

# Challenges of Climate Citizens' Assembly in Suginami

19 December 2025  
Kenji Asakawa

LCS-RNet 16th Annual Meeting



# Topics

1. Introduction: The "Suginami Experiment"
2. The Core Challenge: Avoiding the "Echo Chamber"
3. Methodology: From Information to Inspiration
4. Key Recommendations from the Participants
5. Impact & Lessons Learned

## Support the Guardian

Fund independent journalism with \$13 per month

Support us →

# The Guardian

News Opinion Sport Culture Lifestyle More

World Europe US Americas Asia Australia Middle East Africa Inequality Global development

### Japan

This article is more than 1 year old

## 'Dominated by old men': Tokyo ward's first female mayor takes on status quo

Satoko Kishimoto sets sights on 'radical change' in Japan, where only 2% of local government leaders are women



Satoko Kishimoto, the new mayor of Tokyo's Sugunami district: 'I thought something had to change.' Photograph: Asia Europe People's Forum/YouTube

### Justin McCurry in Tokyo

Thu 21 Jul 2022 10:09 BST

Share

The first female mayor of a district in Tokyo has vowed to challenge Japan's male-dominated politics, weeks after she became one of only two women leading municipalities in the Japanese capital.

Satoko Kishimoto was elected mayor of Sugunami ward last month to become

# Green New Deal for Sugunami

## The female mayor in Tokyo fighting Japan's sexist attitudes

7 March 2023



Satoko Kishimoto was elected mayor of Sugunami last June - the district's first ever female leader

### By Shaimaa Khalil

BBC Tokyo correspondent

Satoko Kishimoto finds running one of Tokyo's main districts to be a lonely job.

## 1. Introduction

# Why Suginami needs the CCA?

"Moving from symbolic participation to substantive impact"

Problems with Conventional Methods:

*"Why do most citizen assemblies produce recommendations that look exactly like existing administrative plans?"*

Background: Often in the CCAs, participants simply 'copy and paste' what experts say.

Our Challenge: Avoid this “Echo Chamber”, by bridging the gap between expert data/information and the 'lived experience' of citizens.



**The Four Core Philosophies** of the Suginami Model

## 2. The Core Challenge

# The Logical Flow of **4 Core Philosophies**

1. Bridging the gap between expert knowledge and lived experience (Input/Learning process)
2. **Ownership** through deliberation (Process)
3. Avoiding the '**copy-paste**' of administrative plans (Output)
4. Moving from **symbolic participation** to **substantive impact** (Substantive change)

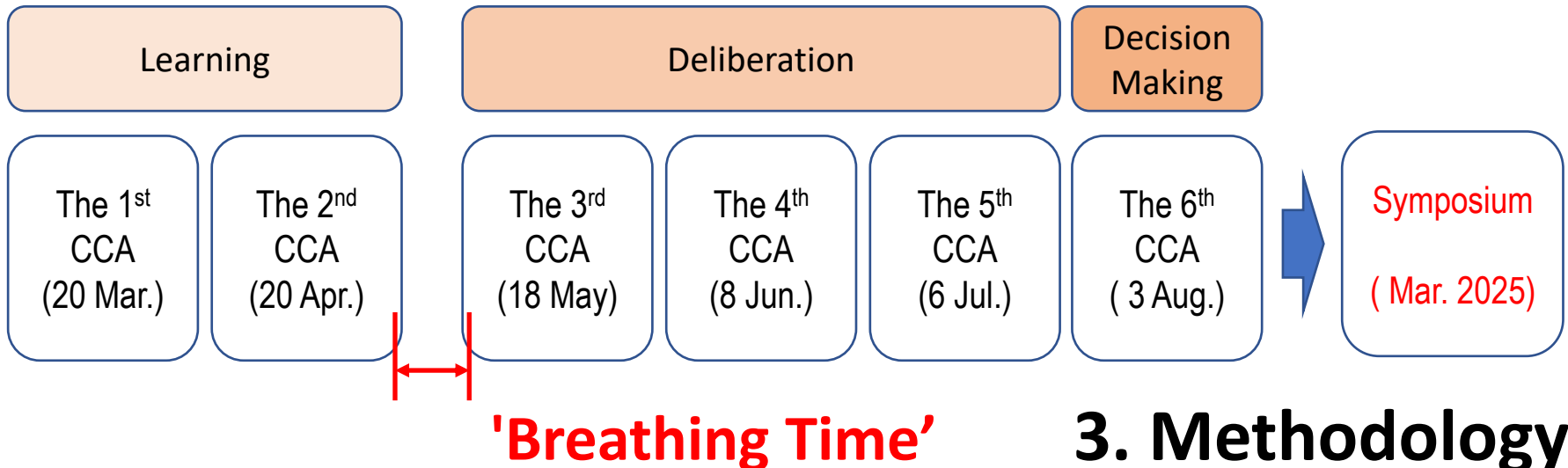
## 3. Methodology

# Designing for 'Ownership'

- Inspiration over Information
- 'Breathing Time'
- Strategic Ambition

# Outline of Suginami CCA

- Participants: 77
  - Invitations were sent to 5,000 randomly selected residents out of 570,000 inhabitants,
  - 199 responded (4%) and were selected to be representative on the actual gender ratio, age structure and residential area of the ward.
- Sectors: 4 (Energy, Transport, Circular society and Urban Green)
- Process



## 3. Methodology

# From Information to Inspiration (Mindset Building to foster **Ownership**)

The 'Five Steps' to Foster Ownership" → Knowledge curation process in Suginami

- ① Why must we address climate change at the local level?
- ② Why must the current generation bear the burden for the sake of future generations?
- ③ Why use a "Citizens' Assembly", instead of administration or local assembly, to discuss Suginami's climate strategy?
- ④ Why is it necessary for Suginami residents to take the lead in taking action?
- ⑤ How will Suginami-Ward Office actually treat the recommendations made by this assembly?

9:15	15 分	なぜわたしたちは、気候変動問題に取り組まないといけないの 江守正多 東京大学未来ビジョン研究センター教授/ 国立環境研究所上級主席研究員
9:30	10 分	わたしにとっての気候変動問題：若者世代からのメッセージ 芝崎瑞穂 Change Our Next Decade 代表理事/ 北海道大学大学院文学院 博士後期課程
9:40	10 分	なんで気候区民会議をやるの？：ミニ・パブリックスの意義 三上直之 名古屋大学大学院環境学研究科 社会環境学専攻 教授
9:50	20 分	グループで意見交換：感想の共有
10:10	5 分	意見交換のポイントの共有（グループファシリテーターより）
10:15	10 分	環境先進都市杉並を目指して：ゼロカーボン社会を創造しよう 岸本聡子 杉並区長
10:25	5 分	質疑応答

*Inspiration talk from  
the younger generation.*

*Time for 'Emotional Reflection' separated  
from 'Logical Deliberation'.*



## 3. Methodology



# Impactful recommendations

**Waste:** Citizens didn't just talk about recycling. **They questioned the very definition of 'waste'** and proposed a ward-wide composting system.

- *Media Response: Tokyo Shinbun highlighted how a single resident's realization—"Is food waste not a resource?"—moved the local government to start studying composting.*

**Energy:** they proposed '**Suginami Power**'—a local energy company to ensure resilience and local circularity.

**Mobility:** they suggested **bold ideas like aerial walkways or ropeways** to solve local transit gaps. These ideas were 'unfiltered' and 'ambitious'.

*Media Response to overall: Asahi Shinbun recognized Suginami as one of the first successful cases of implementing the European Citizens' Assembly model at a Japanese local level.*

## 4. Key Recommendations from the Participants

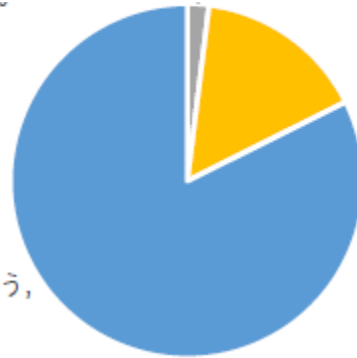
98% of participants felt a high level of satisfaction

えない, 1名, 2%

全くそう思わない, 0名, 0%

ややそう思う,  
8名, 16%

とてもそう思う,  
42名, 82%



## Questionnaire survey

93% of participants felt outputs from the group discussion were reflected to the recommendation

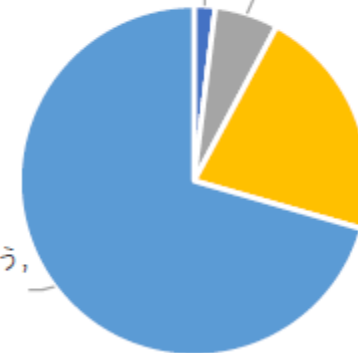
全くそう思わない, 1名, 2%

どちらともいえない, 3名, 6%

あまりそう思わない,  
0名, 0%

ややそう思う,  
11名, 21%

とてもそう思う,  
36名, 71%



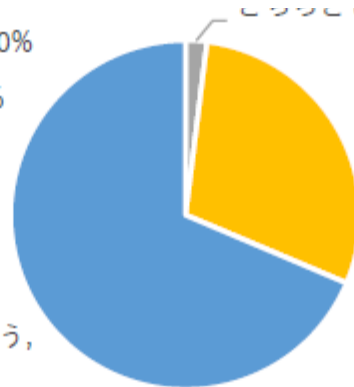
89% of participants expressed a strong desire to stay actively engaged in driving Suginami's climate action initiatives forward even after the assembly concluded."

あまりそう思わない, 0名, 0%

全くそう思わない, 0名, 0%

ややそう思う,  
15名, 29%

とてもそう思う,  
35名, 69%



## 5. Impact & Lessons Learned

**Thank you very much**

asakawa@iges.or.jp