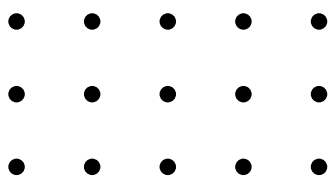


# Advancing civic participation in algorithmic decision-making:

A guidebook for the public sector





We know that the use of data analytics and algorithmic decision-making is growing in the public sector. This can have significant implications for how citizens experience and engage with public services. Yet citizens are often left out of the debate about the development, implementation and uses of these emerging technologies.

From planning, procurement, strategy, and general discussion, there are many ways to involve the public. In this guidebook we shed light on some of the ways civic participation can be enhanced in relation to algorithmic decision-making focusing particularly on the public sector.

**The guidebook addresses four core questions:**

**01**

**Who** is this guide for?

This section briefly outlines who this guide is for and how it can be useful.

**02**

**Why** involve the public?

This section makes the case for involving the public in decision-making and what benefits it can bring. We also address some common objections and obstacles.

**03**

**What** could civic participation look like?

This section explores a number of examples of civic participation in relation to data and algorithms, ranging from familiar formats to more radical visions that all share a commitment to enhancing citizen voices.

**04**

**How** to get started?

This section brings together contacts, resources, and organisations that can help you get off the ground and explore avenues for enhancing civic participation.



01

**Who is this  
guide for?**

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# Who is this guide for?

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The Data Justice Lab has produced this guide with input from the Ada Lovelace Institute for individuals and teams working in the public sector, across roles and responsibilities. Regardless of position, this guide will be relevant for anyone interested in pursuing avenues for enhancing the role of the public and civil society in decision-making relating to the use of data, artificial intelligence, and automated decision-making systems.

The guide builds on on-going research from the Data Justice Lab on the increasing datafication of public services and the potential for civic participation, and the pioneering work on public engagement on data and AI carried out by the Ada Lovelace Institute. The guide focuses particularly on citizen involvement in relation to public sector use of data and algorithmic processes, but will also be relevant for those not working directly with such technologies. Areas such as procurement, budgeting, service provision, or management are all significant for civic participation and part of the examples outlined.

The guide recognises that there are significant constraints for doing civic participation activities and does not have all of the answers, but it is intended to initiate ideas, discussions and plans for greater civic participation by providing concrete examples that can be applied to a range of contexts. The hope is that it can help catalyse new approaches for enhancing democracy overall.





# 02

**Why involve  
the public?**

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Involving the public in significant areas of decision-making is important for understanding needs, fostering trust and enhancing the accountability of the public sector. Whilst it can be a difficult process it is a key part of securing the legitimacy of public institutions and serves to advance more sustainable and fairer policy processes. It is also a core component of nurturing an innovative culture primed to tackle the pressing issues - big and small - of the 21st century.

Enhancing civic participation does not need to emerge from top-down initiatives to be effective but can be realised across the public sector within a wide variety of institutions. Many public bodies already have measures for involving stakeholders and have expressed commitments to public engagement. These are initiatives, tendencies, and philosophies which can be built upon to elevate participation and equip the public sector for contemporary and future challenges.

This guide details practical methods and approaches for bringing the public further into decision-making processes and giving citizens voice. Before providing examples we address some common issues and concerns about civic participation and how it can benefit and enhance those processes.

Citizens want to be involved in making decisions about issues which affect them.

It can be tempting to think that if an issue isn't raised through existing channels, then no one cares about it. However, it may also be that the public do not know about a particular issue which, if offered the required information and avenues for involvement, they would otherwise want to have a say on. Research has shown that when it comes to questions of data and technology, it comes to questions of data and technology, for example, a lack of knowledge is not due to apathy or ignorance, but is often an outcome of the obscurity of the processes surrounding algorithmic decision-making and a sense of disempowerment that anything can be done about their uses.<sup>1</sup>

As is evident from our examples of civic participation below, when using appropriate formats, there can be great public interest in developments relating to algorithmic decision-making. But it also matters whether this interest is garnered and leads to genuine influence about the development and uses of emerging technologies.



Public engagement takes resources, but it can help produce better decisions and build trust, making it worthwhile.

Finding ways to enhance civic participation in algorithmic decision-making can be resource intensive. However, as our examples show, there are ways to engage with the public using existing infrastructures and expertise that can make it less daunting. This is important as research has shown that allocating time and money to involve citizens improves decision-making and diversifies public discourse (OECD 2020, Breckon et al., 2019). For example, the UK Government's Sciencewise programme has shown that the public is able and willing to contribute usefully on highly technical as well as controversial issues, ranging from the disposal of radioactive waste to the future of Britain's energy supply.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, resource constraints are a challenge. This is why, later in this document, we have offered a range of different examples of democratic expansion from different contexts. There is no single way to improve democracy and involve the public in decision-making. This adds a degree of difficulty but it also allows for flexibility.

A broader range of voices leads to more inclusive and robust policies.

Expertise within the public sector is vast. Yet we also know that it can be limited. When it comes to questions of data analytics and algorithmic decision-making in particular, expertise from those who are impacted by these developments within different communities is crucial but often side-lined. This is especially the case as research has shown that developments in data-driven technologies tend to disparately impact those already disadvantaged and marginalised within society.<sup>3</sup>

People with certain experiences, bodies, or abilities, may encounter barriers to engaging in public life that means their voices are not heard. Whilst there is plenty of expertise amongst professionals in the public sector, on issues of technology there are many experiences that are currently not accounted for which can have a significant impact on how to think about algorithmic decision-making. For example, racial

biases have been detected in facial recognition technologies used by police forces across the world.<sup>4</sup> Including more civic participation, particularly from minority groups, in decisions about the adoption of these technologies has shown to be significant for addressing these harms.<sup>5</sup>

Public involvement can help make progress on divisive issues.

Democracy requires space for disagreements but advancing civic participation does not necessarily mean creating divisive debates on pressing issues. Research has shown that on questions relating to technology the complexity and speed of developments has frequently meant limited dialogue and consultation, also because the implementation of new technologies is seen to be void of politics and policy implications.<sup>6</sup> Yet engaging the public in technological innovation is important for ensuring trust and progress further down the line.

The examples we provide below often privilege deliberation and cooperation as a way to enhance civic participation and ensure that experiences of others are heard. This can help democratise the public sector overall and how people understand changing practices. Rather than being a barrier to change, involving the public can be a way to chart a way forward through complex issues, such as in the case of using a Citizens Assembly to resolve the issue of legalising abortion in Ireland.<sup>7</sup>





03

**What could civic participation look like?**

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In recent years, we have seen a proliferation of interesting and useful democratic methods. Citizens assemblies, citizens juries, participatory budgeting, among others, have sprung up to offer different ways of elevating how citizens can engage with policy issues and the role they can have in influencing decisions that govern their lives. Elsewhere, more structural changes have been pursued which attempt to bring government and the economy closer to the public itself, such as the 'Preston Model' in North England and the 'Roadmap to Technological Sovereignty' pursued in Barcelona. In the United States, we have seen a series of measures that engage the public in the governing of complex and controversial surveillance technologies that can apply to a range of contexts.

The collection of examples we have outlined below are by no means definitive. There is no canonical way to advance civic participation. This guidebook is intended as a tool for those working in the public sector wanting to reflect on and pursue exercises geared towards civic participation in a way that suits their context.

What follows are some examples that illustrate both opportunities and challenges with enhancing civic participation in relation to algorithmic decision-making, and beyond. We encourage you to read more about the examples which pique your interest and reach out to those involved. The section which follows this one will attempt to aid you in your further research and outreach efforts.

## Mini-publics

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Before we dive into our first few examples it is worth explaining a key term used to refer to a few of the methods we will explore here: mini-public.

Mini-publics are a family of methods which use deliberation - structured and mediated conversations between participants - to explore the public's positions on a given topic or issue. It is premised on using "social science methods to assemble a microcosm of 'the public' with each citizen having an equal chance of being selected".<sup>8</sup>

Finding out what the public thinks can be difficult. Deliberative mini-publics typically recruit a cross-section of the public using randomised participant selection. Participants are usually selected through stratified random sampling so that a range of demographic characteristics from the broader population are represented (age, gender, ethnicity, etc.). Some mini-publics may focus on a particular

community and seek a representative sample of individuals within that population, rather than the whole of society. This can a useful approach to highlight marginalised voices. Some mini-publics offer individuals financial incentives for taking part, a measure meant to enable participation from a broader spectrum of society, particularly resource-poor communities, or provide free childcare to make it possible to include those responsible for children. The most important aspect of mini-publics is that they involve ordinary members of the public; those who wouldn't normally have their voices heard through traditional channels.

Our next few examples will illustrate types of mini-publics, followed by some other examples of democratic methods and ways to empower the public.

## Citizens juries

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A citizens jury is a popular type of mini-public. Conventionally they have around 12-25 members, chosen by random selection with demographic spread taken into account. The number of participants can vary while still following this method. Money and childcare may be offered to participants to facilitate participation. So too can translation in nations with multiple local languages. Further measures include facilitating the participation of disabled persons. Measures like these should be considered in all contexts.

Citizens juries can range from a day to a few weekends. "Presenters", "expert witnesses", or "commentators" present to the participants, offering expertise on the topic at hand. Their role is to equip participants to be able to deliberate on the given topic in a detailed manner. Pre-prepared information packs are also often given to jurors and one or more facilitators will be on hand to keep the discussion productive and orderly. The discussion will usually be based around a core question or set of questions. A citizens jury may produce a decision which can be enacted or author an advisory report.

An important aspect of citizens juries and other comparable exercises is an oversight panel or board, charged with overseeing the process and preparing or auditing materials. This board may include a range of stakeholders with different perspectives on the topic at hand in an effort to maintain balance.

Citizens jury is a widely used democratic method that has become particularly prominent in recent years. One way citizens juries is used

is to find out in more detail what the public thinks about an issue. This has the potential to give the public more influence by producing better evidence for policy making. A citizens jury can also be used to produce a decision which is directly put into action.

This model can be applied across a variety of scales and could be useful for topics ranging from direct decision-making (e.g. should a particular artificial intelligence system be implemented?) to broader ethical and political issues (e.g. how should potential harms of using algorithmic processes be assessed?).

#### Examples:

1. In 2019, the Ada Lovelace Institute and Understanding Patient Data asked three citizens juries (Taunton, Leeds, London), involving 60 individuals, to deliberate on the question, *What constitutes a fair partnership between the NHS and researchers, charities and industry on uses of NHS patients' data and NHS operational data?*<sup>9</sup> This was followed by a nationally representative survey of 2095 people in the UK to test broader opinion on aspects of the question, informed by the citizens juries. The resulting outputs offered policy recommendations. This is an example of how a very complex and nuanced policy issue can, with the help of citizens juries, be deliberated on in a sophisticated manner and result in actionable outputs.
2. Citizens Juries c.i.c. held two five-day citizens juries in February 2019. These explored a perceived tradeoff between accuracy and “explainability” in decisions made by, or using, artificial intelligence.<sup>10</sup> Participants explored this tradeoff in four different scenarios: diagnosis of acute stroke; finding matches between kidney transplant donors and recipients; deciding which offenders should be referred to a rehabilitation programme; and screening job applications and making shortlisting decisions. These scenarios allowed participants, informed by pre-prepared materials and guest expert speakers, to explore the tradeoff from a variety of angles. The project was co-funded by the NIHR Greater Manchester Patient Safety Translational Research Centre and the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The project's outcomes went on to inform official ICO advice. Many of the materials used by this project, as well as its outputs, are available



for download.<sup>11</sup>

3. In 2018, the Jersey Citizens Panel was created to gain insights into how people of Jersey can best remember the past abuse of children while in the Island's care system.<sup>12</sup> This "citizens panel" was "based loosely" on the model of a citizens jury. In this example, the standard randomised recruitment of mini-publics was adapted to foreground people who had themselves experienced harm and abuse in Jersey's care system.
4. In the Forest of Dean, Citizens Juries c.i.c. were commissioned by Gloucestershire health authorities to design and run a citizens jury to provide recommendations for the location of a new community hospital, choosing between three locations.<sup>13</sup> The process took place over five days and involved 18 citizens, recruited from across the Forest of Dean district. The jury's recommendation was decided by a vote in front of public observers. The jury's recommended location was chosen by NHS Gloucestershire. This jury is particularly interesting for how it was given that it offered a pragmatic decision which could be acted upon, as opposed to the various recommendations which often arise from citizens juries.

## Citizens assemblies

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Another type of mini-public, citizens assemblies, are similar to citizens juries but bigger, involving more citizens (typically 50-250). They tend to be higher profile events and last anything from a weekend to a few months, with days usually spread out. Their size may lend them more democratic legitimacy in some people's eyes, but they may also be unsuited for more localised issues due to heightened organisational costs. As with all other methods, they work best when resources are allocated to facilitate the involvement of a broad section of society, such as financial incentives and childcare, proper disability access, and the possibility for those in multilingual nations to participate in the local language they prefer.

Citizens assemblies can carry legitimacy with their size and can be useful for developing policy or accompanying more traditional democratic methods, like referenda, as in the example of Ireland's Citizens' Assembly (see below). They can be appropriate for large controversial policy questions on emerging technologies, such as whether it is acceptable for the police to use facial recognition technologies in the UK.

**Examples:**

1. The Ada Lovelace Institute's Citizens' Biometrics Council was the first citizens assembly to deliberate on biometrics technologies in the UK.<sup>14</sup> Its focus was on AI and data driven biometrics technologies like live facial recognition and voice recognition which are deployed in contexts ranging from policing and education to virtual assistants like Siri and Alexa. It aimed to produce an understanding of an informed public's expectations, conditions for trustworthiness and redlines when it comes to the use of biometrics technologies and data. It took place across six workshops over 2020. The citizens assembly consisted of a demographically representative group of 60 members of the public, paid for their time to ensure fairness and inclusivity. The projects Oversight Group included representatives from academia, policing, business, and the Information Commissioner's Office, a key oversight body in this area. Alongside this work, the Ada Lovelace Institute have run a number of "Community Voice" workshops to explore in depth the disproportionate impact of biometrics technologies with individuals from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, as well as with disabled people and LGBTQI individuals.<sup>15</sup>
2. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and the Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government have also partnered with civil society organisations to author a handbook for local authorities titled "How to run a citizens' assembly" as part of their Innovation in Democracy Programme.<sup>16</sup> Three authorities took part in the programme and ran citizens assemblies on issues including the future of town centres and traffic congestion. The write ups for these case studies include a number of questions answered by the participating authorities (Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Test Valley Borough Council, and the Greater Cambridge Partnership) such as *Why did you want to run a citizens assembly?* and *If you could start again what would you do differently?*<sup>17</sup> Throughout the mini-public literature you can find detailed accounts and advice like this from those who have already run their own processes. Check out the last section of this document for additional resources.
3. The 160-person British Columbia Citizens' Assembly met to recommend an alternative electoral system for the Canadian province. After 11 months of deliberation the members recommended a version of the single transferable vote system. The government committed to a referendum based on this

recommendation and the population of British Columbia was balloted in a referendum.<sup>18</sup> This is an interesting example of a citizens assembly being given power to shape a political process and potentially change the province in a major way. Nonetheless, in the end the referendum did not pass. This further highlights how democratic deliberation does not necessarily lead to change, but the exercise may still be worthwhile.

4. One of the most high profile citizens assemblies in recent years is Ireland's Citizens' Assembly which served a pivotal role in helping the country move forward on the historically contentious issue of abortion.<sup>19</sup> This citizens assembly equipped policymakers to break a long standing political deadlock<sup>20</sup> and the democratic legitimacy of the citizens assembly helped Ireland's politics move forward in a way conventional avenues had been unable to do.

Citizens assemblies have also been demanded by environmental campaigners on climate and ecological issues<sup>21</sup>, arguing that this can "go beyond politics" and help us transcend the stagnation of party politics and partisanship.

## Permanent mini-publics

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In recent years the prospect of institutionalising mini-publics as permanent bodies has been pursued. This is underpinned by extensive research<sup>22</sup> and organisations such as the Sortition Foundation are actively campaigning for the establishment of such bodies.<sup>23</sup> Permanent mini-publics seek to go beyond the constraints of one-off exercises that are prone to limited sustainability and seek to institutionalise these new democratic forms so that the citizen voices can be a more permanent feature in governance decisions. Some argue for replacing politicians with randomly selected citizens participating in permanent mini-publics.<sup>24</sup> More modest proposals have been put forward, such as suggesting the Scottish Parliament could establish a second chamber made up of randomly selected citizens.<sup>25</sup> Modest versions of permanent mini-publics have been put into practise elsewhere already. This could be applied to an oversight body in the form of a permanent citizens assembly set up to scrutinise the uses of automated decision and artificial intelligence systems in the public sector.

**Examples:**

1. In 2019, Madrid's *Observatorio de la ciudad* organised a group of 49 randomly selected citizens to sit alongside the City Council.<sup>26</sup> This was set up to be a permanent organ of citizen participation, augmenting existing digital avenues and standard local democracy. The *Observatorio* had three main functions: To analyse citizens proposals via the city's digital participation platform (decide.madrid) and decide if they should go to a public vote; Analyse municipal policies; Deliver reports on particularly significant issues. This initiative was short-lived following a change in the city's government.
2. In 2019 the parliament of the Region of Brussels introduced regulations to allow the creation of "deliberative committees", made up of a mix of members of the Regional Parliament and randomly selected citizens.<sup>27</sup> The parliamentary committees are composed of 12-15 parliamentarians and 36-45 randomly selected citizens aged 16 and up. They are expected to be established once every year. The themes for deliberation are open to the public, although the Regional Parliament has the final say. Once a topic has been defined it goes through various stages of consultation, culminating in a vote, which is carried out separately by the citizens and parliamentarians since non-elected citizens cannot officially vote in a parliament. This approach follows similar measures in the German-speaking community of Belgium.<sup>28</sup>

## Technological tools for civic participation

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A number of tools have been developed intended to assist with enhancing civic participation. Some are readily available to use, with a wealth of best practise already established and organisations with a huge amount of expertise ready for someone else to adopt the tools they maintain. Tools like these attempt to lower the barrier to democratic participation and help make public involvement an easier, more daily practice.

**Examples:**

1. Consul is an expansive set of software equipped to facilitate many aspects of democratic engagement, from debates and citizen submitted proposals to participatory budgeting and



voting. It has been deployed in 35 countries, by 135 institutions, and has been made available to 90 million citizens. It has received support from the United Nations and the European Union.<sup>29</sup> Consul has been used particularly widely in the Spanish speaking world, with large scale deployments even in cities as large as Madrid<sup>30</sup> (Decide Madrid).

2. Decidim is a comparable but distinct platform to Consul and is used in Barcelona.<sup>31 32</sup> Decidim has also been used by cities, regions, and organisations around the world.<sup>33</sup>
3. In 2012, Rahvakogu (The People's Assembly), a platform for crowdsourcing and civic consultation, was set up by the Estonian president's office, prompting nearly 2,000 proposals from citizens. The top 15 were selected to be debated in Parliament, with seven of them now adopted as laws.<sup>34</sup>
4. In Latvia, ManaBalss.lv ("MyVoice") is an e-democracy tool, created in 2011, which facilitates online petitions for the Latvian parliament.<sup>35</sup>
5. Across the UK a number of "citizens panels" are run online by councils and other bodies, with Delib's Citizen Space<sup>36</sup> used in both Bristol<sup>37</sup> and Cardiff's<sup>38</sup> citizens panels. These platforms are usually used for public consultations and may be used to collect the views of the public on an ad hoc basis.

## Community oversight

A number of initiatives have focused on establishing structures to enable direct public control over various forms of infrastructure, particularly in the area of technology. These have often focused on regulatory mechanisms or safeguards within the process of procuring and implementing new technologies to ensure community oversight. The establishment of community oversight bodies or citizen-led task-forces to oversee uses of technologies fall within this category.

### Examples:

1. Responding to the growing use of surveillance technologies, including facial recognition, by police forces in the United States, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) launched their Community Control Over Police Surveillance (CCOPS) campaign. The aim of this campaign is to pass CCOPS laws "that ensure local residents, through their city council representatives, are

empowered to decide if and how surveillance technologies are used”, a goal these laws achieve by maximising the public’s influence over these decisions.<sup>39</sup> Along with a number of transparency increasing measures - such as making sure police forces report what surveillance technologies they are using - the model legislation, which, since 2016, has been adopted in at least 15 jurisdictions, protecting and empowering over 14.2 million people, demands the establishment of Community Advisory Committees on Surveillance.<sup>40</sup> These Community Advisory Committees, the legislation states, “should reflect the diversity of the City’s residents” and are to “provide the City Council with broad principles to help guide decisions about if and how surveillance technologies should be used”. These recommendations are then turned into “remedial adjustments” aimed at correcting negative impacts from the use or potential use of surveillance technologies.<sup>41</sup>

2. New York City’s Automated Decision Systems Task Force was convened to develop recommendations for a framework for the use of and policy around automated decision systems in the city.<sup>42</sup> On top of meetings involving individuals from across government and civil society, the task force ran seven public meetings open to the public across the city’s various boroughs. These forums were livestreamed and transcripts were made available. Based on this, the task force recommended the public discussion on automated decision systems be broadened, both by engaging with and educating the public.

## Participatory budgeting

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Participatory budgeting (PB) is a form of direct democracy which gives citizens direct control over part or all of a public budget. How PB usually works is: 1) A steering committee designs and oversees the process, 2) Local residents brainstorm project ideas which could receive funding, 3) Volunteers help develop these ideas into feasible proposals, 4) Residents vote on the proposals which they most want to see funded, 5) The project is funded.<sup>43</sup>

PB is built on the acknowledgement that people who live in an area know best what that area needs. By giving the public the possibility to not only vote on proposals but also design and put them forward themselves, citizens are genuinely empowered. A review by the Public Policy Institute for Wales highlighted that participatory budgeting can increase citizen confidence in local service providers and improve

citizen awareness of councillors in their wards.<sup>44</sup> Technology may be used to assist with the PB process (see the next section).

Participatory budgeting was pioneered in Brazil in the late 1980s and has since spread worldwide with many millions of pounds being allocated to public projects. Participatory Budgeting has been actively promoted by the Welsh<sup>45</sup> and Scottish<sup>46</sup> governments. The Scottish Government aims to allocate 1% of local authority budgets to PB by 2020/21<sup>47</sup> and has already funded an array of projects across Scotland, with PB Scotland acting as a gateway to these efforts.<sup>48</sup> England has also seen millions of pounds allocated through PB projects in places including Newcastle, Southampton, Stockport, Tower Hamlets, and Manton.<sup>49</sup> Huge cities such as Paris<sup>50</sup>, New York City<sup>51</sup>, and Madrid<sup>52</sup> have allocated hundreds of millions to PB exercises. Paris alone announced it would allocate €500 million to PB for the period 2014-2020.<sup>53</sup>

Such an approach could be applied to procurement processes, including of new data systems in the public sector, in which the public is informed of different providers and the costs and purpose statement of the procurement, including an option of non-technological solutions. The suggestion with such an approach is that if the public is given greater control over budgets, resources can be better targeted towards community needs.

## Public ownership of infrastructure

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A growing number of initiatives relating to data have focused on questions of ownership. These seek to challenge the dominance of platforms and infrastructures owned by private companies and move away from centralised forms of data collection and ownership. These initiatives have been particularly prominent in more local contexts, particularly for cities.

### Examples:

1. Since 2016, Barcelona City Council has been implementing its vision for a “digital city” under its Digital Transformation Plan.<sup>54</sup> This plan has attempted to foster a political culture of openness and collaboration through local digital innovation and citizen empowerment. The Council promotes an active model of citizenship which casts individuals as decision-makers and owners of data. The Council is concerned with “technological

sovereignty”; transferring control over data away from private corporations and back to the city and its citizens. Such measures envision an engagement with data for improving the city in line with citizens concerns, who are further empowered through democratic structures such as the city’s Decidim<sup>55</sup> digital participatory platform (see above).

2. The City of Amsterdam outlined in their manifesto titled Tada!<sup>56</sup> the principle that data should be “for everyone”. “Data that government authorities, companies and other organizations generate from the city and collect about the city are held in common. Everyone can use them. Everyone can benefit from them.” Government authorities, companies and other organisations were invited to sign up to the document to commit to some basic principles on the digital city, such as being inclusive, tailored to citizens, and open and transparent. A key element is “control”, stating that “data are meant to serve the people”, highlighting the importance of public control over uses of data.

Both these examples are “data commons” pilots carried out as part of the EU-funded DECODE project<sup>57</sup>. Reflecting on the pilots, one of the project’s coordinators claims “data can be considered a new meta-utility, a public infrastructure”.<sup>58</sup> It should therefore be subject to public ownership.

Treating data like a public utility, under public ownership, allows it to be subjected to democratic influence by the public. This approach to data sits alongside other areas, such as community controlled renewable energy which offer opportunities to decarbonise, decentralise, and democratise the electricity system. The UK government<sup>59</sup> and Australia’s New South Wales government<sup>60</sup> have both promoted community owned renewable energy and offered advice on how to kickstart such initiatives.

## Local co-operativism

Alongside the focus on community oversight, data ownership, there has been a growing emphasis on the importance of participatory models for local economies that aim to build community wealth and democratise the economy. They also favour worker-owned co-operative forms of organisation as a way to ensure governance structures in line with community interests that are more sustainable.



Studies have found that co-operatives<sup>61</sup> survive through their first six to ten years at a rate 7% higher than traditional small businesses.<sup>62</sup> They are more resilient because every member has a stake in the business and are a part of the community in which they operate. Whilst such an approach is not exclusively focused on technology, the suggestion is that a wider focus on a more democratic and localised economy can serve as an appropriate foundation for advancing civic participation across the public sector.

#### Examples:

1. The “Preston Model” offers an interesting model for community wealth building. Inspired by examples from Cleveland, Ohio<sup>63</sup>, and the Basque Country<sup>64</sup>, the Preston Model, named for the English city where it has been put into practise, leverages procurement to keep wealth in the local community. It does this by selecting “anchor institutions”. These are local, public sector institutions like councils, universities and hospitals which have a vested interest in the community’s prosperity and are unlikely to leave. This model advocates that these anchor institutions procure more goods and services from local firms - such as local builders, printers, farmers, etc. Where goods cannot be sourced locally, this model advocates the creation of worker-owned cooperatives to plug these gaps in the local economy and create more secure jobs. This model prioritises small, local enterprises over attracting national or international capital. Fair and well paid employment are a cornerstone. In addition to making the economy more open to democratic intervention, supporters claim this model also provides productivity, social, and environmental benefits.<sup>65</sup> This approach has been pioneered in the UK through a collaboration between Preston City Council and the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES).
2. In Wales, the Welsh Government has been exploring a “Foundational Economy” approach, which Lee Waters MS, Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport, has called “Preston Plus”, applying similar ideas to the Preston Model but at a national level. The foundational economy refers to the “anything that is fundamental to the ability of the community to function”.<sup>67</sup> The aim is to support foundational sections of the economy so communities can keep hold of their wealth, including enabling individuals to live in an area comfortably.

Keeping the economy closer to the people who depend on it makes it more accessible to democratic intervention. In North Wales, Cwmni Bro Ffestiniog have pioneered a comparable local development approach by networking social enterprises around Blaenau Ffestiniog, focusing on cooperation within a network of social enterprises, an decentralised approach better suited for a mostly rural region like Gwynedd.<sup>68</sup> This work is being expanded through a larger partnership network, Dolan, linking up similar initiatives across North Wales.<sup>69</sup>

3. Democracy Collaborative refer to measures like these and related models, such as worker owned co-ops, community development finance initiatives, and community banks - such as Wales' Banc Cambria<sup>70</sup>, due to launch soon and supported by the Welsh Government - as "community wealth building".<sup>71</sup> By building and keeping wealth in communities, local populations can be empowered beyond formal democratic instruments and play an active role in the day to day evolution of their economy.



04

How to get  
started

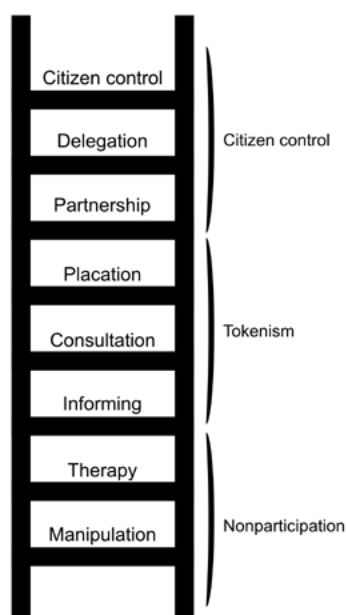
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The different models and examples provided in this guidebook show some ways to advance civic participation. Not all of them apply to all contexts, but they may serve to inform different ways to approach a particular challenge.

As a starting point, when embarking on an exercise to advance civic participation, it is important to first identify what purpose you want public involvement to play. To ensure that the involvement is comprehensive and constructive, rather than tokenistic, there are number of processes to think about.

A famous tool for thinking through these sorts of processes is Sherry Arnstein's "Ladder of Participation". This imagines citizen involvement on a scale from "manipulation" and "therapy," through "informing", "consultation", and "placation", and reaching its apex with "partnership", "delegation", and "citizen control".<sup>72</sup> The best forms of public involvement feature higher on this ladder, towards citizen control. Most people would agree that manipulation should be avoided but we should also bear in mind the limitations of mere consultation and placation. Democratic exercises which do not empower the public stand the risk of delegitimising such exercises in the eyes of those they are meant to engage.

In the rest of this section we provide some resources which can help you to get started. These point to further research, including other reports like this one, and more details on the methods and initiatives we have outlined.





# 04

## Additional resources

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### Citizens juries

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#### Resources

1. Participedia's [entry on citizens juries](#).
2. Involve's [resource on citizens juries](#).
3. Shared Future c.i.c.'s [citizens juries literature review](#). Despite sounding very academic, this review is very accessible. It also includes critiques of citizens juries, as well as a brief overview of other types of mini-publics.
4. [newDemocracy on citizens juries and their experiences in Australia](#).

#### Case studies

1. Understanding Patient Data and the Ada Lovelace Institute's [research on what the public thinks about businesses and organisations using data held by the NHS](#). They utilised three citizens juries and a nationally representative survey of over 2,000 people.
2. Citizens Juries c.i.c.'s [Forest of Dean hospital placement citizens' jury](#). Check out the rest of their website for other examples, like their [Explainable Artificial Intelligence juries](#).
3. [The Jersey Citizens Panel](#), which iterated on the citizens jury model. An interesting example of how democratic methods can be adapted for different circumstances.

### Citizens assemblies

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#### Resources

1. ["How to run a citizens' assembly"](#), a handbook developed by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. This was developed alongside [citizens assemblies run by three UK authorities](#).
2. [Local Government Association on citizens assemblies, with additional case studies](#).
3. Involve's [resource on citizens assemblies](#), including additional case studies.
4. Participedia's [entry on citizens assemblies](#).

#### Case studies

1. [Ireland's citizens assembly and the Eighth Amendment](#). This citizens assembly helped [change the national conversation on abortion and women's bodily autonomy](#) in Ireland.
2. British Columbia's [citizens assembly on electoral reform](#). This led multiple referendums. [Here for the official website and report](#).
3. Extinction Rebellion has called for a [citizens assembly on](#)

## Permanent mini-publics

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[climate and ecological justice](#). The Climate Assembly UK was commissioned by six parliamentary select committees, and its report can be [found here](#). However, while welcoming the assembly, Extinction Rebellion did not think it was given enough power and was too tied to flawed government targets, mourning [“its lack of urgency and agency”](#).

### Resources

1. [The Sortition Foundation](#) have been one of the leading voices calling for permanent mini-publics. They worked with other organisations to develop a [proposal for a permanent citizens assembly for the Scottish Parliament](#), alongside the existing chamber. Check out their [co-founder’s popular TED talk](#).
2. Larry Patriquin, a professor of Social Welfare and Social Development, has written a book on permanent citizens assemblies. A PDF is available for free [here](#).

### Case studies

1. Although it has since been scrapped due to a change in city government, [Madrid](#) offers one of the most advanced examples of a permanent mini-public.
2. [Permanent mini-publics in Belgium are gaining ground](#), first in the country’s German-speaking region and more recently in the Brussels region. The work in the Brussels region sees citizens working alongside parliamentarians.

## Mini publics and democratic innovations

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### Resources

1. A Nesta report titled [“Evidence vs Democracy: How ‘mini-publics’ can traverse the gap between citizens, experts, and evidence”](#). It covers a number of methods and case studies in an accessible manner, arguing for the benefits of using mini-publics and innovating democracy. Nesta’s [Government Innovation](#) workstream covers many of the same areas as this document, complete with reports, case studies, and initiatives Nesta themselves have spearheaded. Nesta often work with public bodies on projects.
2. A concise and readable paper on [different types of mini-publics](#), by Oliver Escobar and Stephen Elstub.
3. A [comprehensive OECD report](#) which explores many mini-publics, using the language of “deliberative processes”.
4. A more academic paper by Oliver Escobar and Stephen Elstub

## Technologies for participation

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which [explores the broader area of “democratic innovations”](#), of which we can consider mini-publics a subset.

5. Involve maintain a [vast resource of democratic methods](#) for further inspiration. Also consider checking out the even more comprehensive [Participedia](#), a crowdsourced encyclopedia with a wealth of case studies, methods, and collections.

### Resources

1. The Consul project has a [detailed website](#). They provide a [dossier](#) running over the main features and benefits of the system, and a [condensed version](#) of this document. Their [user guide](#) is public, allowing you to get an even deeper idea of how the system operates. They provide [further documentation](#) on various features of the system, and there is a [forum](#) for more information and conversations. They encourage interested organisations to get in [contact](#).
2. Involve have written up a [case study](#) on the Decide Madrid platform, Madrid’s implementation of Consul. [Participedia](#) have also written up a case study, with additional reports linked to in their references.
3. Decidim, the participation platform used by Barcelona, has a similarly comprehensive [website](#). Their [documentation](#) has guides on installing, configuring, and running your own Decidim site. They also encourage organisations who want to use Decidim to get in touch. Developers are encouraged to collaborate on the project.
4. You can peer behind the curtain of Decidim’s development with <https://meta.decidim.org/>, which is itself an instance of Decidim. More information [here](#). You can even check out proceedings from their festival, [Decidim Fest](#), which has been running for a number of years.
5. Decidim provide a list of the many [cities, regions, and organisations](#) who use the platform, with links to the operational instances.
6. IT For Change wrote a [research brief](#) on the rise of democratic technologies in Spain and their genesis in social movements and open source technologies.
7. This report, [“eDemocracy and eParticipation”](#), explores democratic technologies from across Europe, including some of the additional examples we cite in our second section.
8. [Delib’s website](#) provides details on the many public departments, many of them in the UK, who use their public

consultation platform, Citizen Space. They provide a [tour](#) of the system and [customer stories](#), many of them UK authorities. Demos of the system are available remotely [on request](#).

## Community oversight

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### Resources

1. The ACLU have a [subsite](#) which goes into a lot of detail on their CCOPS work. Some of the information relates to the state of facial recognition use in the United States but is not limited to this.
2. Most importantly, the ACLU provide a [model Community Control Over Police Surveillance \(CCOPS\) bill](#). This document is annotated with notes for localities on how they can adapt the bill to their circumstances. Adapting such a document to a UK context would certainly need more adjustment, and a legislative approach like this may not be suitable for all circumstances in the UK, but this is nonetheless a valuable document which could serve as the catalyst for similar efforts here.
3. The ACLU's [guiding principles fact sheet](#) goes over the core goals of their campaign regarding public control over police technologies.
4. They have a comprehensive [resource library](#) which includes campaigning guides, informative blogs, and other materials.

## Participatory budgeting

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### Resources

1. The [Welsh Government](#) produced an accessible toolkit for planning participatory budgeting projects with young people. [Here](#) is an evidence review into PB produced by the Public Policy Institute for Wales.
2. CitizenLab provide a [step-by-step guide](#) on implementing participatory budgeting for cities and local governments in the form of a free e-book.
3. PB Scotland have a [brief guide](#) on participatory which includes some videos of past events for inspiration. The [news section](#) of their website is good for keeping up with participatory news in Scotland and beyond.
4. Authorities across Scotland use participatory budgeting. [Here is Midlothian Council's webpage on PB](#) which describes how they do it and answers some common questions.
5. Consul, which we address in the Technologies For Participation section, can carry out participatory budgeting. [Here](#) is the documentation section of the system's website, which includes

this document specifically on [participatory budgeting](#).

### Case studies

1. Hope For Democracy: 30 Years of Participatory Budgeting Worldwide is a [freely available monster of a book](#), clocking in at 638 pages and packed with participatory budgeting case studies from almost every continent. The book also reflects more generally on PB, it's spread, and its future.
2. As part of its "Civics for All" initiative, the New York City Department of Education launched participatory budgeting in [all of the city's high schools](#). Their detailed training materials, included suggested activities, [are available for you to read](#). Participatory budgeting has also been [rolled out across the city](#) to the tune of tens of millions of dollars.
3. [Here](#) is a report exploring Paris' PB activities. Participedia also have an [extensive entry on Paris' participatory budgeting efforts](#), including analysis and lessons learned.

### Public ownership of infrastructure

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### Resources

1. The city of Amsterdam's Tada manifesto has its [own website](#), with an accompanying [blog section](#) with many related articles.
2. Tada invite organisations to take part in [their workshop](#), "Data ethics in practice", designed for people who have to make decisions based on data in their day-to-day work or who are working on data-driven projects. [This article](#) describes the vision and background in more detail.
3. The city of Barcelona similarly has a [detailed website](#) for its digital transformation. It includes various featured projects from the city, including a subsection titled "[City Data Commons](#)".
4. You can read an overview of Barcelona City Council's Digital Plan [here](#). Barcelona [welcomes contact](#) regarding their Digital City Plan.
5. The DECODE project, which has had a hand in Amsterdam and Barcelona, has an [informative website](#) with a wealth of materials. To really dive into the project and learn about DEcentralised Citizen-owned Data Ecosystems (the full name of the project) you can check out the project's outputs [here](#). A much briefer overview of the project is available [here](#), and some additional FAQs [here](#).
6. The UK government has a [page](#) with guidance for local groups who are interested in setting up community energy projects. [Here](#) is another similar guide from Australia.



# 04

## Local co-operativism

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### Resources

1. CLES and Preston City Council worked together on community wealth building initiatives in the city. [Here](#) is an overview of their efforts. [Here](#) is CLES' webpage on the Preston Model, and [here](#) is Preston City Council's.
2. The Welsh Government has a webpage dedicated to the [foundational economy](#). Here is an [article](#) by Lee Waters MS introducing the foundational economy. The Welsh Parliament's research blog provides [another primer](#) on the topic.
3. There is a collective of academic researchers who go by the name [Foundational Economy](#) whose website collects resources and promotes the foundational economy framework. They have a [short film](#) introducing the concept, and a page where they collect [reports](#) on the topic.
4. Cwmni Bro Ffestiniog have an informative website detailing their network, in both [English](#) and [Welsh](#). They have documents available on the organisation's [vision](#), a [case study](#) exploration, and a [report](#). Welsh speakers can also check out [BROcast Ffestiniog](#), a podcast series run by the organisation.
5. Dolan's [website](#) provides information and updates on the partnership network. This includes things like recorded talks, including [this one](#) on the foundational economy with Wales' Future Generations Commissioner, the Welsh Government's Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport, and Elin Hywel from Cwmni Bro Ffestiniog.
6. Democracy Collaborative may be a US based organisation but their [website](#) has lots of interesting material on the democratic economy.
7. Mondragon is a federation of workers cooperatives based in the Basque region of Spain. You can get an idea of the scope of what is possible with workers coops by looking at their [annual report](#), which they have reproduced in English. Read more about Mondragon [here](#).
8. [Here](#) is a comprehensive pamphlet, from 2015, on how to set up a workers' co-op.

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