

Results of the Academic Citizens' Assembly - MYBLUEPLANET 2024

This report summarizes the process, results, and insights of the [Academic Citizens' Assembly](#) (ACA) organized by [MYBLUEPLANET](#) (MBP), with support from the [Climate Reality Project Europe](#), on Thursday 25.04.2024 in Lausanne.

21st century democratic decision-making for the Swiss societal transition.

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1. Context and goals

The **Academic Citizens' Assembly – MYBLUEPLANET** ([ACA MBP 2024](#)) took place on Thursday 25.04.2024, 16-19h at [Arctic Juice and Café Lausanne](#), Rue du Grand Chêne 1, 1000 Lausanne.

The Assembly question was “**How can democracy empower employees to implement real climate action?**”, defined as follows:

- Democracy means that every employee has a voice in shaping both company action and decisions that affect their life.
- Climate action is a credible plan to reach net zero by 2035 (ideally) or 2040 (latest), including a minimum of 90% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, incl. phasing out activities that cannot be decarbonized.

Workplace democracy is a very suitable topic for a deliberative assembly, as a highly complex topic, strongly related to values, potentially transformative, and requiring some time, knowledge, and reflection to understand.

Since the 1980s, citizens' assemblies have been successfully conducted dozens of times in many countries, almost always leading to recommendations of high quality. Most assemblies had between 20 and 150

participants, and the main challenge was acting on the result by the government, parliament, or popular referendum. To overcome this issue, the [Academic Citizens' Assembly](#) (ACA) is specifically designed to scale to hundreds of thousands of participants, building on the Swiss tradition of participatory direct democracy.

ACA is entirely based on academic principles: evidence-based, lobby-free, no ideology. In contrast to many assemblies, interest groups do not get a special platform to defend their “interests” during the preparation phase, which is limited to science-based information.

Citizens' assemblies ensure representativity by a process called “stratified sortition”, where participants are randomly selected to maintain a representative proportion of all subgroups considered significant, such as age, gender, education, and sometimes nationality, income, size of city, political views or other. In contrast, the ACA is designed to be representative by full inclusion. ACA MBP 2024 was not representative of the broader society, as participants were self-selected from the broader MBP, Business School Lausanne, and Climate Reality Project communities.

The main partners of the Academic Citizens' Assembly are [Business School Lausanne](#) (BSL) and [EPFL](#), supported by [CLIMACT](#) and [E4S](#).

2. Structure, process, and tools

ACA MBP 2024 was a one-session, 3-hour mini-assembly, in the open space of Arctic Juice and Café in Lausanne. The group deliberation and proposal writing took place in fixed groups, while voting was individual and anonymous. Each group was seated at its own table in the café.

The assembly started with a panel on workplace democracy and sustainability, moderated by Khulan Berger, with four panelists: Sascha Nick, founder of CO₂-monitor and ACA; Anna Chilton, Biodiversity specialist at Nestlé; Nikhil Divecha, CFO of Arctic Juice & Cafe Lausanne; and Renée LaPlante, founder of Decarbonista.

After the panel discussion, Sascha Nick provided an overview of workplace democracy and its centrality in accelerating corporate climate and sustainability action, together with some key challenges. This introduction was illustrated with the recent example of SBTi employees confronting power (their new CEO and the company board) and opposing greenwashing (a proposal to water down what “science-based” climate action means). Four days later, SBTi backtracked, saying “SBTi standards have not changed”. Further, in 1985, Robert Dahl wrote “if democracy is justified in governing the state, then it must also be justified in governing economic enterprises”. Overall, the best-known example is Mondragon, the world's largest cooperative, founded in 1956.

After the introduction, groups were formed. Each group had a volunteer facilitator (to ensure respect, inclusion, focused participation, and output, within the scheduled time) and observer (to note each group's social dynamic). Both facilitators and observers could participate in the deliberation and vote, in addition to their roles.

ACA MBP 2024 was the sixth ACA we organized, and the second one with a general audience.

Access to all needed tools (opening form, team documents, proposal voting software - pol.is, and the closing survey) was provided in a “Tools” section on the [ACA MBP 2024](#) page of the ACA website. It could be accessed on any device including mobile phones, but laptops were generally used for typing proposals and observer notes.

3. Participation - surveys, statistics, observers

ACA MBP 2024 had a total of **19 participants in 3 groups**, 6-7 per group.

A total of **22 proposals** were submitted, **391 votes** cast.

The **Participant Survey**, based on 11 replies (58% response rate), focused on the process of the ACA and the satisfaction with various aspects of organization, as well as feedback for future improvement.

The survey was included in the process, but as the time was short, and a number of people had to leave, participation rate was lower than usual (70-80%).

Participants were 63% female, 37% male; covering a broad range of roles and professions: engaged citizens, entrepreneurs, educators, sustainability professionals.

Main stated **motivations around energy and sufficiency**: stopping climate change, promoting sustainability, taking responsibility, innovation, education, and concern for future generations' well-being, but also reflecting, learning, and connecting with others.

Level of **prior knowledge**, self-declared: range 5-9, average 7.5, mode 9

Emotions associated with climate action covered a broad range from outrage, anger, panic, and sadness, all the way to hope, courage, positivity.

Participants **already practice a wide range of sufficiency measures** such as less or low carbon travel, educating children, awareness of essentials, and nutrition.

Organization of the ACA: inclusion and respect were very high (range of votes 0-10, "mode" is most common reply)

- Overall organization: average 7.8, mode 8 (36% of votes)
- "Was the goal of the ACA clear to you?": average 7.7, mode 8
- "Was the process of the ACA clear to you?", average 7.7, mode 8
- "Did the voting work well?", average 9.2, mode 10 (46%)
- "Could you express yourself, and were you heard?", average 8.4, mode 10
- "Were you treated with respect?", average 9.6, mode 10 (82%)
- "Quality of discussion?", average 8.5, mode 10 (46%)
- "Quality of proposals?", range 1-10, average 7.2, mode 9 (27%)
- People reported feeling good, respected, enjoying the process, interested, inspired; but also rushed, "socially awkward", and a bit rushed
- Several people thought more time would have been beneficial
- Group size (6-7 people) was considered good or perfect in all responses

An analysis of all four **observers' sheets** (3 groups, 1 session, total 3 sessions) indicates good quality of discussions:

- The atmosphere was relaxed 100%, mixed 0%, tense 0%
- Soft power prevailed 67% (33% rather, 33% clearly), hard power prevailed 33% (33% rather, 0% clearly)
- Symmetry of the discussions during the session (participants treated each other as equals): 100% (100% very symmetric, 0% symmetric)
- Participants were open to change positions 67% of the time (generally 0%, always 67%), generally not open 33%
- Participants were mixed in providing justifications for their claims: 33% mostly, 33% about half the time, and 33% mostly not
- Reciprocity (referring to others' positions) was mixed: high 33%, medium 33%, low 33%
- Active participation: 100% for both male and female participants
- Facilitators provided active facilitation 100% of the time, passive 0%
- No polarization was observed or reported in two groups; one group was polarized with four non-convergent views

4. Voting results: accepted proposals

Out of the total 22 proposals submitted, seven (32%) reached **75% or higher support**, slightly edited for clarity:

100%

1. Employees have rights under certain conditions to start a referendum on key topics
2. Each employee has a vote in the general assembly (regardless of shareholding)

95%

3. Employees participate in co-creation workshops to build the solutions/strategy roadmap

90%

4. Employee assembly to propose changes and resolutions for company to execute

80%

5. Employees are company stewards, profit payback to investors has a limit
6. Employee education on democracy, sustainability, and action-oriented training

75%

7. Nature appreciation workshop to form an emotional bond (e.g. planting a tree)

5. Next steps

To build on the momentum and learnings of the ACA MBP 2024, we propose the following next steps:

- Share this report with participants, academia, public administrations, journalists, social media
- Outreach to cities, communes, cantons to adapt a future assembly to their context and language
- In collaboration with My Blue Planet and the Climate Reality Project Europe, replicate deliberative assemblies on workplace democracy and climate action in different setting (countries, target audience), and companies willing to engage
- Plan a full-day conference with scientific input, a learning phase, and a two-step deliberative assembly, where the second round of deliberation is informed by results from the first round

6. Photos and impressions



Academic Citizens' Assembly – MYBLUEPLANET 25.04.2024

