



Urban Transitions 2024

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Submission ID

602

Title (required)

Engaging Communities in Sustainability Transitions: Insights from Misono Climate Assembly in Saitama, Japan

Abstract (required)

The need for systemic transitions to achieve sustainability has become increasingly evident, necessitating bottom-up solutions that address real, local needs and incorporate citizen participation within the framework of current democratic regimes where citizens enjoy the freedom of choice. One innovative approach to this challenge is climate assemblies, which have gained traction in countries like France and the UK and are now spreading to cities globally. These assemblies are characterized by the random selection of citizens to create “mini-publics” that can effectively capture citizens’ perspectives on climate change through deliberation.

These assemblies, however, have been adopted at the nationwide and city-wide levels. In exploring community-level solutions for climate change, the framework of climate assemblies may also be useful to encourage behavioral changes. This study focuses on a climate assembly at the Urawa-Misono neighborhood in Saitama, Japan, a suburban area developed in 2007 and notable for its predominantly young family demographic. To represent the community accurately, eighteen individuals were selected based on age, gender, and home address balance. Throughout three meetings, participants received experts’ input and deliberated on local solutions for mitigation and adaptation.

The primary outcome of this initiative was the promotion of practical solutions to integrate the climate agenda within the community through methods such as gamification. These solutions were mostly pragmatic rather than technically complex, aiming to nudge residents towards more sustainable behaviors. The presentation will also include an analysis of the similarities and differences between this initiative and other climate assemblies in Japan, alongside a survey of participants’ post-meeting feedback.

By examining this case study, the presentation aims to shed light on how local, community-driven climate assembly can be effectively implemented and sustained, contributing to the broader goal of achieving systemic sustainability transitions through participatory democracy.

Author Approval (required)

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Categories (required)

6 Engagement, impacts and Education: 6.2 Community participation in planning

Keywords

climate assembly, Japan, mini-publics, sustainability transition

Preferred Presentation (required)

Oral

Author will attend (required)

I confirm that at least one author will register in full to attend and present the paper at the Conference

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Engaging communities in sustainability transitions:

Insights from Misono Climate Assembly in Saitama, Japan

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Climate Assemblies

- Mini-publics style forum for deliberating on climate change policies
 - Based on the citizen's assembly model
 - Participants recruited from randomly sampled citizens
- Beginning:
 - Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat (2019-2020)
 - Climate Assembly UK (2020)
- Spread to other nations and municipalities across Europe

KNOCA's climate assemblies map



<https://www.knoc.eu/climate-assemblies>

Climate Assemblies in Japan

- First experimental assembly in Sapporo City by researchers in 2020
- First municipality-organized assembly in Musashino City (Tokyo) in 2022
- As of Nov. 1, 2024, twenty assemblies has been organized in Japan.



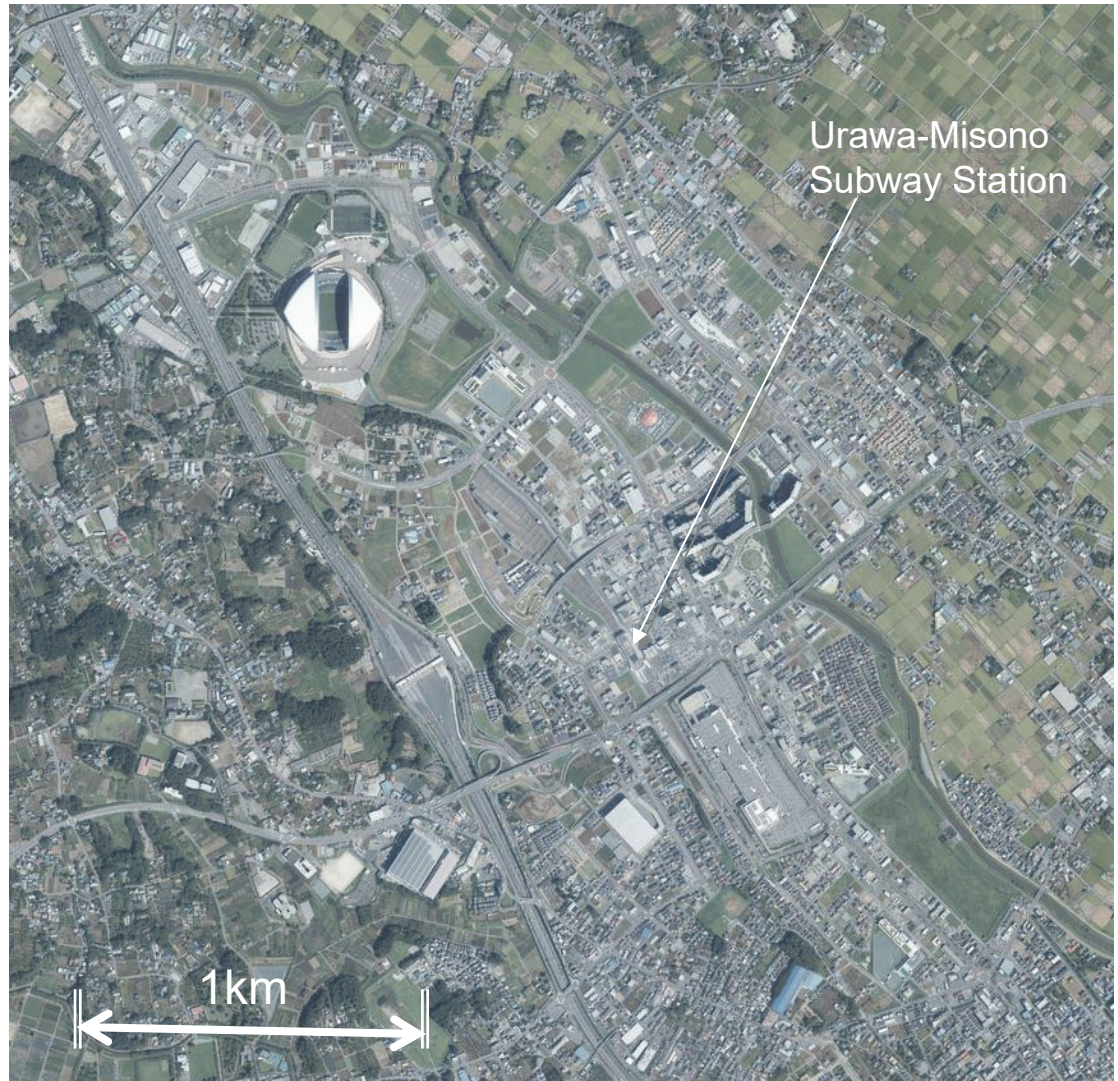
Misono Climate Assembly

- An experimental process in 2023/2024
 - Organized jointly by a local community development corporation (Misono Town Management) and a university research team (Meiji University)
- Focus on a **neighborhood-level planning**
 - First of such kind in Japan



About Urawa-Misono Neighborhood

- 3km x 2km area
- Population: 23k
- Households: 9.5k
- Around Urawa-Misono station
 - Last stop of a subway line from Tokyo
- Typical “new town”:
mostly young family households
commuting to Tokyo,
migrating to the area
in recent years



Inviting participants

- Distributed flyers to all households in the area
 - Using “posting” service (door-to-door direct mailing)
 - Not a random-sampling procedure
- 64 individuals responded
- 16 initial participants selected
 - In proportion to the each sub-district’s population, age, and gender
 - One additional middle school student invited
 - One participant replaced by another in the middle of the process
- Remuneration: JPY 5,000 per meeting (EUR 30).

Misono2050 12月～2月 全3回の会議です
1回ごとに5,000円を
参加いただいた方に
お支払いします

みその気候市民会議
参加者大募集!

・世界中で石油、石炭、天然ガスなどの「炭素」を燃やして、二酸化炭素を大量に排出しているため、地球全体の平均気温が上昇しています。
・平均気温が上昇すると、世界各地で異常気象（猛暑、集中豪雨、干ばつなど）が起きやすくなります。浦和・美園駅周辺地区でも影響が出る可能性は十分にありまます。
・みその気候市民会議では、浦和・美園駅周辺地区の「脱炭素」に向けて、浦和・美園駅周辺地区に関わるいろいろな組織や人々がこれから実行する具体的な対策を考え、対話します。

気候市民会議は「浦和・美園駅周辺地区にお住まいのみなさま」の会議です。
意識が高くなくても、専門知識が全くなくても、大丈夫。
美国にお住まいの「個人」として3回すべての会議にご参加いただける方を募集します。

みその気候市民会議の日程・内容
3回の会議を2023年12月2日（土）、2024年1月20日（土）、2024年2月10日（土）の3日間、いずれも午前9時～正午に、浦和・美園駅西口駅前のアーバンデザインセンターみそで開催。
参加者には気候変動についての講義を聴いていただいた後、浦和・美園駅周辺地区で「やるべきこと」について、少人数のグループでお話しいただきます（各テーブルに進行役がつきますのでご安心ください）。
（※事前に資料を配布して「予習」をお願いすることもあります。）

参加者募集について
浦和・美園駅周辺地区に居住している15歳以上の方で、3回ともご参加いただけた方を募集します（※すでに予定が入っている方はご遠慮願います）。
応募者多数の場合、年齢・性別等ごとに抽選で選ばれた方のみご参加いただけます（定員12名の予定）。
ご参加いただいた方には、各回5,000円（3回で15,000円）の謝礼をお支払いします（※支払方法は本人名義の銀行口座振込のみです）。
お申し込みは<https://forms.gle/QQLN4x573X2pvKFGA>で受付中!（2023年11月5日（日）まで）

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Processes

	Date/Time	Themes	Participants
#1	2/12/2023 9:00-12:00	Understanding climate change (impacts and policies)	17
#2	20/1/2024 9:00-12:00	Brainstorming possible solutions in Urawa-Misono neighborhood	16
#3	10/2/2024 9:00-12:00	Summarizing proposals	17

- Technical information provided by a nationally well-known scholar and a prefecture-based research institute
- 3 subgroups
- Facilitated by organizers' members



Recommendations

- Four areas: Mobility, Housing/Buildings, Lifestyle, and Disaster prevention
- Focusing on local issues at specific locations →
 - Roof-covered walkways near the train station, opening a new bus line between specific locations...
⇒ **Based on the local needs**
- Adopting gamification schemes
 - Apps to reward walking, fireworks for celebrating carbon reduction...
⇒ **Based on the interests of “average citizens”**



Following the assembly's recommendations, a roof-covered picnic table is installed in a neighborhood park.

Participant evaluations

- Number of respondents: 16 (9 males, 7 females)
- **High-level of participants' commitment**
 - Participation in the realization of proposals: 87.5% of participants expressed a desire to do so.
 - Many people thought that the Climate Assembly would be useful in forming policies in Urawa-Misono (75% answered "yes").
 - The percentage of people who thought that participating in activities aimed at realizing citizen-proposed initiatives would help raise public awareness of climate change was higher than in other regions (100 % answered "yes").
- **High-level of diversity** (even with this small-size engagement)
 - “Citizens with a variety of opinions participated” -> 87.5%
 - “People with diverse values and perspectives participated” -> 87.5%
 - In the free-form comments, participants commented that they were able to interact with people of different generations and people they don't usually have contact with.

Key takeaways for future citizen engagements in planning

- **Possibilities:** Engaging citizens in discussing a *global issue* (climate change) at the community level.
- **Recruitment:** Insuring diversity by *mini-publics* style recruiting (informing all households, selection by address/age/gender, providing remuneration).
- **Effectiveness:** Generating *highly specific* action proposals at the local level.

Thank you for listening! Any questions/comments?



And I'd like to thank again all members of the Misono Climate Assembly!

The Misono Climate Assembly project was supported by JSPS Grants-in-