

Mapping Participation for Democratic Innovations:

An experiment in evaluating a citizens' panel on home energy decarbonisation

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<https://doi.org/10.5286/UKERC.EDC.000966>

November 2023



Contents

Summary.....	4
Introduction.....	6
Reconsidering the qualities of participation	7
The Citizens' Panel on Home Energy Decarbonisation	9
An experiment in mapping and evaluating participation	10
Reflective practice	11
Evaluative practice.....	11
Mapping public engagement	12
Reflecting on the citizens' panel	16
Standard deliberative performance	17
Reflexive participation performance	18
Reflecting on the Observatory experiment	21
Insights and recommendations	24
References	26

Summary

Through a series of collaborative experiments with partners, the UK Energy Research Centre's (UKERC) Public Engagement Observatory is actively exploring how new approaches to mapping diverse forms of public engagement can make a difference in practice to energy and climate-related decisions, innovations and new forms participation.

1. In this briefing we report on one such experiment that explored how the Observatory's approach might contribute to new democratic innovations. Members of the Observatory team collaborated with partners involved in undertaking a citizens' panel on home energy decarbonisation.
2. The experiment makes two contributions to existing work on public engagement and participatory democracy. It is one of the first attempts to explore how emerging approaches to mapping public engagement might shape democratic innovations in practice. In addition, it involved exploring new ways of considering the quality of public participation processes like citizens' panels and citizens' assemblies. This included asking how these discrete forms of participation are situated in wider systems of public engagement, focusing on questions of exclusion in addition to the usual emphasis on inclusion in evaluations of participation, and adopting a more formative, reflexive and anticipatory approach to evaluation.
3. To allow formative evaluation, the experiment involved a series of reflective meetings and workshops involving the citizens' panel orchestrators (the Climate Citizens project and the Climate Change Committee) and facilitators (Shared Future). In addition, insights presented in this briefing also draw on observations of the citizens' panel process and interviews with citizen participants, orchestrators and facilitators undertaken by the Observatory team.
4. Overall, we found that the citizens' panel performed well against standard deliberative criteria of representativeness, inclusivity, deliberation fairness, access to resources, learning, and openness and transparency. The more reflexive questions and qualities of participation introduced in the experiment proved more challenging. The team running the citizens' panel did well to respond to these reflexive questions and prompts in new ways, but some aspects of the process remained closed to these possibilities.
5. The experiment demonstrated that approaches to mapping public engagement can play important roles in shaping, enhancing, and situating democratic innovations. An Observatory mapping of public engagement with home energy decarbonisation prompted the organisers to openly reflect on the partialities and exclusions of the citizens' panel and how it was situated within a wider ecology of participation. This led to a new way of publicising and reporting on deliberative processes, as well as novel transformations in process design, in the selection of expert speakers, and in evaluation.
6. Those involved in the collective experiment reflected on how mapping public engagement can play an important role shaping democratic innovations in other ways in the future. Through showing the diverse engagements that already exist, it was suggested that mappings could also inform and provide useful inputs to the framing, design, information provision, expert representation, participant recruitment, reporting, and ongoing evaluation of participatory processes.

7. This Observatory experiment has shown how evaluations of participation can benefit from being more collaborative, formative, ongoing, and anticipatory. It has demonstrated how the qualities of democratic innovations are judged can move beyond rigid pre-given frameworks centred on inclusion and other positive dimensions to also open up to more reflexive questions and criteria that consider the downsides, exclusions, and effects of participation. Such formative and reflexive modes of evaluation should be taken forward in future practice and occur early on before key aspects of participatory processes have been established.
8. Ultimately, all forms of participation are exclusive and partial in different ways. Rather than overlook this, a key recommendation is that those orchestrating and publicising public engagements need to be more open about the exclusions during the process and when claiming representations of the public in process reporting. Through the experiment we found that opening up to diverse forms of participation and uncertainties about publics in this way does not necessarily lessen the strength and credibility of participatory processes and in many ways can make them more robust.



Introduction

The UKERC Public Engagement Observatory is developing novel approaches to map diverse forms of public participation and engagement with energy and climate change on an ongoing basis.¹ Through a series of collaborative experiments with partners, the Observatory is actively exploring how these new approaches to mapping public engagement across systems, and the additional insights they produce, can make a difference in practice to energy and climate-related decisions, innovations and new forms participation.

In this briefing we report on one such experiment that explored how the Observatory's approach² might contribute to new democratic innovations. Members of the Observatory team collaborated with partners involved in undertaking a 'Citizens' Panel on Home Energy Decarbonisation', including members of the Climate Citizens project at Lancaster University³ who initiated the citizens' panel, along with process facilitators from Shared Future⁴ and staff at the Climate Change Committee (CCC)⁵.

This collective experiment and the report that follows make two contributions to existing work on public engagement and participatory democracy. First, it is one of the first attempts to explore how emerging approaches to mapping public engagement might shape democratic innovations in practice. Second, it explores radically new ways of considering the quality of public participation processes, like citizens' panels, citizens' assemblies, and deliberative mini-publics. This includes asking how these discrete forms of participation are situated in wider systems of public engagement, focusing on questions of exclusion in addition to the usual emphasis on inclusion in evaluations of participation, and adopting a more formative, reflexive and anticipatory approach to evaluation which also works interactively to shape democratic innovations in real time rather than after the event, as is usually the case.

After introducing a new way of thinking about the quality of participation that goes beyond standard frameworks for evaluating deliberative processes, we introduce the Citizens' Panel on Home Energy Decarbonisation and outline the evaluation experiment process. An analysis of the performance of the citizens' panel against standard deliberative and reflexive participation criteria is then presented. Finally, we reflect on the difference that the Observatory and its participation mapping had on this particular democratic innovation and the implications and lessons of this for future research and practice.

Reconsidering the qualities of participation

The Public Engagement Observatory shows that there is now an increasing diversity of ways that citizens are engaging with energy and climate change. With this rise of participation has come increasing scrutiny and questioning over the quality or effectiveness of these processes.

Different forms of public involvement have different purposes and ultimately different ways of judging their quality. Various forms of public engagement – ranging from behaviour change initiatives to community energy and from citizen science to digital engagement – are each subject to different highly specific pre-given standards, principles and criteria by which they are judged. Deliberative forms of participation, like citizens’ assemblies and citizens’ panels, are no exception.

As the ‘deliberative turn’ has taken hold over the past decades, a set of standard deliberative quality criteria have become established. Often grounded in Habermasian principles of discursive ethics, such frameworks

(see for example^{6,7,8}) often emphasise the importance of participatory deliberation being representative and inclusive, fair, informed, transparent, and learning-oriented - amongst other things (see Table 1, left column). These criteria are operationalised in ‘independent’ evaluations, such as the recent evaluation of the national citizens’ assembly on climate change in the UK⁹, where the evaluators try to maintain critical distance from the process in the hope of providing objective insights – often in the form of a report after the participation event has ended. Such notions and systems of quality are part of wider professional communities and industries that form around the provision of specific forms of participation like deliberative mini-publics¹⁰.

Table 1. Standard deliberative and reflexive qualities of participation.

Standard deliberative qualities	Reflexive participation qualities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Representative and inclusive of all those interested and affected by the issue and removes barriers to participation. ● Fair deliberation where all participants are allowed to access the dialogue, express views, and develop recommendations. ● Access to resources to allow for effective participation, such as access to information, expertise, and time. ● Learning is enhanced for all those involved in the process. ● Openness and transparency about the purpose, boundaries, and intended use of the deliberative process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Being reflexive and responsive to exclusions in problem framings, participants, and the process of participation. ● Diverse and systemic which means being open to diverse forms of participation on the issue and how they interrelate in wider systems. ● Being responsible about the ethics, future implications, and effects of participation.

Most evaluations of deliberative processes stop at these criteria. Whilst these standard deliberative criteria remain relevant for the evaluation of the Citizens' Panel on Home Energy Decarbonisation, in the Observatory experiment we also incorporated new ways of thinking about the qualities of participation emerging in science and technology studies (STS) and the social sciences. Work on *Remaking Participation*¹¹, that underpins the UKERC Observatory approach, sets out a new way of seeing participation and publics as not pre-given but constructed through practice, as being highly diverse, and as interrelating together in wider systems of participation. This suggests additional things should be taken into account when considering the performance and qualities of any form of participation (see¹²), including those that are deliberative. We included some of these considerations in the experiment (see Table 1, right column).

First, while standard frameworks for evaluating participation focus on what is included, a remaking participation perspective says it is just as important to also consider what gets excluded. All forms of participation are partial and exclusionary in different ways. So, it is

important to be *reflexive and responsive* to exclusions in problem framings, participants, and other aspects of participation processes. Second, while standard evaluation frameworks set external pre-given criteria that look inwards to judge a discrete participation process, a remaking participation perspective suggests that such processes should also be more outward looking in attending to *diverse and systemic* participation. This means being open to the ways in which all forms of participation, whether deliberative or otherwise, interrelate with other diverse forms of engagement in wider systems. Third, standard frameworks for evaluating participation tend to ask positive questions about how good a process is or was. There is less concern about the downsides, assumptions, negative implications, and effects of participation, including in the longer term. In this sense, a remaking participation perspective suggests there is a need to be *responsible* about the ethical issues, future implications, and effects of participation. The Observatory experiment with the Citizens' Panel on Home Energy Decarbonisation is the first attempt to apply these reflexive qualities of participation from *Remaking Participation* in practice.



The Citizens' Panel on Home Energy Decarbonisation

The citizens' panel was a collaboration between Lancaster University's Climate Citizens project, the Climate Change Committee (CCC), and Shared Future. In addition, the Sortition Foundation¹³ recruited panel participants. The panel was organised in response to policy shortcomings in implementing low carbon heat installations and stimulating home energy efficiency upgrades identified by the CCC¹⁴⁻¹⁵.

The citizen panellists were invited to explore "what needs to happen to bring home energy use in line with the need to tackle climate change"¹⁶.

According to the project orchestrators, the panel proceedings were framed around this issue to allow consideration of a range of solutions, both in terms of the sector implicated and the target of the solutions on the one hand, whilst being sufficiently focused, actionable, and policy-relevant on the other. Specifically, the Panel aimed to:

1. Provide evidence on preferred policies for home energy decarbonisation amongst non-fuel poor owner-occupiers;
2. Demonstrate how the CCC could use public deliberation to compliment the technical and economic analysis that goes into their advice to government.¹⁶

Participants from across the wider Birmingham area spent 25 hours over seven sessions between April – June 2022, both online and in person, learning about the policy area and working with CCC analysts to design solutions they thought would work for owner-occupiers. The process followed a principle of co-design, in which technical experts and a total of 24 citizens worked collaboratively to develop solutions which integrate different forms of knowledge held by the two groups. Such an approach was adopted with the aim of

developing solutions that are grounded in the lived experiences and, thus, being acceptable by owner-occupiers on the one hand, whilst being technically, economically, and politically feasible on the other. External commentators presented information to supplement the input of CCC analysts, where required. There was a reactive approach to policy design, giving participants the opportunity to guide the process, suggest speakers and discussion topics, and control the shape of their final recommendations and findings.

The citizens' panel resulted in a final report¹⁶ setting out the formal set of recommendations from the panellists, including a full package of measures for home energy decarbonisation. The report also included qualitative analysis of the panel's discussions by the Climate Citizens team. Our UKERC Observatory evaluation experiment was the other main output from the process.

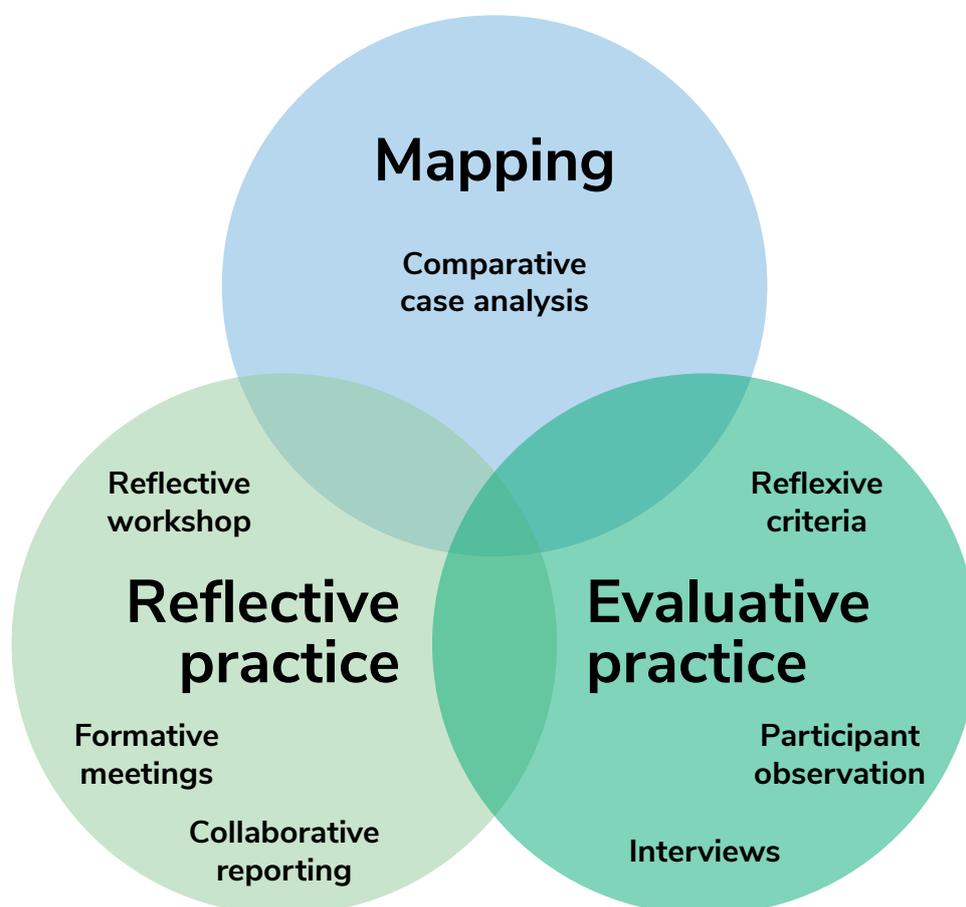
An experiment in mapping and evaluating participation

After the citizens' panel had been established and shortly before the process commenced, the Climate Citizens project team invited the UKERC Observatory to contribute to evaluating the process.

Rather than simply undertake a standard deliberative evaluation, we saw this as an opportunity to more openly explore what difference the Observatory's approach to, and mappings of, public engagement might make to the design, practice, and evaluation of the citizens' panel. In discussions with the Climate Citizens team, we proposed a collective experiment (see Figure 1) that went beyond a standard deliberative process evaluation, in also seeking to:

- Apply the latest thinking and associated criteria on reflexive participation practice (as summarised in Table 1, right column) in a collaborative process to prompt reflection, formative feedback on, and adjustments to, the citizens' panel in real time;
- Explore how the Observatory's mappings of public engagement (see Figure 2) might make a difference to the design, practice, and evaluation of the citizens' panel.

Figure 1. The citizens' panel evaluation experiment process.



Reflective practice

In the spirit of collective experimentation, and to allow formative evaluation, feedback, and reflection to influence the citizens' panel process—design and reporting in real time, we organised a series of reflective meetings and workshops. Formative and reflective activities between the UKERC Observatory team and the citizens' panel orchestrators (Climate Citizens team; CCC) and facilitators (Shared Future) were held online and proceeded as follows:

1. An initial reflective meeting was held with the Climate Citizens team prior to the citizens' panel process commencing to establish the terms and conditions of the collective experiment, and ways of collaborative working. This involved, amongst other things, initial consideration of reflexive questions and exploring means through which our mappings of public participation might inform the process.
2. A reflective meeting was held with the Climate Citizens team mid-way through the citizens' panel process to reflect on the Observatory mapping findings, to consider implications for the citizens' panel, and to start reflecting on the deliberative and reflexive qualities of the panel.
3. A post-process reflective meeting with the Climate Citizens team to consider more specifically what difference the reflexive criteria and Observatory mapping could make to the publicity and reporting of the citizens' panel.
4. A final reflective workshop including all parties (i.e. orchestrators and facilitators) involved in the citizens' panel process. This involved reflecting on the citizens' panel and the collective experiment process as a whole, following publication of the citizens' panel findings.

Evaluative practice

Insights presented in this report also draw on observations of the citizens' panel process and interviews with citizen participants, orchestrators and facilitators undertaken by the Observatory team as part of evaluative activities. These included:

- Participant observation of four citizens' panel sessions (including observation of expert presentations and subsequent Q&A sessions, plenary discussions, small group discussions, informal discussions before, during and immediately after organised panel sessions).
- Brief, informal conversations with citizen participants, CCC representatives, and external commentators during the in-person sessions of the citizens' panel.
- Focused interviews with citizen participants, the Climate Citizens team, CCC representatives, and the facilitation team after the citizens' panel process for the purposes of the collective experiment and evaluation.

Mapping public engagement

Through a focused mapping, the Observatory team identified cases of public engagement that are relevant to home energy use and decarbonisation (see Figure 2). These were shared with the Climate Citizens team to read and then respond to in reflective meetings 2 and 3. The Climate Citizens team was subsequently invited to draw on these insights to identify any overlooked viewpoints, consider process design choices, and communicate the findings of the panel in a way that acknowledged diverse issue framings and ecologies of participation around home energy use and decarbonisation.

The mapping of diverse forms of public engagement around home energy use and decarbonisation in the UK employed the Public Engagement Observatory's comparative case analysis method^{17, 18, 19, 20}. The application of the method comprised the following steps:

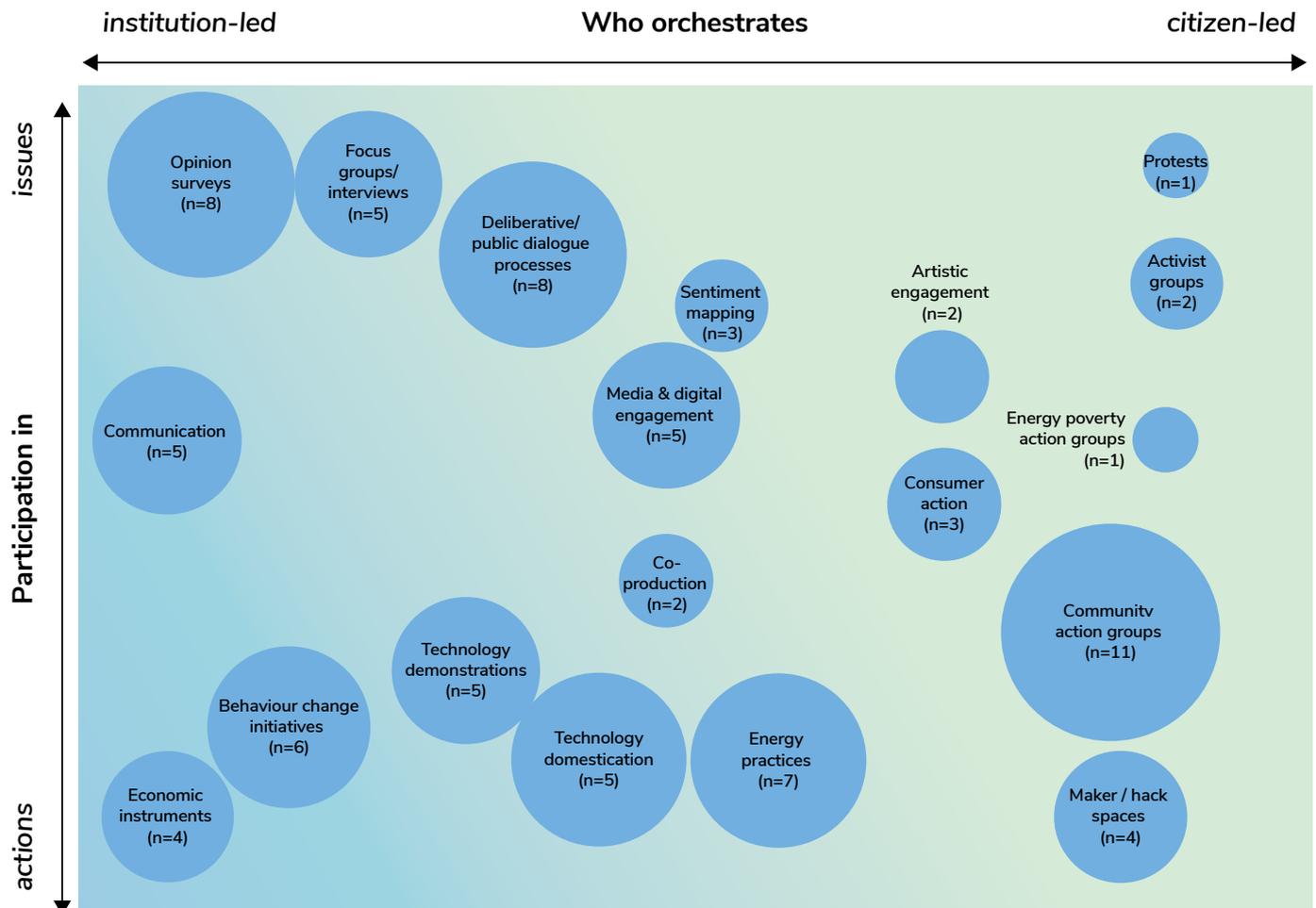
1. Scoping the framework for analysis and search terms;
2. Expert panel feedback on the framework and search terms;
3. Systematic searches of academic and grey literature based on synonyms for participation (*how*), publics (*who*), and energy and climate change issues (*what*);
4. Screening and selection of a subset of 89 cases focusing specifically on aspects to do with home energy use and decarbonisation;
5. Qualitative coding of the shortlisted cases to establish the 'who', 'how', 'what', and 'where' of each case of public engagement;
6. Further qualitative case study analysis to identify key trends, patterns, and productivities in participation.

Searches of the keywords and synonyms were undertaken on academic and non-academic search engines (Web of Knowledge, Scopus, Google Scholar, Google, and Ecosia) to identify relevant cases of public engagement from the academic literature, grey literature, and media occurring between 2015 and early 2022. A key principle of the method is to attend to diversity in mapping the many different forms of participation that exist according to an open definition of public engagement as 'collective practices through which publics engage in addressing collective public problems' (in this case home energy decarbonisation-related issues)²⁰. We screened in cases that met this definition, that reflected the diversity and patterns of public engagements identified in the searches, that took place in the UK between 2015 and 2022, and that had enough documentary evidence to allow case study analysis, resulting in a subset of 89 cases in total.

According to this mapping, deliberative processes like the Citizens' Panel on Home Energy Decarbonisation are one form of engagement in a broader landscape of public engagements. Our mapping across a wider system of public engagement with home energy decarbonisation shows that it is highly varied and diverse in terms of who participates (i.e. not limited to consulted publics, but also including general aggregate populations, consumers, users, activists, communities, active citizens, householders, etc.), what they participate in (ranging from everyday engagements with energy efficiency and smart technologies in the home through to experimentation with novel sustainable technologies in energy co-operatives, community action groups, and maker/hack-spaces), and how they participate (spanning public opinion surveys, formal consultations and deliberative processes, to forms of protest, digital engagement, grassroots innovation, and everyday practices) (see Figure 2). What is particularly striking when visualising the mapping data in Figure 2 is the way it broadens out beyond institution-led public involvement to more citizen-led and grassroots forms of engagement and action.

Figure 2. A mapping of cases of public engagement around home energy use and decarbonisation (n= 89 cases)

Forms of participation are mapped on two dimensions on the basis of the degree to which they are predominantly (1) institution-led or citizen-led and (2) involve participation in issues (discourses) or actions (material commitments). The size of the bubbles relates to the number of cases associated with each form of public engagement identified in the mapping.



Our analysis shows that broadening out to a wider diversity of public engagements can also identify and reveal additional public perspectives, visions, and concerns that may be missed or marginalised by instances of participation located on the left-hand side of Figure 2. Indicatively, cases in the comparative case mapping located in the top-left part of Figure 2 — including public opinion surveys, focus groups, public information and communication, and deliberative processes — were principally framed in terms of climate change, decarbonisation, and net zero. Cases on the bottom-left part of Figure 2 — including smart meter trials and financial incentives — were mainly framed with respect to a range

of different sustainable energy technologies and behaviours.

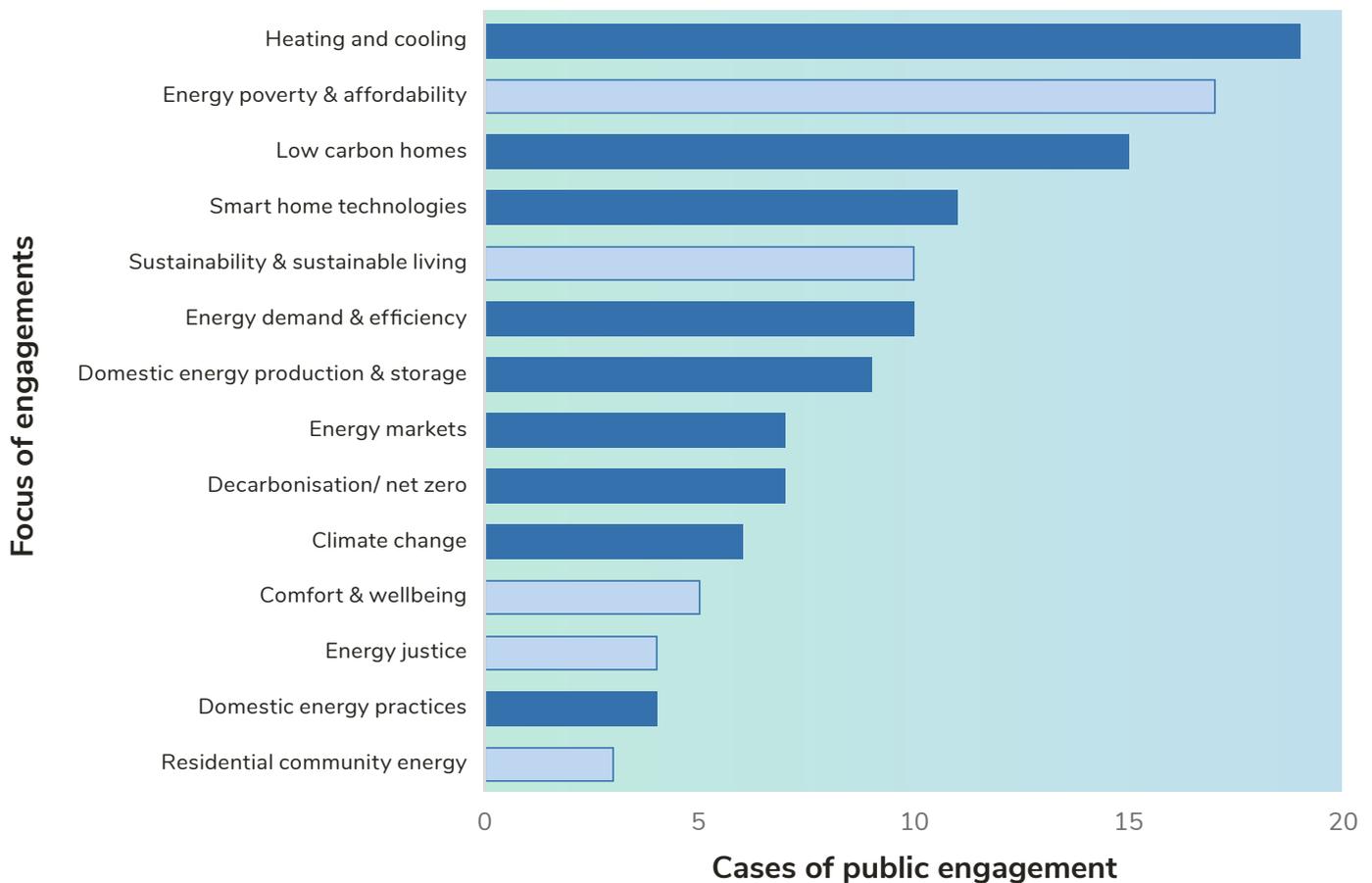
In contrast, some of the cases situated in the right part of Figure 2 – ranging from energy cooperatives through to forms of activism and protest, and from everyday energy practices to technology domestication – placed more emphasis on additional public concerns over energy poverty and affordability, equity and justice, comfort, and wellbeing. Some of these cases are more often associated with alternative visions of energy transitions, including broader concerns around sustainable living, and around the need to challenge current forms of living through

the development of low carbon (eco) homes and community energy schemes (see Figure 3). Our mapping further confirms the findings of earlier research, which shows citizen-led and 'uninvited' forms of participation often

extend beyond institutional framings to include alternative and more radical visions of energy system change, placing greater emphasis on sociocultural change as well as alternative models of growth and social progress.

Figure 3. What publics are engaging with in relation to home energy use and decarbonisation in the UK.

Dark blue bars represent engagement foci that were considered during the citizens' panel, whilst light blue bars represent issue framings identified in alternative engagements that were not core foci of the citizens' panel. (NB – the foci of engagements are not mutually exclusive.)



The mapping in Figures 2 and 3 does not claim to develop a fully representative or general picture of public views and actions, indeed it suggests such a thing is not possible. Rather, it seeks to reveal the diversity of public engagements, views and actions that exist. In doing this it illustrates some key theoretical insights set out in *Remaking Participation*¹¹ and subsequent work, the following of which are particularly relevant to the current citizens' panel experiment.

- First, the mapping highlights that all forms of participation are partial, inclusive, and exclusionary in different ways. What gets co-produced in a deliberative mini-public process like a citizens' panel – including the form of engagement, who is engaged, and the public views and actions emerging – is different compared to other cases and forms of engagement identified in Figure 2 (including those that also adhere to a deliberative model of participation).

- Second, the mapping illustrates the point that what publics say and do is powerfully shaped by the ways in which they engage - or in other words the format or practice of participation. Different forms of engagement allow different kinds of publics, public views, and actions to come forward. Likewise, someone is likely to express things and act differently through a deliberative process compared to engaging in everyday practices, on social media, or in a protest group - they become different kinds of public in each.
- Finally, prior work has shown that the many engagements identified in Figure 2 are interconnected and any individual can engage in multiple forms of participation across the map. One implication of this is that while deliberative processes seek to create a separate space for dialogue and seek to recruit those not already involved in the issue in question, all citizens' panel participants are already engaged with the issue in some way (and continue to be throughout the process), including in mundane engagements associated with everyday practices, consumption, communication, social media, and so on.



Reflecting on the citizens' panel

A summary of how the citizens' panel performed against standard deliberative and reflexive qualities of participation is shown in Table 2. Overall, the citizens' panel process performed well against standard deliberative criteria, with only a few weaknesses evident. The reflexive qualities of participation proved to be more challenging.

The team running the citizens' panel did well to respond to reflexive questions and the Observatory mapping in new ways. However, some aspects of the process remained closed

to these possibilities, partly due to deliberate choices about the framing and design of the citizens' panel made before the formative evaluation process commenced.

Table 2. Citizens' panel performance with respect to standard deliberative and reflexive participation qualities.

Standard deliberative qualities	Reflexive participation qualities
<p>Representative and inclusive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participants representative of different socio-demographic characteristics ● Some publics deliberately not included <p>Fair deliberation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Well facilitated, in a fair and structured way ● Some inequalities between expert commentators, orchestrators, and citizen participants <p>Access to resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Good access to information and expertise ● Time constraints an issue for some <p>Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Signs of enhanced learning for participants, specialist commentators, and those orchestrating and facilitating the process <p>Openness and transparency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clearly defined focus and question for the panel ● Some uncertainty over purpose and use 	<p>Reflexive and responsive to exclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Relatively narrow, yet intentional, problem framing, reinforced by co-design format ● Some responsiveness in commentator selection, but difficulties responding to citizen participant exclusions ● Important attempt to openly acknowledge exclusions when reporting panel findings <p>Diverse and systemic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited attention to other diverse public engagements in process design ● Attempt to contextualise the panel in wider landscape of public engagements in final report <p>Being responsible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some reflection on the implications of the co-design participation format ● Could have gone further in anticipating longer-term social implications and effects of the citizens' panel and its proposed solutions

Standard deliberative performance

Significant effort went into organising a citizens' panel defined by design integrity and sound deliberation. Most process participants were enthusiastic about their involvement in the process. We found that the panel performed well against standard deliberative criteria, with only a few shortcomings evident.

Representativeness and inclusivity were priorities for the process. The 24 panellists were recruited by sortition which sought to include “a range of people that would not otherwise have been engaged in these issues alongside those who have been engaged one way or another” (orchestrator, personal communication). Citizen participants reflected key socio-demographic characteristics of UK homeowners with regards to gender, age, ethnicity, disability, housing type, heating system fuel, indices of multiple deprivation, and opinions on climate change. Panellists appreciated how “the panel was a melting pot of people with different backgrounds and attitudes” (citizen participant, interview).

The focus on UK homeowners was a deliberate choice by the process organisers to ease deliberation (for example, to ensure focused discussion given time constraints, in terms of addressing a specific policy gap, and so on). This did mean that some publics were knowingly excluded, such as private and social housing lessees (tenants) and fuel-poor homeowners.

The citizens' panel allowed **fair deliberation**, whereby different participants could enter the dialogue, put forward their views, and develop recommendations. Facilitators and organisers were seen to “run the panel in an exemplary manner” which ensured “everyone had the chance to express their views”, although at times “some people's voices were more dominant” (citizen participants, interviews). The co-design format which involved CCC expert representatives in the process created challenges for equalising relations between citizens and specialists, with some participants feeling they “lacked the expertise to produce viable recommendations on their own” (citizen participant, interview).



In terms of **access to resources**, the citizens' panel provided panellists with good access to information and expertise, expert talks, information summaries, interaction with experts, as well as opportunities to undertake their own independent research in between sessions. As is often the case in such processes, time was a precious resource and some participants felt "there wasn't always enough time to ask questions and discuss specific ideas and proposals in as much detail" as they would have hoped for (citizen participant, interview).

We found evidence of enhanced **learning** about home energy use and decarbonisation on the part of citizen participants, as well as the orchestrators (including the CCC representatives) learning about participant priorities, sensitivities and deliberative reasoning. Facilitators appreciated how the citizens' panel "gave the opportunity to learn how to do things differently" (facilitator, reflective workshop).

The co-design format of the citizens' panel, where citizens worked with CCC analysts to collaboratively develop solutions, assisted this degree of learning and exchange.

The overall aim and focus of the process was made **open and transparent** to participants and "discussions were focused and on track to produce a clear set of recommendations" (facilitator, observation notes). Despite this clarity, there was some participant uncertainty over the purpose and use of the citizens' panel recommendations, especially with regards to whether there were any direct links with decision making. Whilst the majority of those involved hoped that "the panel and its findings provide fresh impetus and social approval for home energy decarbonisation", a small number of participants felt that "government just has other priorities and problems to attend to and won't necessarily listen to the recommendations" (citizen participant, interview).

Reflexive participation performance

Attending to the more reflexive qualities of participation proved to be more challenging. The reflective process between the Observatory team and the citizens' panel orchestrators allowed for this to be partially addressed which led to important changes being made, but some aspects of the citizens' panel process remained closed to these possibilities.

With respect to being **reflexive and responsive to exclusions**, a key set of exclusions occurred through how the process was tightly framed in technical and policy-oriented terms. As the organisers of the citizens' panel stated:

"We made a series of assumptions about the fact that... we kind of know what needs to happen and the pace of installation and retrofits is largely set out [by government]... The transition pathways are largely set in stone already, and we didn't want to spend any time discussing this" (orchestrator, reflective meeting).

The orchestrators did this deliberately, intentionally framing the process in a way that could produce useable evidence for policy makers and expert advisors in the CCC. Our evidence suggests that this instrumental framing was reinforced by the co-design format, where citizen participants were asked not to deviate from the core focus, and often looked for their proposals to be "validated – one way or another – by the CCC team before being discussed and developed further" (citizen participant, interview). The format of participation therefore played a role in shaping process outcomes and reinforced certain constraints about what would be politically feasible or acceptable. One citizen panellist ended their participation early in the process, partly in response to these framing conditions and controversies about heat pumps. It is important to note that some participants were comfortable with the process, stating they "were all on board with how this was framed" (citizen participant, interview). The outcomes of the process were also actively shaped by the views and positions of the participants themselves.

In knowingly adopting this relatively narrow framing the process orchestrators sought to navigate the tension between policy relevance or public relevance of participation processes and placed the emphasis on the former. Nonetheless, the deliberate focus on bringing the energy use of non-energy-poor householders in line with the need to tackle climate change, ultimately excluded both energy poor householders and tenants, as well as competing or alternative perspectives of climate and energy futures. Though they were discussed to some extent in the citizens' panel, issues such as comfort, wellbeing and inequalities were not given the same level of attention as the need to decarbonise, whilst conceptions of radically alternative forms of sustainable living and concerns around energy justice and democracy were not so evident in the process.

Our Observatory mapping (Figures 2 and 3) showed that such issues and alternative courses of action are raised in other forms of public engagement with home energy decarbonisation. Through our collaborative

process, the citizens' panel orchestrators came to openly reflect on these exclusions in the process and to consider how this particular citizens' panel is situated within a wider landscape of public engagement identified in the Observatory mapping.

A particularly novel attempt to be reflexive and responsive to such exclusions, and attend to participation as **diverse and systemic**, was the way this was reflected on in the final report from the citizens' panel¹⁶. The citizens' panel orchestrators' reflections on the Observatory mapping also led them to be responsive in identifying an additional expert commentator who offered a more challenging perspective on how problems of energy justice relate to home energy decarbonisation.



Whilst generally acknowledged, diverse public engagements with home energy decarbonisation were intentionally framed outside of the initial citizens' panel process design and recruitment, partly because the Observatory team and its mapping were brought in relatively late in the process, after these elements has been established.

In the reflective process and the final report of the citizens' panel, the orchestrator team openly reflected on framing effects of the process. There was also some reflection on the implications of the co-design participation format. This shows some commitment to being **responsible** about democratic innovations and their future implication and effects.

However, we suggest there were opportunities to go further in systemically reflecting on the underlying purposes and assumptions, as well as in anticipating the longer-term social implications and effects, of the citizens' panel and its proposed solutions. For example, in how the deliberative format of participation

linked to policy foregrounds certain forms of citizen participation and democratic arrangements over others. How the co-design format or the participants involved may have played a role in closing-down the possible futures that were expressed. And how the imagined future in the resulting recommendations emphasises techno-economic solutions as part of a centrally organised transition, that intentionally overlooks certain additional actors (e.g. tenants, the fuel poor, progressive and innovative publics) and alternative futures (e.g. bottom up forms of social innovation and change) in home energy decarbonisation.



Reflecting on the Observatory experiment

We now reflect on the Observatory experiment as a whole and consider what difference the mapping and reflexive participation approach can make to democratic innovations. The collective experiment brought about transformations in the design, evaluation, and reporting of the citizens' panel which likely would not have happened otherwise. It also prompted wider reflections on the value and roles that mapping participation can have in the design and evaluation of new forms of public participation and engagement.

In what one orchestrator called “an experiment in doing things differently”, a different, more formative, anticipatory and real-time approach to evaluation was cultivated which “encouraged [us] to reflect on why things were done in a specific way and see how things can be done differently” (orchestrator, reflective meeting). This, along with the Observatory mappings, prompted reflexive learning and transformations for the process orchestrators and the citizens' panel itself.

For the process orchestrators, it resonated with and further prompted their view of public participants not as unengaged ‘innocent citizens’ or ‘blank sheets’, as is often the case with other deliberative mini-public processes²¹, but as citizens who come to the process having already engaged multiply in the issues under discussion:

“Another way of thinking about it is that all of the participants will have been involved in some of these other kinds of engagements mapped here, right? It’s silly to expect everyone to be a blank sheet. They’re not just coming in as ‘innocent citizens’ who have been selected to not necessarily have knowledge about this or pre-existing interest necessarily; they’ve all engaged with home energy decarbonisation, one way or another” (facilitator, reflective workshop).

The experiment and Observatory mappings also led to the orchestrators doing things differently in process design – for example in changing the range and nature of expert commentators that were included in the citizens' panel:

“We’ve already done things differently as a result. We’ve been considering which views aren’t represented... But we realised that the experts we put together for the panel were great, but they’re all policy people, and we felt that we had to do something to push back against that biased framing a little bit... And the most concrete outcome of that has been to ask other experts who think of these issues differently to join the panel” (orchestrator, reflective meeting 2).

“For me the question of how this was framed, and about other ways of engaging at the community level and in more radical ways is really important... There was some important learning about mapping that bigger ecosystem and how that might shape who came to speak and how that informed the deliberation” (facilitator, reflective workshop).

A key effect of the collaborative experiment and the Observatory mapping is how they prompted process orchestrators to actively recognise the partialities and exclusions inherent in the citizens' panel. A significant impact of this was how it brought about a novel shift in the practice of publicising and reporting on the findings of the citizens' panel.



Our Observatory mapping was used in the final report to situate the findings of the panel and its exclusions in the context of a wider ecology of already existing public engagements with home energy decarbonisation:

“I think you prompted us to really think of how this panel is situated within broader ecologies of participation, of how framings and exclusions shaped the process and outcomes, and the way we’ve reported on this Panel is a clear testament to this – I’ve hardly seen any reports from similar processes that are as explicit about exclusions” (orchestrator, reflective meeting).

Whilst the Observatory team was brought into this deliberative process at a relatively late stage of its design and development, in the final reflective workshop involving the Climate Citizens team, Shared Future and a CCC representative, reflective discussion moved on to consider how the Observatory’s mappings of public engagement could play important roles in shaping democratic innovations in other ways.

Despite some concerns around a mapping method that “relies on secondary documentary evidence and might, thus, risk masking undocumented cases”, and around the risks of “not zooming-in in sufficient detail on similar deliberative processes” (facilitator, reflective workshop), all stakeholders involved expressed an interest in using this mapping participation approach in the future to inform their own practice, including:

- In the early stages of developing new public engagement processes, to inform the process design through building on already existing engagements or forms of participation that are under-represented (facilitators, reflective workshop);
- In framing the process to be more reflective of the different issue and problem framings evident in existing public engagements (facilitators, reflective workshop);
- To inform participant and specialist recruitment by being reflective of the diverse types of publics and issue framings that already exist (facilitators, reflective workshop);

- To understand how a specific public engagement process being developed interacts with and is shaped by other forms of engagement (*facilitators and orchestrators, reflective workshop*);
- In understanding how process participants engage in other forms of engagement before and after any discrete engagement process that is being organised, such as a citizens' panel (*facilitator, reflective workshop*).

These reflections relate to and extend earlier work in UKERC and the Public Engagement Observatory which showed how consideration of mapping participation evidence before the design of new forms of engagement can play a strong formative role, including in thinking about public representations and the enrolment of participants in novel ways. For example, as shown with Distributed Deliberative Mapping^{19,22}, it can inform more distributed approaches to deliberation where in addition to convening a deliberative mini-public like a citizens' panel, already existing groups identified in the mapping (such as activist groups, community energy groups, and so on) are also enrolled into the process and engage on their own terms.

Furthermore, reflection in the final reflective workshop indicated that the value of the mapping participation approach can extend beyond process design to provide more substantive inputs into science and policy decision-making:

"I think it's an approach that the CCC would be interested in using in the future. It's a different way of looking at things. It helps contextualise the findings but without lessening their strength exactly because of this stance that makes us aware of how everything has limitations and exclusions. But we would have to be quite strategic about it – we couldn't do it for everything" (orchestrator, reflective workshop).

This final reflection is significant. It is often assumed that participatory processes gain power through closing down around definitive representations of the public and in providing consensual recommendations for policy. Yet, here we see acknowledgement that opening-up to considering diverse forms of participation and uncertainties about publics in the citizens' panel on home energy decarbonisation did not necessarily lessen the strength of its findings for policy, and in many ways could have made them more robust.



Insights and recommendations

- The collective experiment reported on in this briefing has tested novel approaches to democratic innovations. It is the first time that reflexive criteria from *Remaking Participation*^{11,12} have been applied in evaluating the qualities of participation in practice. It is also one of the first attempts to explore how emerging approaches to mapping public engagement might shape democratic innovations in practice. On both fronts the experiment has demonstrated how these approaches can be successfully applied in practice. The partners involved in undertaking the Citizens' Panel on Home Energy Decarbonisation should be commended for being open and responsive to these new perspectives in a spirit of collective experimentation that has brought forward new ways of doing and lessons for future practice.
- Our collective experiment has shown how evaluations of participation can benefit from being more collaborative, formative, ongoing, and anticipatory – as opposed to the dominant practice of independent evaluations that mainly offer insights 'after the event'. We recommend ongoing formative and reflective processes, such as that undertaken in this experiment, should be undertaken throughout the development and implementation of future democratic innovations including citizens' panels and other forms of participation.
- A further recommendation is that the ways in which the qualities of democratic innovations are judged need to be opened-up to more reflexive questions and criteria. When thinking about the quality of public participation and engagement, it is important to move beyond rigid pre-given evaluation frameworks centred on inclusion, representativeness, decision impact and other positive aspects to also consider the downsides, exclusions, and effects of participation as well. This Public Engagement Observatory experiment has shown that even in policy-relevant cases, such as the Citizens' Panel on Home Energy Decarbonisation, these more reflexive considerations and questions can be applied and attended to in being more responsive to framing effects, exclusions, and outcomes of participation processes as well as their evaluation.
- Overall, we found that the citizens' panel process performed well against standard deliberative criteria, with very few weaknesses evident. The more reflexive qualities of participation proved to be more challenging. The team running the citizens' panel did well to respond to reflexive questions and prompts in new ways, but some aspects of the process remained closed to these possibilities.
- The collective experiment has demonstrated that emerging approaches to mapping public participation and engagement can play important roles in shaping, enhancing, and situating democratic innovations – in the case of citizens' assemblies and panels, but also many other forms of participation and democratic practice. The Observatory mapping prompted the citizens' panel orchestrators to openly reflect on the partialities and exclusions of this particular process and how it is situated within a wider ecology of participation. This led to novel responses, including one of the first attempts to publicise and report on a deliberative process in a way that openly situates its outcomes and exclusions in relation to a wider landscape of public engagement, in this case around home energy decarbonisation.
- Ultimately, all forms of participation are exclusive and partial in different ways. Rather than ignore or hide this, a key recommendation is that those orchestrating and publicising public engagements need to be more open and humble about the exclusions during the process and when claiming representations of the public in process reporting. Complete representations of 'the public' should be qualified and situated in relation to other public views, actions and engagements that exist on the same issues, as was attempted

in the Citizens' Panel on Home Energy Decarbonisation. Through the experiment we found that opening up to diverse forms of participation and uncertainties about publics in this way does not necessarily lessen the strength and credibility of participatory processes and in many ways can make them more robust.

- Those involved in the collective experiment reflected on how mapping public engagement can play important roles in shaping democratic innovations in other ways in the future. Through showing the diverse engagements that already exist, it was suggested that mappings like those carried out by the Public Engagement Observatory can inform and provide useful inputs to the framing, design, information provision, expert representation, and participant recruitment of participatory processes. Such mappings can also help discrete forms of participation become more aware of their interactions with other forms of participation and of how process participants are simultaneously engaged in other forms of engagement before, during, and after the event.
- A further recommendation is that formative evaluation processes involving the consideration of reflexive criteria and participation mappings should occur early on in the inception of participatory processes, before key aspects of their design and framing have been established. The Observatory team was brought into the citizens' panel process before it commenced but at a relatively late stage of its design and development. The citizens' panel was intentionally tightly framed in technical and policy-oriented terms by the organisers. Earlier involvement would have allowed the CCC and process organisers to reflect on and possibly respond to diverse societal framings identified in the mapping. The approach of Distributed Deliberative Mapping^{19,22} provides an example of how early consideration of mapping participation findings can shape participatory process design, opening up the framing of the

problem, possible solutions, the actors involved, and broadening out to include already existing citizen groups alongside a convened deliberative mini-public like a citizens' panel.

- Developing new institutional architectures, like observatories, and systemic approaches to mapping participation are needed to support the above recommendations, contributing from the initial inception and design of democratic innovations, through the performance of participatory practices, the reporting and publicity of findings, in formative and summative evaluations, and in providing alternative forms of evidence about public engagement in their own right.

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This briefing should be cited as: Chilvers, J. & Stephanides, P. (2023) *Mapping Participation for Democratic Innovations: An Experiment in Evaluating a Citizens' Panel on Home Energy Decarbonisation*. London: UK Energy Research Centre.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5286/UKERC.EDC.000966>

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About the UKERC Public Engagement Observatory

The UKERC Public Engagement Observatory maps the many different ways that people are engaging with energy, climate change and net zero on an ongoing basis. It openly shares, experiments with, and undertakes these mappings with others to help make energy and climate-related decisions, innovations and participation more just, responsible and responsive to society. Through its network, the Observatory makes connections and encourages learning across wider systems of public engagement in the UK and internationally.

UKERC is funded by the UK Research and Innovation, Energy Programme.

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