
Genesis and Evolution of the Citizens' Convention for Climate

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How did the Citizens' Convention for Climate (C3) come into being? In what context? Who were its architects, and what were its consequences? This deliberative process certainly did not spring from nowhere; it was the continuation of a long line of democratic innovations², but also a product of the political crisis which gripped France during late 2018 and early 2019 (see section 1.1). The genesis of the Convention involved several groups of actors with differing objectives, but who managed to agree on setting up the mini-public (section 1.2). This negotiated beginning impacted the composition of the governing bodies in charge of the Convention, which also created complications during its operation (see section 1.3). The chapter bases its analysis primarily on participant observation³.

¹ Dimitri Courant was an observer throughout the whole of the process, and carried out 24 interviews.

² See Introduction.

³ This chapter integrates some of the analyses presented in Chapter 2 of: Courant, D. (2022a), The new spirit of sortition. Democratic principles and political representation of deliberative mini-publics. PhD Thesis, University of Lausanne/University Paris 8, Lausanne/Paris.

1.1. Precursors and context: the Grand débat national and the citizen group of the ESEC

As is the case with the majority of mini-publics, it is impossible to understand the emergence of the Grand débat national – Great National Debate (GDN), and of the Citizens’ Convention in France, without taking account of its immediate context – a context marked by “political crisis” (Dobry 2009; Rayner 2019). When President Macron’s government launched so broad a citizen consultation, along with these two very different debates, it was because they were dealing with a contestatory movement on an unprecedented scale: the “Gilets jaunes” (Yellow Vests). This atypical social movement began in November 2018, in protest against the government’s decision to raise the tax on fuel (Jeanpierre 2019). However, the group’s demands grew in number, and as of December 2018, the main demands related to the establishment of a mechanism of direct democracy, the citizens’ initiative referendum (RIC, from the French), and the establishment of citizens’ assemblies, made up of citizens selected at random, to rewrite the Constitution. Given that the Gilets jaunes, after having blockaded roundabouts all over the country, staged demonstrations in France’s major cities every Saturday, the government held a nationwide debate. In this context, the Economic, Social and Environment Council (ESEC – the third Chamber of the Republic, made up of representatives of civil society organizations, such as unions, associations, interest groups, NGOs, etc.) experimented with a new form of citizen participation. This set up a “citizen group” of 30 randomly selected participants to issue an opinion, which was to be taken into account in the decision of a Temporary Commission, on which five of the randomly selected citizens would also sit. The ESEC was also facing a crisis, but one which was more diffuse and less extensive. In this case, it was the threat of marginalization. Thus, it saw citizen participation as a means of reinventing itself and renewing its legitimacy (Aubert 2019; Baeckelandt et al. 2023).

The GDN took place, first and foremost, through meetings of local initiatives, open participatory debates organized from the bottom up, supplemented by an online platform for people to post their opinions (though there was no mechanism to facilitate debate among the Internet users). Subsequently, in March 2019, regional citizens’ conferences were organized in every region of France and all of the overseas departments and territories, taking place over two successive weekends, each bringing together 100 citizens selected at random, and lasting only two days. Whilst in quantitative terms, the GDN seems to have involved an impressive number of participants, meetings and contributions, this scheme produced no output in terms of public policy or governmental direction (Courant 2019b; Fourniau 2019; Baeckelandt 2020; Buge and Morio 2020; Reber 2020). The only meaningful

element in President Macron's press conference at the close of the GDN was his announcement of the creation of the Citizens' Convention for Climate (C3)⁴.

It was announced that the citizen group set up by the ESEC would be part of the contribution, entitled "Ruptures and transitions", in the third constitutional chamber of the GDN. The group was made up of thirty randomly selected citizens. It had two weekends to come up with an opinion, with the help of two facilitators and five ESEC councilors. In parallel, a temporary commission of ESEC councilors met for one day a week, including five citizens drawn from the citizen group. Subsequently, the ESEC negotiated to enact a reform, allowing it to include randomly selected citizens in its work in new citizen groups, but it was also to become the organizing institution of the C3.

The issues of ESEC reforms and the integration of randomly selected citizens or the organization of citizen conferences by the ESEC have been under discussion since the early 2010s. However, the C3 represents not the concrete delivery of the reform, but rather a new experiment which came before the reform, and finally crystallized in late 2020. Following the citizen group run in 2019, the ESEC wished to become the organizing institution for the C3, to demonstrate its capacity to become the "chamber of citizen participation". While the Council was indeed given charge of the C3, it had to join forces with other actors, which led to tensions during the course of the process, continuing right up until its end (see Chapter 4).

1.2. A negotiated and hybrid device: between militant lobbying and political strategy

While mini-publics are very often an attempt at "incorporating critiques"⁵, the case of the Convention for Climate is undoubtedly the clearest example of a compromise between different – sometimes mutually opposed – actors. As is the case with the majority of mini-publics, it also arose against the backdrop of a political crisis – the Gilets jaunes protests, but also the "climate marches" (see Chapter 13). The origins of the C3 are complex and diverse, stemming from a negotiation between heterogeneous actors. This contrast-studded genesis had direct impacts on the very composition of the organization – especially its governing committee, marking a clear break with previous deliberative mini-publics. Contrary to the "narratives" constructed by different actors, each of whom try to claim credit for setting up the C3, it was the product of actions and strategies by various protagonists, without a unique and clear point of origin. Here, we offer a

4 See Chapter 16.

5 On this point, see Courant 2022a; 2022b.

chronological analysis in order to untangle the different threads which led to the creation of the C3.

1.2.1. The creation of the “Gilets citoyens”: between hesitations and misunderstandings

Beside the ESEC, another group of actors who must be taken into account is the “Gilets citoyens” (literally, Citizen Vests). However, behind a unitary and cohesive facade, this collective was far more ambiguous and fuzzy. In a sense, we could say that “The Gilets citoyens do not exist”, to paraphrase Bourdieu’s (1980) pronouncement on public opinion. The origin of this “participatory nebula” (Blondiaux and Fourniau 2011), which lasted only from January 2019 to May 2019, came from its “hard core” – the collective “Démocratie Ouverte” (DO – Open Democracy). This association was set up in 2012 by entrepreneurs in “civic-tech startups” (Mabi 2017, 2019). In particular, it is closely related to the Cap Collectif company. The DO’s website lists, among its founding members, the “inventors of Parlement & Citoyens, vox.e.org, NosDéputés.fr and NosSénateurs.fr, and QuestionnezVosÉlus”⁶. DO is directly linked to actors “living for” participation, but above all, “living off” participation, to adapt Weber’s (2004) famous turn of phrase on politics. It is a coalition of “public participation professionals” (Bherer et al. 2017; Lightbody and Roberts 2019). The association also has four employees and has remunerated partnerships with and grants from a host of institutional actors, in both the public and private sectors.

Although it is linked to civic tech entrepreneurs, DO has never, itself, organized a deliberative process, and its “expertise” in the matter is limited. However, in the context of the Gilets jaunes movement, the association swung into action to demand a citizens’ assembly be organized. Its first act to bring this about was to publish an article, entitled “Gilets jaunes – Comment sortir démocratiquement de la crise ?” (The *Gilets jaunes* – How can we get out of the crisis democratically?), on its own website on December 9, 2018⁷. This article proposed a three-phase process: “citizen consultation” in a form resembling the GDN, a “citizens’ assembly”, and a “national referendum”. The aim was to “genuinely bring our democratic apparatus ‘up to date’, with one objective: to adopt a reform to the Constitution in 2019 which gives

6 Démocratie Ouverte (2020). Il était une fois Démocratie Ouverte [Online]. Available at: <https://www.democratieouverte.org/histoire-democratie-ouverte/> [Accessed 23 October 2020].

7 Démocratie Ouverte (2018). Gilets Jaunes – Comment sortir démocratiquement de la crise ? [Online]. Available at: <https://democratieouverte.org/blog/gilets-jaunes-democratie>.

a central role to citizen engagement and participation in our institutions”⁸. Their proposal of a deliberative assembly is atypical:

(February – May 2019) 2.1) Constitution of a citizens' assembly composed of 99 remunerated members, selected at random, from the different stakeholders. They could be distributed as follows, for example: 51 citizens, including members of the Gilets jaunes; 24 elected representatives; and 24 representatives of intermediary bodies⁹.

This proposal reveals a lack of knowledge in relation to assemblies created by random selection, because it does not correspond to any existing format, and no arguments are put forward to justify this complex hybrid composition, doomed to failure in practice (Courant 2021, pp. 14–15). A meeting was held on December 20, 2018 at Superpublic – a coworking space. The stated goal of that meeting was to take advantage of the fact that “the possibility of making profound democratic advances has never been so favorable, in France, as it now is”, to obtain “concrete advances in institutional reform”. In actuality, the twenty actors present (notably, members of DO, professional facilitators, three political science researchers, representatives of civic tech startups, and a deputy from Macron's party LREM) began by exchanging information in an attempt to understand the form of the GDN – then still in the process of taking shape. The participants also disagreed on the position that should be adopted in relation to the GDN and to the Gilets jaunes. A number of the “civic tech entrepreneurs” had been, or would be, paid by the government to facilitate the GDN, and therefore were not in a position to easily criticize it; others felt it absolutely necessary to form an alliance with the Gilets jaunes; still more wished to be able to address “all French people”, without “limiting the scope to the Gilets jaunes”. The debates revealed wavering between various options: collaboration with the government, a balance of power to exert pressure on the government, providing technical and symbolic support to the Gilets jaunes, or organizing a deliberative process themselves¹⁰. This tension in terms of position between “inside” and “outside” was also noted by Mabi (2019, pp. 72–73):

Cap Collectif chose to provide the service, and adapted its tool to the requirements of its client (the government). *Bluenove* accepted the framework of the (grand) debate to focus on data analysis. The heavy

8 Idem.

9 Idem.

10 Observer's notes, first meeting of Démocratie Ouverte, “Gilets jaunes et démocratie”, Paris, 20 December 2018.

involvement of actors connected to the civic tech community raises questions about the political position of that community, in that both these companies are also part of the collective *Démocratie Ouverte*, which has announced its support for the Gilets jaunes. One of the directors of *Bluenove* is actually one of the collective's Co-Chairs. Is it truly possible for them to be on the side both of the challengers and of those in power?

The month before that, another group of actors, notably elected representatives, most of whom were close to DO, also published an article calling on “Emmanuel Macron to include 100 randomly selected citizens in the future High Council for Climate (an expert committee)”¹¹, but it did not gain much media attention. One of the signatories, the political scientist Loïc Blondiaux, ended up as a member of the governing committee of the C3. Another, the paleoclimatologist Valérie Masson-Delmotte, gave the inaugural address on the climate at the first session of the C3.

The heads of DO have relatively little knowledge of citizens' assemblies; they confuse “Ireland” and “Iceland” (which are only one letter apart, in French as they are in English); and are ignorant of the number of citizens' assemblies in Ireland, their staffing, their compositions, the subjects on which they deliberated, and the results of the referendums, amongst other things. These errors and confusion about the case of Ireland are common in the press¹² and also, sometimes, in published works of research¹³, and the members of DO continued to make these mistakes in their contributions in the media¹⁴, even up until the very end of the C3. Despite

11 Orphelin, M. et al. (2018). Réinventons le dialogue autour de la transition écologique !. *Le Point* [Online]. Available at: https://www.lepoint.fr/politique/tribune-reinventons-le-dialogue-autour-de-la-transition-ecologique-25-11-2018-2274228_20.php.

12 Barroux, R. (2019). Le gouvernement met sur les rails la Convention citoyenne sur la transition écologique. *Le Monde*, [Online]. Available at: https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2019/06/04/le-gouvernement-met-sur-les-rails-la-convention-citoyenne-sur-la-transition-ecologique_5471161_3244.html; Rotivel, A. (2019). L'Irlande, pionnière de la démocratie participative. *La Croix*, [Online]. Available at: <https://www.la-croix.com/Monde/Europe/LIrlande-pionniere-democratie-participative-2019-04-15-1201015824>; Torgemen, E. (2019). Assemblée citoyenne : l'exemple irlandais qui inspire le gouvernement français. *Le Parisien*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.leparisien.fr/societe/assemblee-citoyenne-l-exemple-irlandais-qui-inspire-le-gouvernement-francais-18-05-2019-8074926.php>.

13 Blondiaux, L. et al. (2019). Le Référendum d'initiative citoyenne délibératif. *Terra Nova*.

14 Imer, M. and D'Allens, G. (2020). Pour une fois qu'on remet les citoyens au centre du jeu, osons leur faire confiance. *Reporterre* [Online]. Available at: <https://reporterre.net/Pour-une-fois-qu-on-remet-les-citoyens-au-centre-du-jeu-osons-leur-faire-confiance>. [Accessed 6 February 2020]

significant differences between the two processes, the term used by DO was “citizens’ assembly/citizens’ panel” until late January 2019, when the former term began being used over the latter. However, at the same time, DO was presenting itself publicly as “specialist in democracy and citizens’ assemblies”, and it was in this guise that Mathilde Imer would join the Governing Committee of C3.

DO held another meeting on January 16, 2019, at the Halles civiques de Belleville (Paris), which initially reproduced the same elements as the one before. The purpose of that meeting was to develop four avenues for action and draft an open letter to the President of the Republic in an attempt to influence the GDN, notably asking that the data collected be made public. The 37 people present included the same actors who had been there in December, particularly close to the civic tech industry, but also a number of members of the *Gilets jaunes*, eager to launch what they called “The True Debate”.

One of the four avenues identified for action was “the project to establish a citizens’ assembly/citizens’ panel”, the aim and boundaries of which were as yet extremely unclear. The “citizens’ assembly” workshop as part of the meeting on January 16, 2019 was made up of eight people, including five “full-time associative employees”. Participants referred to a plan for a “constituent citizens’ assembly during the summer”, linked to a music festival that was planned, but ultimately canceled, by the collective “La Bascule”¹⁵. The subgroup envisaged multiple options in terms of “deliberative missions” for the citizens’ assembly: synthesis of the contributions of the GDN to lay the groundwork for a referendum to change the Constitution; deliberation about the citizens’ initiative referendum to be established; more general deliberation about democratic reforms.

These options were presented to the plenary session, but without actually clarifying matters for all actors. An example follows, where a participant wonders: “What is a citizens’ panel or a citizens’ assembly? No-one knows. Blondiaux suggested getting 400 citizens together at Versailles”¹⁶. Nevertheless, a new goal was set:

– A member of DO: We will begin writing an opinion piece or an open letter [...] with the workshops feeding into it [...]. Summaries will be sent out in order to collect potential signatures.

¹⁵ See: <https://la-bascule.org/>.

¹⁶ Indeed, Loïc Blondiaux mentioned the idea of calling a mini-public of 400 citizens at Versailles in reference to the Estates General in one of his appearances on *France Inter*. Blondiaux, L. (2019). *Le Grand Face-à-face*. *France Inter*, 12 January [Online]. Available at: <https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/le-grand-face-a-face/le-grand-face-a-face-12-janvier-2019>.

– Another member of DO: The next step is that opinion piece, which needs to be shared and put together collaboratively. It needs to be signed by a very diverse collection of actors [...]. Put out a great deal of “comms” about this initiative¹⁷.

Thus, over the course of the next week, the open letter was written on the basis of the initial draft proposed by DO, amended and modified by a small number of actors – notably to weaken the implication of a “partnership” with the government, and strengthen that of a counter-power position. Once finalized, it was sent for signature to a great many different actors: civic tech entrepreneurs, association members, elected representatives, and researchers. The letter was published in the newspaper *Le Parisien* on January, 23 2019 under the title “Les “Gilets citoyens” écrivent à Macron”¹⁸. The very same day, DO’s third meeting took place about the issue of the GDN, in the same location as before – the Halles civiques. The aim was to drum up media coverage for the article, notably through social networks and media who had been invited to cover the meeting. After a fairly deeply divided debate, the “collective” decided to adopt the name used by the journalists in *Le Parisien* – the “Gilets citoyens”¹⁹. This gave rise to numerous misunderstandings.

To begin with, the vast majority of signatories had (and will have) never attended a single one of the collective’s meetings, either before or after the publication of the open letter. Examples include researchers Dominique Bourg and Marie-Hélène Bacqué, elected representatives Carole Delga, Bertrand Pancher and Jo Spiegel, and the columnist Clément Viktorovitch.

As the collective has since changed direction many times, it is dishonest to claim that all those who signed the article published on January 23, 2019 have contributed to (or approved) the stances subsequently adopted by the collective. In addition, the majority of signatories have never selected the label “Gilets citoyens”, and have never been consulted on that point.

Secondly, people who were subsequently presented as the “figureheads” of the Gilets citoyens never signed the article. Such is the case, notably, of the Gilets jaunes co-founder Priscillia Ludosky, the Chair of the Council of Rural Mayors in

17 Observer’s notes, 2nd meeting of Démocratie Ouverte, “Gilets jaunes, Grand Débat et démocratie”, Paris, 16 January 2019.

18 de Saint-Sauveur, C. and Vernet, H. (2019). Les “Gilets citoyens” écrivent à Macron. *Le Parisien* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.leparisien.fr/politique/les-gilets-citoyens-ecrivent-a-macron-23-01-2019-7994661.php>.

19 Observer’s notes, 3rd meeting of Démocratie Ouverte, Paris, 23 January 2019.

Essonne Yvan Lubraneski, and the actress Marion Cotillard, who were, nevertheless, among the five “names” mentioned in the press release dated April 24, 2019. The other two, Cyril Dion and Laurence Tubiana, though they did indeed sign the open letter, have practically never participated in the collective’s meetings. Dion only attended for press conferences and Tubiana occasionally sent one of her assistants, without ever coming in person. The same is true of Marion Cotillard, who never took part – be it in person or remotely.

Thirdly, the collective remained an informal organization, and its way of functioning was atypical. Thus, the list of its members was not clear, and while certain people claimed that it matched the list of signatories of the open letter, we can see that in fact, this was not the case. As it was not an association with formalized statutes, there was no explicit rule on its operation governing the informal collective, and whilst DO stated categorically that “the collective cannot be reduced to DO”, in fact, it was the Vice-Chair of DO and its employees who made practically all of the decisions. It was only around May 2019, in the wake of various protests, that DO proposed to bring in an explicit means of organization, based on a members’ vote using Loomio – an online platform – as well as a “circle of trust” and a “circle of support”. In reality, despite the facade presented on the website, the collective never actually worked in this way. The “circle of trust”, for example, has never held a meeting.

The meeting of 23 January included 27 actors – for the most part, the same ones who had attended the previous meeting. Again, it began with the sharing of information about the GDN and the “True Debate”. After some discussion of the media coverage of the article and ratification of the name “Gilets citoyens” by vote of those present, they were divided into subgroups. The “workshop” on the topic of a “citizens’ assembly” again included some ten people, but still not the Co-Chair of DO, who presented herself as an “expert” in citizens’ assemblies to justify her inclusion on the governing committee of the C3. The subgroup discussed the objectives of the assembly but also its composition, its size, the means of selection, facilitation, the informative materials on which the deliberation would be based, the types of addresses the participants would hear, financial resources and timescale. On the question of the means of random selection, a DO employee proposed that a blindfolded child should throw darts at a map of France: “then we arrive at the home of the person selected with cameras and perhaps a celebrity to tell them ‘You’ve been chosen!’ and see how they react”²⁰. Other members of the subgroup were opposed to that idea, which compromised the participants’ ability to remain anonymous, and in no way corresponded to the usual practice for mini-publics (Courant 2020; Fourniau 2020).

20 Observer’s notes, third meeting of Démocratie Ouverte, Paris, 23 January 2019.

1.2.2. Meetings with government personnel at the Élysée, and adoption of the project by the state

Following this meeting, the collective's public activities gradually tapered off. It met again at the Halles civiques to discuss the same issues on February 13, 2019. Very little progress was being made on the cases, and confusion reigned²¹. However, without the collective being informed of it, a "secret sequence" had just been put into action. The executives of DO shifted their attention from public meetings with the poorly identified collective known as the "Gilets citoyens" to meetings behind closed doors at the Élysée (the presidential residence, equivalent to the White House). On December 21, 2018, the director Cyril Dion and the actress Marion Cotillard were the guests of the journalist Ali Baddou on *France Inter*, promoting the petition "*L'Affaire du Siècle*" (the Case of the Century), whose purpose was to take the government to court for its failure to act on climate change²². Cotillard then received a text from Emmanuel Macron "asking why she was criticizing him. He proposed that they should meet at the Élysée to discuss the matter. She accepted the invitation, on condition that 'her friend Cyril' could join them"²³. The meeting with Emmanuel Macron took place on February 12, 2019, at the Élysée. According to Dion:

When I arrived at the meeting, I told myself that there was no point imagining another *Grenelle* on the environment²⁴, or proposing any other minor measures. What was needed was something bigger and bolder. No government, today, has the courage to take actions that are capable of meeting the commitments entered into at COP21. There is too much pressure and too much lobbying. The solution has got to come from the general population; we need to reach a consensus within society which forces the State to take action [...]. Emmanuel Macron understood the historic nature of that assembly. This

21 Observer's notes, fourth meeting of Démocratie Ouverte, attended by videoconference, 13 February 2019.

22 "Marion Cotillard, Cyril Dion: 'Continuer sur cette trajectoire, c'est 5 degrés de plus à la fin du siècle'" (If we carry on the way we are going, we shall see a further 5°C increase in global temperature by the end of this century). L'invité d'Ali Baddou. *France Inter* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/l-invite-d-ali-baddou/l-invite-d-ali-baddou-21-decembre-2018>.

23 D'Allens, G. (2019). Comment Cyril Dion et Emmanuel Macron ont élaboré l'assemblée citoyenne pour le climat. *Reporterre* [Online]. Available at: <https://reporterre.net/Comment-Cyril-Dion-et-Emmanuel-Macron-ont-elabore-l-assemblee-citoyenne-pour-le-climat>.

24 Lengthy meetings with stakeholders.

represented a way for the government to shift the stress caused by radical proposals, thus avoiding direct criticism. It would then be the citizens who would make proposals. That would allow the executive to implement measures that it would not have made if left to its own devices²⁵.

Thus, the meeting between Macron and Dion marked the beginning of a change of direction away from an assembly on topics linked to the GDN or to democratic reform, discussed at the meetings of *Gilets citoyens*, toward an assembly on the sole matter of the climate.

Another actor, Léo Cohen, advisor to the Minister for the Ecological Transition and future member of the governing committee of the C3, affirmed that in reality, he had the idea of a citizens' assembly for climate under his own steam, without any exchanges with the "*Gilets citoyens*"²⁶. In early December 2018, at the same time as the first public calls for a citizens' assembly began being heard, Cohen gave his minister, François de Rugy, a note proposing the "establishment of a democratic convention" bringing together citizens and elected representatives, drawing inspiration from Ireland's constitutional convention, "which served as a trigger", stated Cohen²⁷. The aim of this hybrid mini-public would have been to "make rulings on a variety of subjects affecting French people's day-to-day lives (transport, taxes, purchasing power, the ecological transition, etc.)", and its proposals could be submitted to a referendum by the president. Before the meeting between Macron and Dion on February 13, Dion was received by de Rugy and Cohen, and together they "reached an agreement as to the necessity of a Convention for Climate"²⁸.

On February 15, Mathilde Imer, accompanied by Julien Talpin, a researcher in political science and Director of the research consortium *Démocratie et Participation*²⁹, and Quentin Sauzay, were received at the Élysée. Sauzay is a "former consultant for the World Bank in Benin and Kenya, [...] and a collaborator with the Senate"³⁰. Closely connected to the foundation Terra Nova, he became

25 Idem.

26 Observer's notes, Conférence "Les citoyens peuvent-ils écrire la loi ?", Zoom, 10 May 2021.

27 Cohen, L. (2020). Ils réussiraient là où nous avons échoué. *Revue XXI*, 120–121. Also see Pech (2021), p. 22–23.

28 Idem, p. 121. Also see Pech (2021), p. 30.

29 See: <https://www.participation-et-democratie.fr/>.

30 *Démocratie ouverte* (2019). Quentin Sauzay : Le Nouveau Co-Président de Démocratie Ouverte. Medium. *Démocratie Ouverte* [Online]. Available at: <https://medium.com/@OpenDemocracyFR/quentin-sauzay-le-nouveau-co-pr%C3%A9sident-de-d%C3%A9mocratie-ouverte-b8bf29db21b5>.

Co-Chair of DO in April 2019 and then a paid adviser to the Co-Chair of the C3. The “representatives of *Gilets citoyens*” did not meet Emmanuel Macron, but two advisers from the Élysée, Fabrice Aubert and Antoine Pellion, who “set forth their ideas about establishing an assembly of randomly chosen citizens to address the ecological transition”³¹. Pellion was:

Emmanuel Macron’s energy adviser at the Élysée. He began his career at Areva (nuclear), before working with the former socialist minister Ségolène Royal and Xavier Ploquin, a former employee of the Treasury and Total (a massive oil company), who served as adviser to Nicolas Hulot³².

These meetings were also attended by Jean-Marc Dumontet, CEO and showrunner, a member of LREM (the President’s party, with a center-right position) from its beginning, a supporter and adviser of Macron’s during the 2017 campaign³³.

It was only on March 27 that the management of DO sent the so-called “*note Élysée*”, addressed to the advisers by certain members of the collective, in the wake of the meeting of February 15, proposing a citizens’ assembly “composed of 100 to 150 people: 2/3 citizens and 1/3 local elected representatives, parliamentarians (with respect for the political and geographic diversity: 1 representative per group), intermediary bodies (the ESEC, trade unions, etc.)” with the mandate to answer the question “How can we achieve a 40% reduction in France’s greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 (by comparison with 1990), by means of socially fair/acceptable measures?”³⁴.

In early April 2019, the leadership of DO insisted that a “small group of experts”, of which I, Dimitri Courant, was a part of, should work on the “methodological shape” of a citizens’ assembly that would be organized directly by the collective. It can be hypothesized that there was a cloud of uncertainty hanging over the negotiations with the government, and that therefore, at least in public, the leaders of DO returned to the strategy of a “citizens’ assembly arising from civil

31 Gilets citoyens, Press release, 15 May 2019, p. 16.

32 d’Abundo, A. and Bourbon, J.-C. (2018). L’agriculture et le nucléaire accusés d’entraver l’écologie. *La Croix* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.la-croix.com/France/Politique/Lagriculture-nucleaire-accuses-dentraver-lecologie-2018-08-29-1200964813>.

33 Dumontet, J.-M. (2017). Jean-Marc Dumontet : “Pourquoi je soutiens Emmanuel Macron”. *Le Point* [Online]. Available at: https://www.lepoint.fr/presidentielle/jean-marc-dumontet-pourquoi-je-soutiens-emmanuel-macron-07-03-2017-2109868_3121.php.

34 “Note Élysée – Suite rdv 15_02”, n.d.

society” (Courant 2019a). Another possibility is that they had never given up on the idea of a “State-run citizens’ assembly”, but feared negative reactions from the “group of experts” if emphasis were placed on that point, whilst using the group’s work to generate credit in their own negotiations with the government. In any case, the group, comprising eight experts, only had one true working meeting, held via Zoom, on April 3³⁵.

Having discussed numerous elements of “deliberative design” (timescale, facilitation, hearings, headcount), the group was supposed to meet again the following week, on April 8, but in reality, things did not happen that way. That day, the Co-Chair of DO announced that she had a “meeting with the Élysée” the next day, to make progress on the project of establishing a citizen’s assembly on “the ecological question”, which was “one of the main topics included in the announcement of the GDN”³⁶. The same day, the Prime Minister, Édouard Philippe, delivered an initial overview of the GDN which some found to be oversimplified and manipulative. A professor of political science left the meeting, after declaring: “It’s out of the question! The government is making tools of us. They cannot be relied upon. I will not be a part of it, and it will not be done in my name. We should not enter into discussions with them”³⁷. The members of DO did not seem inclined to follow the same path, preferring to accept the government’s proposal. The group of experts never met again.

On April 19, for the very first time, the “Gilets citoyens” were asked to express an opinion by means of a “majority vote”. Four scenarios were proposed: “1) operational guidance; 2) affirmation of our red lines; 3) counter-proposal and display of total independence; 4) affirmation of our red lines and independent counter-proposal”.

It was the final option which won out, followed closely by scenario 2. However, the meetings with the government were ramped up, as were the press conferences; the collective would not meet again until July 2, 2019. The main purpose of this meeting was to present, to the handful of members attending, the design of the Convention for Climate, on which they had not been consulted³⁸. In fact, in spite of the collective’s vote, DO went for option 1, “operational guidance”. Its two

35 Observer’s notes, first meeting of the “group of experts” of Gilets citoyens, via Zoom, on 3 April 2019.

36 Gilets citoyens, Press release, 15 May 2019, p. 17.

37 Observer’s notes, second meeting of the “group of experts” of Gilets citoyens, Paris, 8 April 2019. Other participants, myself included, shared that position.

38 Observer’s notes, DO/Gilets citoyens meeting, remote, 2 July 2019.

Co-Chairs, Imer and Sauzay, joined the organization of the C3, the former as a member of the governing committee, and the latter as an adviser to the Co-Chair of the C3, Thierry Pech. The details of the meetings with the government are given in the “press release” of 15 May³⁹.

1.3. Modifications and crises

The genesis of France’s Citizens’ Convention for Climate was a chaotic and complicated process, and its implementation no less so. Indeed, the ambiguities surrounding the origins of the C3 had an impact on the very way in which it worked, leading to internal tensions. In addition, numerous external crises interfered with the Convention’s deliberations.

1.3.1. *An ambiguous launch: the governing committee, guarantors and mandate*

In early May 2019, meetings took place between the “self-proclaimed spokespeople” of the “Gilets citoyens collective” and the government – notably the Ministry for the Ecological and Solidarity Transition (MTES), with the aim of designing what the C3 should be, and negotiating as to the composition of its “governing committee”. The Chair of the governing committee was entrusted to Thierry Pech, the Managing Director of the think tank Terra Nova, and former editor of the magazine *Alternatives économiques*, but also a supporter of Emmanuel Macron in 2017 alongside the economist and contributor to that magazine, Jean Pisani-Ferry⁴⁰. Ferry’s daughter was recruited by Pech to be his assistant at the C3⁴¹. Following some negotiations, a Co-Chair was also appointed: Laurence Tubiana, a high-level civil servant and ambassador for the COP21 negotiations, who had, since 2017, been at the helm of the European Climate Foundation, after founding the think tank “*Institut du développement durable et des relations internationales*” (Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations

39 Gilets citoyens, Press release, 15 May 2019, p. 17.

40 Llorca, A. (2017). Stéphane Bern, Yohan Cabaye, Line Renaud : des dizaines de personnalités au meeting de Macron à Bercy. *LCI* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.lci.fr/elections/stephane-bern-yohan-cabaye-line-renaud-des-dizaines-de-personnalites-au-meeting-de-macron-a-bercy-2045254.html>.

41 Their position as actors involved in the organization of the C3, however, did not prevent them from publishing assessments and analyses of it. See: Pech, T. and Pisani-Ferry, C. (2020). Convention citoyenne pour le climat : Quelques enseignements pour l’avenir. *Terra Nova* [Online]. Available at: <https://tnova.fr/>; Pech, T. (2021). *Le Parlement des citoyens : La Convention citoyenne pour le climat*. Le Seuil, Paris.

– IDDRI) in 2001, which she headed until 2014. The Director of the IDDRI was appointed as an expert on the support group for the C3, and one of its members was part of the governing committee.

However, the Economic Social and Environmental Council (ESEC) was not completely sidelined. Of the fifteen “qualified personalities” making up the governing committee, seven were members of the ESEC. One of these, Julien Blanchet, a Vice-Chair of the ESEC and a former participant in the aforementioned Citizens Group, was appointed as General Rapporteur to the governing committee. This often gave the impression of a three-pronged Chairship, with Pech, Tubiana and Blanchet’s contributions in the plenary sessions often coming on the heels of one another. The strong presence of the ESEC was reminiscent of President Macron’s remarks on April 25 at the conclusion of the GDN:

Finally, I hope that this place of our fellow citizens in our democracy, which has been revitalized by this exercise, can also occur in the very necessary upcoming reform of the *Conseil économique social et environnemental* (ESEC) [...]. We shall reduce the number of its members, but alongside the powerful associative social and economic forces who are present, and bring the important subjects to the table, I hope we can have citizens, selected by lot, to join the ranks of this assembly, helping to make it fully representative of our diverse and vibrant society. Without further ado, I can announce that in June, we shall be randomly selecting 150 citizens to begin putting together this citizen participation council. It will be organized by the current ESEC before it is reformed, and we begin to innovate with the new work which I believe meets the deep-seated aspirations, and allows collective intelligence to be mobilized in a different way⁴².

The mission letter from the Prime Minister Édouard Philippe officially establishing the C3 was therefore addressed to the Chair of the ESEC, on July 2, 2019, indicating that the Convention’s mandate was:

To define the structural measures which would enable us, in keeping with the spirit of social justice, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030, with respect to the level in 1990. At the end of that work, the Convention shall publicly present the government and the President of the Republic with a report rendering an account of its discussions and all of the legislative and regulatory measures it has deemed necessary to achieve the target in terms of reducing

42 Press conference following the Grand debate national [Online]. Available at: <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2019/04/25/conference-de-presse-grand-debat-national>.

greenhouse gas emissions. Among the legislative measures, the Convention may highlight those which it feels should be submitted to popular verdict by referendum⁴³.

In addition to its three-pronged leadership, the governing committee was made up of twelve members divided into four groups, as shown by the C3's website⁴⁴. To begin with, there were three climate experts: Jean Jouzel, a paleo-climatologist, a member of the *Académie des sciences*, the IPCC, and an adviser to the ESEC; Anne-Marie Ducroux, Chair of the ESEC's Environmental Section; and Michel Colombier, co-founder and Scientific Director of the IDDRI. Then, there were three experts in participatory democracy: Mathilde Imer, presented as the "co-Chair of Démocratie Ouverte and founder of Gilets citoyens"; Loïc Blondiaux, Professor of Political Science; and Jean-Michel Fourniau, sociologist and Chair of the research consortium "Démocratie et Participation". The third group is described as bringing together "four experts in the economic and social fields", but what is not explicitly said is that this group was intended to reinforce the weight of the ESEC within the organization⁴⁵. Its members all belonged to the temporary commission "Ruptures and Transitions" linked to the aforementioned Citizen Group: Jean Grosset, financial administrator of the ESEC and head of the social dialog observatory of the Fondation Jean Jaurès (a social-democrat think tank); Dominique Gillier, one of the Vice-Chairs of the ESEC and head of the prospective mission for the CFDT (French Democratic Confederation of Labor, a trade-union center); Marie-Claire Martel, Chair of the Coordination des fédérations et associations de cultures (COFAC – Confederation of Cultural Associations) and adviser to the ESEC; and Catherine Tissot-Colle, representative of MEDEF (business interest group) and Vice-Chair of the ESEC's Environment Section. Finally, there were two "people appointed by the Minister for the Ecological Transition and Solidarity (MTES) for their expertise on the climate and participative processes": Léo Cohen, a former adviser to the MTES (from February 2016 to May 2017, and again from September 2018 to June 2019), notably in charge of piloting and establishing the C3 in the cabinet of the Minister of State until its launch in June 2019; and Ophélie Risler, Head of the Anti-Greenhouse-Effect Department within the Directorate General for Energy and Climate at the MTES.

43 Philippe, E. (2019). Lettre de mission du Premier ministre au CESE sur la Convention citoyenne pour le climat [Online]. Available at: <https://www.conventioncitoyennepourleclimat.fr/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/lettre-de-mission.pdf>.

44 Convention citoyenne pour le climat. (2020) Le comité de gouvernance [Online]. Available at <https://www.conventioncitoyennepourleclimat.fr/comite-gouvernance/> [Accessed 3 November 2020].

45 This was the view of numerous actors, which can be seen from their interviews.

Indeed, at the outset, the MTES, in the person of Minister François de Rugy, was heavily involved in the project, being a driving force. However, in the eyes of many, the governmental support was proof that the C3 was merely a ruse to bring in the carbon tax via the back door. The interventions by de Rugy and his Secretaries of State Brune Poirson and Emmanuelle Wargon⁴⁶ contributed to this view, the latter stating, for example, on the subject of the C3's 150 citizens: "We will ask them to think about whether we have done enough to bring about the ecological transition. If not, would a carbon tax be a good or a bad idea, and in what conditions?". In July 2019, the "lobster scandal" – i.e. the journal *Médiapart*'s revelations of de Rugy's luxurious spending out of the state pocket – led to the Minister's resignation⁴⁷. He was replaced by Élisabeth Borne, a close friend of Laurence Tubiana, as was explicitly stated in session 7. Borne addressed the C3 on no fewer than three occasions.

At the first session, the Prime Minister was also present, and in particular, was called upon to respond to questions, concerns and hopes in regard to a statement by the President which gave rise to a variety of interpretations: the phrase "no filter". Indeed, as the C3 website reminds readers, in his speech on April 25, "the President of the Republic undertook that the [C3's] legislative and regulatory proposals would be put forward, with 'no filter', either for a referendum, a Parliamentary vote, or direct application in the legislation"⁴⁸. Many Convention members and organizers understood the phrase to be an injunction to produce texts with the level of detail and thoroughness of a decree or a draft law, which would justify the significant role accorded to experts in the C3; sometimes, these experts went so far as to hold the pen, literally (see Chapter 8). In addition, this phrase is ambiguous because it left the following question open: who decides which proposals should be put to a referendum, to Parliament or implemented directly? However, some people understood "no filter" to mean that: "what the C3 proposes will be put into

46 Elkabbach, J.-P. (2019). L'interview d'Emmanuelle Wargon. *CNEWS* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.cnews.fr/emission/2019-07-09/linterview-demmanuelle-wargon-858788>;

Mouchon, F. and Torgemen, E. (2019). François de Rugy : "150 citoyens pourront proposer un avenir à la taxe carbone". *Le Parisien* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.leparisien.fr/societe/francois-de-rugy-150-citoyens-pourront-proposer-un-avenir-a-la-taxe-carbone-18-05-2019-8074893.php>; Rouquié, D. (2019). La Convention citoyenne décidera de la taxe carbone, selon Poirson. *Reuters* [Online]. Available at: <https://fr.reuters.com/article/france-environnement-taxe-idFRKCN1TR2VV-OF RTP>.

47 Arfi, F. (2019). La vie de château sur fonds publics des époux de Rugy. *Médiapart* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/100719/la-vie-de-chateau-sur-fonds-publics-des-epoux-de-rugy>.

48 Convention citoyenne pour le climat (2020). "Quel est leur rôle ?" [Online]. Available at: <https://www.conventioncitoyennepourleclimat.fr/quel-est-leur-role/> [Accessed 3 November 2020].

practice”, though this was not the intended meaning behind the statement (see Chapter 16). The issue of the entity with the power to decide upon the “transmission channel” (referendum, parliament or regulation) was the subject of a clash between the Prime Minister and one of the guarantors of the C3, Cyril Dion: the former stated that the government would choose, whereas the latter felt it should be the Convention itself⁴⁹.

Surprisingly, Dion managed to obtain an official position in the organization of the C3, as part of the “College of Guarantors”, being appointed by the Chair of the ESEC, in response to the demands of certain “Gilets citoyens”. The other two guarantors were Anne Frago, Director of the Department for Culture and Social Issues at the Assemblée nationale (House of Representatives), and Michèle Kadi, Honorary Director General of Services to the Senate. These latter two were respectively appointed by the Chairs of the parliamentary assemblies. Supposed to ensure that “the necessary conditions [were] met to ensure the independence of the Citizens’ Convention”⁵⁰, the guarantors, led by Dion, suggested substantial guidelines to the randomly selected citizens on several occasions, often in informal situations, and therefore without public scrutiny. Certain members of the governing committee did the same (see Chapter 8).

With respect to the citizen representatives, selection by random generation of telephone numbers began in late August 2019, under the auspices of the polling institute *Harris Interactive*, as was done for the regional citizens’ conferences during the GDN. In comparison to Ireland’s assemblies, there were more criteria regarding representativity – in total, six: gender, age, level of formal education, socioprofessional category, type of territory and geographic region⁵¹. However, no criterion of “attitude” was taken into account. Thus, the opinions of the members of the C3 differ on certain matters from those of the French population at large: the C3 members were notably more concerned about the climate, and less favorable to redistributive policies (see Chapters 5, 6 and 7). Conversely, for *Citizens’ Assembly UK*, which also dealt with climate change, attitude to the topic was used as a selection criterion. When making contact, the pollster asked the selected citizen what their “level of concern regarding climate change” was, so that the sample reflected trends within British society, which had been polled on the same question.

49 Observer’s notes, C3, session 1, Paris, 4 October 2019. This issue is central for mini-publics (see Courant 2022b).

50 Convention citoyenne pour le climat (2020). Les garants. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.conventioncitoyennepourleclimat.fr/les-garants/> [Accessed 3 November 2020].

51 Convention citoyenne pour le climat (2020). Comment ont-ils été sélectionnés ? [Online]. Available at: <https://www.conventioncitoyennepourleclimat.fr/comment-sont-ils-selectionnes-2/> [Accessed 3 November 2020].

1.3.2. *Evolution punctuated by crises*

Originally, the C3 was intended to conclude in January 2020, but unexpected events changed that. As happened in Ireland, and as often happens in mini-publics, the citizen representatives soon asked for more time for their deliberations (see Chapter 3) and the governing committee agreed, with the ESEC having to disburse the additional money needed (see Introduction). Session 1 took place on October 4–6, 2019 at the Palais d'Iéna. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Ecology were present, as were numerous journalists. In addition, the C3 had audiovisual equipment which, notably, meant that the majority of plenary sessions could be live streamed on YouTube, though certain parts of the sessions were not broadcast. This first session was dedicated to “observations about global warming”, with presentations given by Laurence Tubiana, who was both an organizer and a contributor, and the climate scientist Valérie Masson-Delmotte. However, there was a minor crisis during session 1: the polemic relayed in numerous newspapers regarding Catherine Tissot-Colle's presence on the governing committee. She worked as an adviser to the ESEC, where she represented MEDEF (a pro-business lobby), but she was also a lobbyist for the mining multinational Eramet, which is responsible for a great deal of environmental destruction⁵².

From session 1, the 150 citizens were divided into five thematic groups (TGs): “Housing”, “Transportation”, “Food”, “Producing and Working” and “Consumption”. The means by which they were distributed was the same as at the regional citizens' conferences as part of the GDN (Courant 2019b): as they arrived, the citizens drew badges from bags at random. In addition to having a blank space where the citizens could write in their first names, the badges had different-colored lines on them. Then, another public draw took place to assign each color a thematic group, with its selected facilitators⁵³. Facilitation was handled by the same firms as in the regional citizen conferences during the GDN – i.e. *Missions Publiques* and *Res Publica*, under the guidance of *Eurogroupe*. However, unlike in the regional conferences, the Convention did not have facilitators at the tables, with only two facilitators per thematic group of thirty citizens. This led to imbalances in the amount of time accorded to different speakers, with the experts being rather dominant (see Chapters 8, 9 and 10).

Sessions 2 and 3, respectively in late October and mid-November 2019, took place mainly in the thematic groups, with experts giving speeches outside of the plenary sessions, meaning that the citizen-representatives in different thematic

52 d'Allens, G. (2019). Une lobbyiste de la pollution au cœur de la Convention pour le climat. *Reporterre* [Online]. Available at: <https://reporterre.net/Une-lobbyiste-de-la-pollution-au-coeur-de-la-convention-pour-le-climat>.

53 Observer's notes, C3, session 1, Paris, October 2019.

groups did not hear the same information. The clearest moments of tension during these sessions came from two linked issues: the carbon tax (see Chapter 11) and the creation of a parallel group nicknamed the “squad”, whose mission was to discuss the tax and other “cross-cutting subjects”⁵⁴.

The December session was canceled, because the demonstrations and strikes in protest against the retirement reform had reached record levels – especially across the transport network. Session 4, held in January 2020, was marked by the attendance of Emmanuel Macron, who gave a speech and answered questions until late into the night, as he had done during the GDN. During this session, numerous citizens complained of the parallel operation of the “squad”. This group was constituted by a mixture of volunteering and random selection and attracted the “strong personalities” from the various Thematic Groups (TGs), which therefore suffered a derailment in the intensity of their debates and the quantity of their members. In addition, the “most interesting” and “controversial” issues seem, for the most part, to have fallen under the squad’s remit: the carbon tax, funding of the transition and economic issues, revision of the Constitution, and environmental protection. The initial commitment whereby members of the squad would continue to belong to their TG was not honored in practice. In the plenary session, citizens called for a vote on doing away with the squad⁵⁵. The governing committee refused to acquiesce, but organized a debate behind closed doors, without any researchers, journalists or cameras present, in the wake of which the squad was dissolved, but without a vote. Session 4 also saw the arrival of the support group (SG), made up of “in-house experts” who assisted the 150 citizens in their deliberations (see Chapter 10). The SG became increasingly active during session 5 in February 2020, which was marked by multiple interventions on the part of the experts, who even went so far as to dictate what should be written (see Chapter 8)⁵⁶.

Unlike the previous weekends, session 6, at the start of March 2020, took place almost entirely in a plenary session. Each of the TGs sent spokespeople to present the group’s recommendations to the 120 other citizens who did not take part in their drafting (see Chapter 8)⁵⁷. Strangely, this session was not broadcast at all, which poses a problem from the point of view of transparency. The following week, France declared lockdown to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Whilst each TG had one or two “webinars” between sessions previously, the approach of the end of the Convention’s work and the context of the pandemic caused that number to sharply increase. In addition, two further weekends of

54 Observer’s notes, C3, session 3, Paris, November 2019.

55 Observer’s notes, C3, session 4, Paris, January 2020.

56 Observer’s notes, C3, session 5, Paris, February 2020.

57 Observer’s notes, C3, session 6, Paris, March 2020.

deliberation were organized by the GC, remotely using the application Zoom. Known as “session 6bis” and “session 6ter”, these weekend sessions involving the majority of the “150” took place on April 3–4 and May 30–31, 2020. The practice of deliberation proved to be much more complicated online than face to face. In addition, the Co-Chairs of the governing committee (GC) and two experts from the Support Group (SG) closely managed the discussions, encouraging the citizens to immediately pass on some of their proposed measures to the government, whilst stating that the final vote would indeed take place in June, in person⁵⁸. In the wake of a complicated vote, the citizens agreed to that request, but refused to allow the same proposals to be disclosed to the press. However, there was a leak, and the press published the proposals (see Chapter 4). This session 6bis exacerbated the tensions between the two “factions” within the GC, with the group of ESEC councilors expressing their disapproval of the practices of the “group of co-chairs”, which the councilors deemed manipulative. The aim of session 6ter was to firm up the agenda for the final session⁵⁹.

The last session, number 7, took place on June 19–21, 2020, in person at the Palais d'Iéna. With a very low level of deliberation, it was a rapid succession of votes, with the possibility of prior argumentation in favor of and against limited to five minutes for each of the packets of measures. Indeed, the measures were not voted on individually, but as a series of “packages”, which attracted protest and debate within the assembly. Finally, all of the groups of measures were accepted with very large majorities, with two exceptions: the proposal to reduce the speed limit to 110 km/h on national highways passed but by a lesser margin, and the proposal to reduce working time to 28 hours was rejected by a few votes. The question of the appropriacy of submitting certain measures to a referendum led to heated debate, culminating in rejection, except for the two proposals to revise articles of the Constitution and to officially establish the crime of ecocide⁶⁰. Finally, it was not 150 but 160 citizens who voted, as the GC, fearing absenteeism, had appointed deputies early on in the process, thus taking the C3's headcount beyond the “150” so often cited in the Convention's communications (see Chapter 5). The Minister for Ecology gave the closing speech at the session.

The following week, on June 29, President Macron received “The 150”, including the facilitators and the GC, in the gardens of the Élysée. Six spokespeople for the Convention took it in turns to give brief speeches, before Macron's own address, congratulating the citizens on their work. However, the President pulled “three jokers” from his sleeve, which he falsely claimed he had previously stated

58 Observer's notes, C3, session 6bis, remote, April 2020.

59 Observer's notes, C3, session 6ter, remote, May 2020.

60 Observer's notes, C3, session 7, remote, June 2020. The tension between direct and deliberative democracy is a general issue for mini-publics (see Courant 2022b).

might be a possibility. He officially rejected three of the proposals: “the idea of limiting speed to 110 km/h on national highways or imposing a 4% tax on corporate profits over €10 million, [and...] rewriting the preamble of the Constitution to state that ‘the conciliation of rights, freedoms and principles must not compromise the protection of the environment, which is the shared heritage of all humanity’”⁶¹. Less directly, he expressed his desire to amend the measures aimed at limiting domestic flights, including environmental defense in Article 1 of the Constitution, and making ecocide a criminal offense.

Subsequently, meetings between the citizen-representatives and the government, but also with various intermediary bodies, began to take place at a frenetic rate (see Chapter 16)⁶². Many of the C3’s proposals were left by the wayside, attacked or rejected by the government and lobby groups over the course of the next few months:

It seems that 18 of the 146 proposals – i.e. 12% – have been taken up unchanged. Aside from the three measures that were rejected outright by the Élysée, 23 other proposals are absent from the executive’s action, and have not been carried forward. Finally, the large majority of the measures (78, or 53%) have been partly carried forward⁶³.

In February 2021, there was a final session: session 8, dubbed the “(citizens’) response to the (government’s) response”, enabling the citizens to render harsh judgement on the government’s heeding of their proposed measures, which was felt to be insufficient, whilst affirming their desire to see more citizens’ assemblies in

61 Pietralunga, P.C. (2020). Deux référendums, plan de 15 milliards d’euros, les 110 km/h écartés... Les propositions d’Emmanuel Macron sur le climat. *Le Monde* [Online]. Available at: https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/live/2020/06/29/suivez-en-direct-les-annonces-d-emmanuel-macron-apres-la-convention-citoyenne-pour-le-climat_6044557_823448.html.

62 Observatoire des multinationales (2021). Lobbys contre citoyens. Qui veut la peau de la convention climat. *Observatoire des multinationales* [Online]. Available at: https://multinationales.org/IMG/pdf/rapp_2.pdf; Binctin, B. (2021). Comment les lobbys industriels ont saboté les réformes voulues par les citoyens de la Convention climat. *Basta!* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.bastamag.net/Convention-citoyenne-pour-le-climat-150-propositions-loi-lobbys-industriels-Emmanuel-Macron>.

63 Garric, A. et al. (2021). Que sont devenues les propositions de la Convention pour le climat, qu’Emmanuel Macron s’était engagé à reprendre “sans filtre” ? *Le Monde*. Also see: d’Allens, G. (2020). Face à Macron, les citoyens de la Convention pour le climat se rebiffent. *Reporterre* [Online]. Available at: <https://reporterre.net/Face-a-Macron-les-citoyens-de-la-Convention-pour-le-climat-se-rebiffent; #SansFiltre>. “Sans filtre”. <https://sansfiltre.les150.fr/> [Accessed 12 May 2021].

the future (see Chapter 16). Paradoxically, then, the participants were disappointed with the C3 but optimistic about deliberative devices in general.

1.4. Conclusion

The genesis of the C3 was a process resulting from the momentary coalition of very different actors. From the French government's point of view, it was a way of dealing with the political crisis it was facing at the time – in particular, the Gilets jaunes protests and the climate marches. Also of note was the particularly positive result obtained by the Green party in the spring 2019 European Parliament elections. The original plan was for the C3 to conclude just before the spring 2020 municipal elections. It may be imagined that this would have lent the incumbent majority a positive image, in both ecological and democratic terms. For the participation professionals and the “sortition activists” (Courant 2020; 2022a; 2022b), the C3 was the opportunity to spotlight their ideas in favor of a more deliberative form of democracy, and to gain legitimacy and publicity. For the ecological activists, who certainly had mixed feelings about it (see Chapter 13), this mini-public was a means of gaining media coverage for their causes and putting their proposals to the citizens selected at random, which would give them visibility and greater political weight. For the ESEC, the Convention was one more step toward establishing itself as the “chamber for citizen participation”, although its advisers did not appreciate the lack of control over the process, due to the weight of the members on the governing committee who were not from the ESEC – notably its two Co-Chairs. Nevertheless, the ESEC emerged with a victory, being given organizational control of the new Citizens' Convention on End of Life, launched in 2022.

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