are all equal as human because it is, as Aristotle says, reasoning, it's language and the faculty of reasoning that make us *zoa politika*, that make us human beings and thereby political beings. So a further implication is that inequalities and the processes which generate and maintain significant inequalities would need to be publicly justified - in the public space.

Now that process would, of course, have to involve victims of the relevant processes and structures. And this egalitarian character amounts to a development since Aristotle's time. We noted this last time, Aristotle is often criticized for accepting the exclusion of women and slaves from citizenship, and he seems to hold that only those who can afford the time that is those with

the wealth and leisure to participate reflect on public matters or participate in them are entitled to be citizens.

Aristotle seems to recognize that this would exclude large numbers of men who have to make their living through labour or trade and commerce but would for otherwise be fit for citizenship. And, Aristotle does also say that domestic equality, by which it seems to mean equality between a husband and wife, is the closest private approximation to public justice.

Today we would not accept that as sufficient, and today's republican theorists rightly regard gender equality as an inherent element in citizenship. Citizenship would be, virtually unintelligible without it, without the element of, this element of universal entitlement. And without this entitlement to citizen membership and citizen participation we wouldn't, we probably wouldn't even recognize our systems as democratic at all.

Now this means we don't have to worry too much about whether Aristotle is a, is or is not a recognizable social democrat, that issue has been debated by Richard Mulgan and Martha Nussbaum. But it's not directly pertinent to our concerns here.

The point is that severe inequalities including structural in systemic inequalities would almost certainly undermine any wide sense of citizenship as both status and practice, in the sense that we have been covering here. They would render this unintelligible and perhaps impossible, because what they would render unintelligible is any sense of shared predicaments. If we are very widely separated in wealth, power, authorities, status and so on, security of employment, and all the rest, then our sense of shared predicaments comes under so much pressure that it may simply disintegrate - if we had it in the first place, that is.

Elites, as we saw last time, can buy themselves out of the effects of grossly dysfunctional public processes, we're familiar with this all over the world, and out of grossly dysfunctional public institutions, even if they can't, even if the elites can't buy themselves out of - indefinitely out of the diseases caused by water or air pollution, and certainly can't buy themselves out of our climate catastrophe, the one we're in the middle of. But the consequence, one major consequence of citizenship as both status and practice is that serious questions of distributional or distributional or material inequality cannot be separated from wider questions of the mode of production. And there is no justification for removing that kind of issue from serious and open examination by citizens.

We'll see how this has actually been attempted. Well, any serious discourse on this would of course need to abandon the current promises of or assumptions of ever-increasing wealth and ever-expanding consumption and ever-expanding economic growth. But by coming to consider these kinds of issue, by starting to consider these kinds of issues openly and publicly, we would initiate serious examination of what we produce and how we produce it and what we consume and how we consume it.

For liberalism, these are matters of private preference, but in republican thought, they are part and parcel, and a significant part of, the discourse of citizenship, that is the discourse in the public space. Well, a number of noted liberal approaches stop short at this point; for example, a liberal argument put has taken what is called the capabilities approach. Yes this goes a bit further than strict liberalism, and it is a vast improvement on the idea that, for example, Gross Domestic Product - GDP - is an automatic index of quality of life.

GDP by itself can say nothing about the dignity of the lives people lead, about the sense of meaning - or lack of it - that people feel their lives embody or possess. The capabilities approach has been outlined by Martha Nussbaum, and it encompasses crucial necessities for a decent and dignified life. We saw that a lot of - in response partly to the changes made by Raymond Plant - we saw it in the chapter in the topic of liberalism, that the idea of minimum conditions for agency is now very rarely openly resisted by even extreme liberals. But the capabilities approaches encompasses crucial necessities for a decent or dignified life, such as literacy, access to health care, to education, to even reasonable financial independence and control over earnings or income, and a great deal else besides. **8:20**

Well, what are the implications of the idea that anything is the subject of reasoned public discussion or potentially the subject of it in republican thought? Well, some liberal theories have made some moves in that direction but, as I shall show, they have rather stopped short of quite that point. We will look at the idea of what is called the capabilities approach - yes, it is a vast improvement on the idea, for that example, Gross Domestic Product - GDP is an automatic index of quality of life and the health of a society and so on. GDP by itself - and this is now increasingly noted even by mainstream economists - GDP by itself can say nothing about the dignity of the lives people lead or about sense of meaning or lack of it that people feel their lives embody or possessed or do not possessed.

Martha Nussbaum is the figure most widely associated with the capabilities approach. It encompasses crucial necessities for a decent and dignified life - literacy, access to health care,

to education, access even to reasonable financial independence and control over earnings or income and much else besides. Now, Nussbaum rightly reminds us that these necessities are not exhaustive, the approach leaves many matters as optional and as requiring settlement by what Nussbaum calls the political process.

It's also significant that capabilities are not a matter of innate abilities or qualities. We develop capacities and capabilities in and through our lives and in the context in which we live, and Nussbaum makes this point and in doing so draws on thinkers as varied as Aristotle, Mill - John Stuart Mill - and Rabindranath Tagore.

Well, nevertheless, Nussbaum is a self-avowed liberal, and she explicitly states that she will not offer any comprehensive account of value. I shan't address that question here, whether the idea of central capabilities is not itself a very substantial value, because Nussbaum herself sees the development of capacities as centrally involving choice and freedom, fair enough - but it is rather the case that Nussbaum's idea of central capabilities cannot itself be decided by definitional stipulation. The central capabilities themselves will have to be decided by reasoning public discourse. We may come to very similar concepts of them, but we still can't stipulate what they are, we need to put them up for public discussion.

We've already noted, seen in chapter three, you know, our topic three on liberalism, that liberal theory cannot sustain its own distinction between procedural rights and substantive rights. Nussbaum seems in effect to have accepted that point, but it also follows that is to count as a decent life cannot be defined from above. It'll have to be addressed in and through public discourse.

In addition - the idea of informed political observation and participation plays what seems to be at best, at best an uncertain role in the account of capabilities which Nussbaum provides. Nussbaum notes that, at least in the western tradition, a long line of thought has it that one of the major tasks of government is to ensure that people have the central entitlements. And by that she presumably means the main capacities. Nussbaum also notes that we badly need to, I quote, yes, she says, "We badly need," that's the exact word she uses, those are the exact words she uses. "We badly need to address the whole issue of political structure including the separation of powers, the role of interest groups, voting procedures and presumably also electoral systems." And she is right, Nussbaum is right to say that unless such matters are addressed in political discourse, such discourse is "mere hand waving," that's her own phrase, "mere hand waving."

Now addressing these kind of issues will almost certainly mean reconstituting our existing states, including institutions and laws, on an immense scale, and doing so with the necessary involvement of citizens in ways which completely negate the liberal idea of the state as some kind of external or alien authority which merely holds the ring while people make their own market and lifestyle choices within it.

Well, even further than that, practical reason as characterized by Nussbaum seems not to include the elements of reliable and freely accessible knowledge of and about our systems and procedures of state and our economic structures and processes. It is not enough to assume that practical reason, even if that is enabled, will, *eo ipso*, in and of itself, create the kind of knowledge we need, or give us access to it or to avenues of for informed and authoritative to participation. Practical reason will itself have to be put towards the creation of spaces and systems in which we can freely gain reliable knowledge about our public processes and institutions. And that would mean about matters economic and commercial and about the private sector as well.

Well, what then are the problems of this idea of republicanism and citizenship? In practice we would certainly expect powerful political and economic forces and interests to resist the creation of any kind of public space, which would enable to practice of republican citizenship. Indeed that is precisely what often happens. In Iceland the complete failure to replace the 1944 constitution, which was itself a minor variation on the 1874 constitution, well that failure to replace the 1944 constitution combined with the effects of the 2007 to 99, or 2008 to 10 if you like financial crash in which the corruptly privatized Icelandic banks were heavily implicated, well, those constitutional and economic failures generated very great public anger.

In 2009, the first post-crash Icelandic government, which was the first majority government not to include either of the two main parties, agreed that the public should draft the new constitution. They appointed a seven-member constitution committee to select a random sample of 950 citizens to a national assembly as the first stage of the task. Two of the main issues to be addressed in the new constitution were - reform of the electoral system, and ownership of natural resources. By the way if I am not mistaken India's natural resources are, I understand, the sovereign property of the people. Check that please. It has been an issue in a number of public controversies.

Well, in Iceland a constituent assembly of 25 was elected nationally from 522 candidates from all works of life. And they had to do the detailed work. But this was too much for the now

opposition parties, that is the former two main parties. They seem not, they seem to have got this particular election result annulled on a truly implausible technicality, even though there was no claim that the election had been affected by those technicalities.

That is in a document written by somebody called Gylfason, an Icelandic author, on this particular period, significant period of recent Iceland history. But the constituent assembly went ahead; within four months it had drafted a constitution incorporating all the points raised by the national assembly. They had consulted domestic and international authorities, and despite opposition attempts to filibuster the bill, the resulting bill, despite all that, a national referendum approved the new constitution, a national referendum by the way, approved the new constitution by 67 per cent in favor on a turnout of 49 per cent of the total electorate. Even then, the bill failed after a series of – well - breathtakingly convoluted and utterly hostile manoeuvrings by the spite the main opposition parties, the former two main parties. It may well be that elected politicians fear interested and committed citizens above all else.

Secondly, it's not clear if the idea of citizenship by itself can generate enough of a sense of civic membership to sustain common commitments or the commitment to informed engagement with significant and often very difficult issues which can be, really can look intractable. A sense of civic membership inevitably varies across cultures and classes and regions, and it may well be that sense of civic membership may well be as vulnerable to substantial inequalities, or to rigid social stratification, as any attempts to establish citizenship as a practice.

But republics constituted by citizens remain among the oldest and longest-enduring concepts in political thought, in the whole history of political thought. And their potential appeal may well be shown by their sustained exclusion, the sustained exclusion of the idea of citizen-constituted republics from all other ideologies.

Well that concludes our twelfth topic and therefore, this course of lectures. We've concluded with Republicanism and Citizenship. We'll now go on to look at some attempts to act on certain of these conceptions of citizenship. I have mentioned participatory budgeting in western India, in the city of Pune, we'll look at an item on that, a short item on that from which I've taken excerpts. We'll also look at the idea of citizen assemblies, which are quite widely used, surprisingly widely used around the world. And we'll look at the context in which the idea arose, we'll look at attempts to constitute them and run them and so on, and at how they work. I'll also add at the, when this lecture goes up on the portal you'll also have a PowerPoint, a PowerPoint slide with the sources we shall use for this discussion, this forthcoming discussion. And we shall

- and several other items, and you're welcome to look those up, and they link on to other documents.

Well, let's take a look now at the documents that I've selected for our seminar-type, our worked-example-type, discussion. Well, let's make sure I get first one up, here we are. This is an analysis by Naim Keruwala of participatory budgeting in India - the Pune experiment. The website is 'Development Central', and you will of course have the link in the PowerPoint that comes with this lecture, the seminar documents PowerPoint.

Well, the item dates from 2013, I'll just take some excerpts from it. To start with, the World Bank coined the term 'good governance' in 1992, you're probably familiar with it anyway. And as a result the World Bank and other bodies have, well, embedded this term 'good governance' in a discourse of political accountability. But for the World Bank this emphasized efficiency and effectiveness in how countries, states, and cities are governed. We'll see that that's not necessary the whole story, but let's see.

Well, there are two countries which initially introduced the idea of civic engagement into the process of governance and how we evaluate governance. One was Brazil, the other was Ghana. Ghana introduced the concept in its constitution and implemented it through its legislature. In Brazil, well, Brazil used its own evolving social and political strengths to embed a culture of civic engagement in its politics. The city of Porto Alegre in Brazil introduced the world to the concept of participatory budgeting, as far back as 1989, that's thirty-one years ago now.

Well, in Porto Alegre this participatory budgeting was a part, was a part of various innovative and reformist programmes which the local administration undertook in order to reduce socioeconomic inequalities in Brazilian society. Those are very severe, as I am sure you know. The statistics show that - the figures show that the local government of Porto Alegre spends about 200 millions dollars a year on construction and services through its annual participatory budgeting exercise. That's participatory budgeting - which involves, which makes decisions on the expenditure of two hundred million dollars a year. The city, Porto Alegre, has a population of about one and a half million, and about fifty thousand residents among them take part in the process of participatory budgeting; that's itself quite a sign of success.

Well, what's the conceptual framework here? Participatory budgeting is a democratic process of deliberation by citizens, by civic officials, and by elected representatives. What do they deliberate? Well, the issues that need - they deliberate on the issues that need attention, and they try and arrive collectively at decisions that would directly be included in government

budget. This process means that citizens can voice their opinions and can decide on how to allocate part of a municipal or other public budget for the betterment of neighborhoods; that's what they do.

For example, in New York, I quote from The New York City participatory budgeting website, I quote, "Participatory budgeting lets the whole community participate in decision making. It's a year-long process of public meetings to make sure that people have time and resources to make wise decisions. Community members discuss local needs and to develop proposals to meet those needs. Through a public vote, residents then decide which proposals to fund."

Well, according to one source published in 2004, Cabannes or Cabannes if it's French, I'm not sure, 2004 this is, over 250 cities were at that time implementing participatory budgeting methods in a range of countries. Well, what exactly happens in New York? Let's take a slightly more detailed look at this - New York city, residents of eight council districts in New York city directly decide how to spend at least 10 million dollars of public money on civic communities and services. From September 2012 to April 2013, community members exchanged ideas, they worked together to turn those ideas into proposals, and they voted to decide which proposals would be funded.

What about the Indian experience? Only a few cities in India, namely Bengaluru, Mysuru and Pune, have experimented with participatory budgeting. This paper was written in 2013 remember, more cities may have tried it. I understand that at least one city in Maharashtra besides Pune followed the Pune experiment with its own attempt to introduce participatory budgeting. Now in 2001 Bengaluru became, at that time Bangalore, became the first city in India to implement participatory budgeting.

And these were partly the result of efforts by a local NGO called Janagraha. The campaign resulted in the approval of citizens' budget priorities in over twenty per cent of the city's wards. But as time passed the concept lost ground in the city. In 2006, Pune implemented participatory budgeting for the first time and attracted a massive response from the citizens as well as the city's or city-based, Pune-based NGO's, Janwani and various others, Nagrik Chetna Manch and various others.

Well, the 74th constitutional amendment, and specifically the model Nagar Raj Bill, both direct state governments and urban local bodies to form ward committees. These would involve citizens of the locality and they would prepare the ward-level budgets in consultation with the state governments - that is, with the urban local bodies under the state governments. But these



initiatives have, according to Naim Keruwala, have not been implemented. And result is that there are few channels for citizens to participate in local governance. The paper was written in 2013. Certainly civil society organizations have shown a lot of enthusiasm for participatory budgeting, but Keruwala is blunt, it's the political will that is lacking in India. As he says, "participatory budgeting remains an alien concept in most cities."

What about Pune's own experiences? Well, this participatory budgeting was initiated in 2006 under the leadership of the then commissioner of Pune Municipal Corporation, Dr. Nitin Kareer. Now Pune's Municipal Corporation Budget is, well, what it is 4167.5 crores is that, that's something like an I right 4 trillion rupees? Probably just over that. The allocation towards participatory budgeting is 38 crores, 380 million, it's a much higher proportion than New York City allots. But participation by the citizens in New York is much higher than it is in Pune, and feeds into what Keruwala calls "commendable knowledge management." That is knowledge management on the process and the results. Well, in Pune, the initial years saw lot of enthusiasm among citizens but participation has been declining since then. In 2012-13 participatory budgeting in Pune had only six hundred suggestions from the citizens - for a city with a population over a three and a half million people.

So with a view to engaging citizens in the process of participatory budgeting, the Janwani, that's social wing of the Maratha chamber of commerce, commerce, industries and agriculture, cooperated with the Pune Municipal Corporation. They conducted 20 training workshops on participatory budgeting for various stakeholder groups, that's Keruwala's own word, did this in eighteen different locations and they covered over a thousand residents.

An online application for participatory budgeting was developed with the help of a commercial financial firm or accountancy firm, KPIT Cummins it's called, I think. 335 suggestions were received via online applications, a training kit was prepared by Janwani. It was sent to all the ward officers, to senior citizens' organizations, to self-help group leaders, and participating NGOs. An appeal letter went to all the party leaders and to Prabhag Samiti presidents to request their support in this participatory budgeting process, well, to request their support for it, and they wanted to keep the Prabhag Samiti, well they were also requested to keep the Prabhag Samiti meetings on participatory budgeting open to the public.

What then was the situation in 2013, when the Kariwala papers was written? Well, yes, there was (an) increased participation by the citizens of Pune and that went up from 600 in 2012-13 to 3300 the following year. The PMC, the Pune Municipal Corporation's budget showed a

significant increase towards participatory budget allocation, up to nearly thirty-seven crores, three hundred and seventy million rupees, in 2013-14.

Six major items of expenditure are roads, electricity, buildings, slum improvement, and water supply and drainage. Allocations towards each of these sectors have increased from the previous year. There are spillover effects, and the author suggests a way ahead, and with this proposed training manual Janwani, the NGO involved, aims at reaching out to most of the urban local bodies across India. That's the plan.

How far it's gone, well, would need further follow-up work, but the paper itself is very informative on how things might be done. We should remember also that the areas covered were, well, they were the kind of thing that we would call civic infrastructure. And it appears that participatory budgeting involving citizens in budgeting for these, or allocating budgets, has improved every one of those areas, slum improvement, drainage, water and electricity, roads, and so on.

Well, perhaps the surprising thing is that the idea of participatory budgeting has not had more attention since then, it's now six or seven years later. But we will see that can be a feature of citizen assemblies. Let us have a look at another analysis, this is on a website called Citizenlab and it is by Evy Beekers, B-E-E-K-E-R-S - an article written, posted on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October, 2019, and it raises the question, "Are citizens' assemblies the future of participation?"

Well are they? First of all, what is a citizens' assembly? It's a group of people brought together to learn about a specific policy challenge, to deliberate on possible action, and eventually formulate a policy recommendation for the government. This is a form of deliberative democracy; it stems as the author, Evy Beekers notes, from about 500 BC, I should say BCE, in ancient Athens, from the time of Aristotle. Men from all classes were randomly selected, if I'm not mistaken, by other citizens who would throw pebbles into a pot, the Greek term for pebble is psephos, psephos, hence our term for the study of elections, Psephology. Well, eligible men were randomly selected to participate in large debates on public policy.

Nowadays, random selection for citizens' assemblies is still in place, it's still done. But it rightly represents the world population in terms of things like age, ethnicity, educational level, geographic location and a gender. So, it's quite likely, I'm guessing here, that a selection, random selection for citizens' assemblies today is by the medium of stratified random sampling. I have used this for my own social science field work - in fact, when I was an undergraduate student, when I conducted a survey for my Students' Union at the University Southampton, when I was a non-sabbatical volunteer officer and conducted a university wide survey, in which

staff and students participated. We surveyed students but I designed the random stratified example. That was to ensure that we had appropriate representation of different categories of students - in that case, in those days for that particular study it was by linguistic group - Slavic, Anglo, Anglophone, and so on, a range of languages from around the world, Sanskrit as well, and so on.

Now remember, the citizens selected are not necessarily experts on the issues at hand. They receive assistance and therefore get help in examining the issues from different perspectives. Well, the inquiry phase consists of meetings with competing interest groups, listening to the voices of those affected by the issue, questions and answers with experts and so on. And over the course of days or weeks, sometimes longer, the deliberation phase moves on into, well, becomes a small-group discussion and larger debate phase.

So there's an enquiry phase and a deliberation phase. In the final phase the citizens' assembly, citizens' assembly is expected to make a clear policy recommendation to the government.

Why are they are relevant now? Well, trust in democratic institutions is, as we know, eroding, they have never have been that strong in many parts of the world and therefore to preserve democracy we do need to try an engage citizens at great deal more.

That is a serious concern for the health and perhaps survival of democracy. The most well-known case is, of course, Ireland's Citizens' Assembly, which led to a successful referendum on same-sex marriage 2014. It also let the abolition of the constitutional ban on the abortion in 2017. Well, these two changes dealt with nationally sensitive topics that politicians had, as Evy Beekers says, "skirted around for a long time."

And they show, they exemplify the kind of impact that citizens' assemblies can have on serious major policies. There have been other since then. Scotland held one on Brexit after the EU referendum. France and the United Kingdom have had referenda on have had, I beg your pardon, citizens' assemblies on the climate crises, on the climate crisis. There was, in fact, a citizens' assembly on Brexit before the referendum itself. And a representative example of 50 citizens met in Manchester to discuss the issue in September 2017. No, that was after the referendum, if I've got the date right, that was a year so after. Their conclusion was they wanted a soft Brexit or no Brexit at all.

Well the difficulty is that even fruitful methods like citizens' assemblies have their flaws. For example, actually carrying out recommendations depends on politicians - and there have been

fruitless citizens' assemblies. Governments have neglected policy proposals; for example, in the Netherlands a Dutch citizens' assembly recommended electoral reform procedures. That was, those were neglected; even the Irish assembly, which took the ground-breaking step of legalizing abortion after a referendum, well, even the Irish assembly has issued recommendations on climate change that have not yet had an impact on government, and that's even coming from the assembly. Other concerns, of course, have to do with time and resources such as expert advice, we'll see these, we'll look at some of these in more detail in the next item.

So what's the benefit? What are the advantages? Well, according to Evy Beekers, the real problem we need to solve is that politicians' willingness to establish assemblies and implement its recommendations - well, that's the real problem. Luckily, she says, it's exactly those politicians who can benefit hugely from citizens' assemblies. How's that? The first thing is that popularity is not the part of the equation for the assembly. Politicians have to take reelection into account, especially over sensitive topics - and they are therefore constrained by short term goals, which can conflict with long term decision making. Therefore, assemblies provide a real opportunity for citizens to deliberate without caring about the popular vote. And they can easily take unpopular decisions if needed. Afterwards, politicians can even draw upon citizen assemblies' decisions on unpopular policies to say, well, people do want it, I'll do it, and so on.

Collective intelligence, well, this is a term (where) Aristotle himself may not have used. But - polarization can result in, well, in the abandonment or logjams in, the abandonment of or logjams in, sensitive policy debates. It can be challenging or impossible to get a stranded debate going again via day-to-day argument, public argument and debate. We're very familiar with this in all parts of the world, I won't even go into examples, there are too many to count. But citizens' assemblies offer the potential for us to open up the debate by tapping into the collective intelligence and creativity of individuals. They can offer a way forward in polarized debates so that we try and identify some kind of, not necessarily common ground, but identify ways to talk to one another; we find that in Aristotle, we find it in Beiner's excellent analysis of liberalism.

Well, what about taking participation to the next level? Careful citizen deliberation helps citizens understand the complexity, and the tradeoffs even, in policy dilemmas, in policy problems. This combination of ownership and education empowers citizens to take greater interest, they become much more knowledgeable in policy fields in anything they happen to deliberate. Other forms of participation like online consultation referenda may have the potential to reach more citizens directly. But they can suffer, we know this only too well from uninformed opinions

or poor turnouts, or they can end up being simply unrepresentative. Does that make them useless? Absolutely not but, this is not necessarily about finding one way or another for citizens to participate, it's about creating multiple opportunities to do so. The end game or the purpose is to apparently to improve the legitimacy of local policy decisions. Now that can probably be done by combining message of participation. Well, some citizens who have participated have found these invigorating and very valuable occasions. Of course, citizens' assemblies don't solve all the difficulties democracy is facing, but they can perhaps lend a helping hand.

Well, let's look at some further experiments. In 2018, the German speaking region of Belgium, which is the smallest European Union federal identity, launched a permanent citizen's council. 24 randomly chosen German speaking Germanophones or Germanophones took their seats with the power to tell elected officials which issues matter. And each such issue would be given to a citizen assembly. In this *Ostbelgien Model*, traditional decision-makers still have the final say, but citizens are allowed to come up with the agenda; it's a form of direct democracy in action.

Well, there have been examples of similar things in Madrid in Spain and Gdańsk in Poland, and they've launched, well, citizens' assemblies in their city. And so there's a variety of participation methods, citizens assemblies don't have to follow a single approach. So that's a largely optimistic, cautious but optimistic, account of citizen's assemblies. We need to look at some more skeptical accounts of them, and there's a very good article in the (U), in the journal *Politico* by Naomi O'Leary' and this is a cautionary account, published in June 2019, and it's on the website and you'll have the link to it. Well, O'Leary starts by saying, "Okay, put a hundred ordinary citizens in a room and together they will solve the most intractable political problems of our time and save democracy in the process. If only things were so simple." Well, citizens' assemblies, as O'Leary says, as she says, "Are the flavour of the month among political geeks across the world."

I presume not just geeks, does she really mean we're all geeks by taking an interest in them, perhaps she does that - just joking, particularly about myself. Okay, well, Rory Stewart, one of the senior members of the Tory party, who at one time was in line for election to the prime ministership - to the Tory leadership - proposed, well, for a time proposed one to solve Brexit, what the problem was I'm not sure, but proposed one, he proposed one.

The French president, Emmanuel Macron, has promised a *Grand Débat National*, a Great National Debate, to involve the public directly in his is attempts to form France through citizens

assemblies and online consultations local meetings. The Ostbelgien, the Belgian model is mentioned again here, and well, no doubt the popularity of citizen's assemblies results from the success of the Irish example, two Irish examples, we saw.

But - there are cautionary voices, and, yes, test cases have been tried, if I'm not mistaken in the United Kingdom, a constitutional convention was held in 2012, no it was in the Republic of Ireland, I beg your pardon, 2012 in the Republic of Ireland - a constitutional convention was held. 33 politicians and 66 citizens were charged with recommending an overhaul of the Irish Republic's constitution.

Then there was a citizen's assembly; both of these were very successful - the constitutional convention recommended legalizing gay marriage. And that was introduced by public referendum in 2015, in a world first. In 2017, the assembly recommended ending a constitutional ban on abortion and allowing terminations without restriction in the first twelve weeks, up to the first twelve weeks of pregnancy; that is now law.

But - those are the successes. The full story is more complicated. Legalizing gay marriage was just one of nine reports the constitutional convention delivered. The other recommendations, well, haven't been quite so lucky. Reducing the voting age to the sixteen was rejected; by the way the Scottish government, I understand, would do so if Scotland became independent. And I have met young voters who are very articulate and I'll say convinced me that in the United Kingdom we should reduce the voting age to sixteen.

There was another recommendation made in the Republic of Ireland by this citizen's assembly; that was to remove a constitutional reference to, I quote, "women's place in the home"; that is apparently logjammed in the legislative processes involved; that is to remove a constitutional reference to women's place in the home. Another proposal rejected was to - as a call to - reduce the minimum age of presidential candidates; the Irish republic elects its president in a direct election, as France does, as the United States does.

Well, yes, voting reform, climate change, were also examined by Ireland's citizen's assembly. Many of the recommendations on those topics have actually gone nowhere. So, citizen's assemblies do ultimately depend also on political will - as Naim Keruwala said about participatory budgeting. There are other limitations, we do need to be careful to reflect populations - random stratified examples are a way of doing that.

But, do they actually do so? In the Irish case, the Republic of Ireland's case the assemblies were unpaid, they had to dedicate ten weekends or twelve over eighteen months - in the case of the citizens' assembly, the constitutional convention had met for ten weekends - to the exercise. There were significant reading requirements during the week, the documents may have not necessarily been easy, the time commitment therefore excluded people who work weekends or who have caring responsibilities.

It also filters out all those with an unusually high sense of civic duties so the very keen types tend to volunteer, well, I beg your pardon, I've got that wrong. The process does filter out, yes, all but those, so the very keen types may well select themselves or put themselves forward for this; in statistics I believe that's called self-selection in sampling, and it is a risk. The process can also be expensive; travel was covered but the constitutional convention did not offer childcare costs, or reimbursement for those. It struggled to retain women aged between 25 and 40; given our societies as they are, women of that age are the most likely to need childcare if they're going to attend things like citizens' assemblies, or go out to work. Well, so - thirdly, if ultimately it's up to the government, up to the politicians to choose whether or not to follow citizens' assembly recommendations, are they a waste of time? As it happened, in Ireland there were recruitment problems, the random selection – this does happen with random selection - ended up picking a husband and wife and two next-door neighbours; seven members had to be removed from the citizens' assembly, because it turned out they were not randomly recruited.

There was also a retention problem, 99 were selected for the citizens' assembly; only 61 – that's probably not too bad - stayed out, stayed the full eighteen months, and only 26, that is one quarter, attended every meeting. More funding could certainly help. And William Jennings, Will Jennings, a professor at the University of Southampton, has said that's one of the significant concerns; he says it's, I quote, 'one of the really big concerns'. He says, we don't want it to be that it's just the - “We don't want it to be that it's just the usual suspects who take part in all the other aspects of the political process who turn up and have a very nice deliberative time.” So, there are significant practical issues that have to be addressed if citizens' assemblies are to fulfil their undoubted promise.

But - according to O'Leary, the biggest question is what kind of power such assemblies are to have. If it's ultimately up to government, well, are they a waste of time? In Ireland there were particular circumstances which helped - cross-party support in the Irish Dail, knowledge that the preceding's were livestreamed, materials were made available to the public, there was rolling news coverage, and so on. Ultimately the citizens' assembly worked because it suited the

politicians. Well, the politicians could delay action, they could outsource to an unelected body an unpopular decision or recommendation by the assembly, by the citizens' assembly. And many of the politicians who didn't like the citizen's assembly could and did dismiss the process as illegitimate. So it could be, as some analysts have said, that the greatest effect was not on the public but on politicians. It convinced them sometimes that what had previously been unthinkable might actually have public support, might actually gain it.

But - does that then turn citizens' assemblies into high-profile focus groups? A University College Dublin professor, Eoin Caplin, Carolan, I beg your pardon, said that. Are they then just high-profile focus groups, and that's not the idealized vision of citizens' assemblies which many have.

Well, citizen members were honoured to be consulted and they did learn a lot from the expert presentations and the reading requirements, they called it receiving a free third-level education. And observing the proceedings has been extremely worthwhile for a lot of people. They've seen the participants weighing the evidence carefully, they've changed their prior (conventions), convictions sometimes, and they've worked together for compromise. And - well, some of the younger members decided to go on and study law because they realized they could handle complex, legal and other matters, all related matters.

But a great deal depends on the design of the assemblies and the kind of powers they have, and in our current democratic systems they do require political support, and they do require the receptivity of politicians. But, is there a further issue? David Farrell, a professor at the, a politics professor at University College Dublin, says, well yes but what about expert issues? He says, I quote, "You would not want to fly an airplane by citizen's assembly."

It's a powerful point but, does that not revive the question we looked at in technocracy - which was the one raised by Plato. Plato's analogy is with the captain of a ship, an expert in navigation, and sailing and techniques of handling a ship. Now that has to be left to experts and Plato thinks the state has to be left to experts. Accordingly, as we saw Renford Bambrough, the philosopher, the Oxford philosopher, pointed out in a famous paper written in the 1950s, if I remember rightly, that the kinds of decisions that a captain cannot or very rarely is involved in making are to do with where the ship sails, why it sails where it sails, what kinds of cargoes it carries and why it carries those cargoes and so on. Are those susceptible to the kind of technical expertise that seems to be implied in David Farrell's comment? Yes, certainly if we've



got to fly an aircraft we need a qualified and experienced and well-practised pilot to do that, a genuine, someone with genuine technical knowledge.

But whether we are flying to war or flying people to visit somewhere else or flying emergency supplies to an area of flicked affected by a climatic tragedy or natural disaster, well, those kinds of decisions surely are not technical decisions. We may draw upon technical knowledge in order to make them, but the decisions ultimately - as Renford Bambrough says - are not technical. So, is professor Farrell's a decisive argument against the citizen's assemblies, I say, I would suggest not.

Well, there's always a risk that citizens' assembly recommendations will end up gathering dust. We can wind up with one which was not quite a citizens' recommendation, but would have, if implemented well, would have transformed the life's of - today - one and a half billion people in India. In 1946, Sir Joseph Bore, a civil servant, recommended a national health service on the lines of the National Health Service being devised in the United Kingdom.

This would be funded out of general taxation and nobody would pay anything at the point of need, that is at the point of treatment. The report is now if I am not mistaken, I can use the metaphor here, under seventy-four years of dust. What would have happened if it had gone to a genuine, properly selected, properly randomly selected citizens' assembly in the emerging independent India?

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