
Representing citizens' interests in climate, energy, and urban development politics

Karin Fossheim

PSI Climate seminar

October 31, 2024



Overview of presentation

- Political representation in climate and energy politics
 - What is political representation?
 - Elected and non-elected representatives
 - Non-elected representatives and their role in policymaking
- The risks and potential of including non-elected representatives in climate and energy policymaking

What is political representation?

A changing understanding of representation

From	To
A principal-agent relationship	A dynamic, interactive, and deliberative relationship
Territorially defined who is represented	Constantly changing who is represented
Representatives respond to the represented predefined interests	The representatives and the represented shape each other's interests
An outcome of elections	An outcome of a process of mutual adjustments

(see, among others Castiglione & Warren, 2019; Urbinati & Warren, 2008; Pitkin, 1967; Saward, 2010)

Representation

- View political representation as:
 - The making, revising and remaking of representative *claims* to stand for someone or something put forth by *state* (i.e. elected representatives) and *non-state* (i.e. non-elected representatives) actors before a decision-making authority (Guasti & Geissel, 2019; Montanaro, 2017, p. 37, Saward, 2010).



Elected and non-elected representatives



The representative

*“It is obvious that **we** can achieve better policy [...] in opposition than in **government** given these premises. Accepting these [premises] would disappoint **those concerned with climate change and environmental protection**”.*

(Audun Lysbakken,
the Socialist Left Party, September 29, 2021,
[Aftenposten.no](https://www.aftenposten.no))

The represented interests



*“Climate and environmental action in both the present and the future shapes and concerns many in **my generation**. It affects the choices **we** make, and we often feel alone”.*

(Penelope Lea,
UNICEF Norway,
2021)

*“**We** have tried to propose [...] carbon capture and storage (CCS) [to the government]. It is important to have this in place for the **smelting and waste incineration industry**”*

(Frederic Hauge, CEO Bellona, October 13, 2021, E24).

*“[...] **the petroleum industry** has a leading responsibility in tackling climate change, and **we** [the petroleum industry] are doing that”*

(Anders Opedal, CEO Equinor, May 26, 2021, E24).

*“You are failing **us**. But the **young people** are starting to understand your betrayal. The eyes of all **future generations** are upon you. And if you choose to fail us, **I** say: We will never forgive you”*

(Greta Thunberg,
U.N. Climate Action Summit,
2019)



Non-elected representatives and their role in policymaking

Collaborative governance

- An increasingly common strategy used by governments to address climate change (Hofstad et. al., 2020).
- Involves *public* and/or *private actors* collaborating to define problems and *co-create* new policies and innovative solutions (Ansell and Torfing, 2021).
 - Co-create need-based solutions to help achieve ambitious reductions in CO2 emissions (Sørensen and Torfing, 2022).
 - The participating private actors are often the *non-elected representatives* (Fossheim, 2022a; 2022b; Marquardt et. al., 2024).

Forms of collaborative governance in climate policymaking

- Deliberative mini-publics e.g., Climate citizens assemblies (Ainscough and Willis, 2024; Sandover et. al., 2021).
- Collaborative arrangements e.g., Climate council / committees / commissions / networks (Fossheim, 2022a; 2022b; Hofstad et. al., 2020).
- Climate planning (Davies and Hgel, 2021; Vogel et. al., 2021)



Norwegian Citizen's Assembly

- 66 participating citizens acting as non-elected representatives of “the public” (Ministry of digitalization and public governance, 2024).
- Mandate, recommendations to the government on:
 - How can we reduce overconsumption while maintaining a high quality of life and in an inclusive and fair way?
 - What is needed for us to consume less textiles, shoes, electronics, furniture, and equipment for home and leisure by 2030?



Business for Climate Network

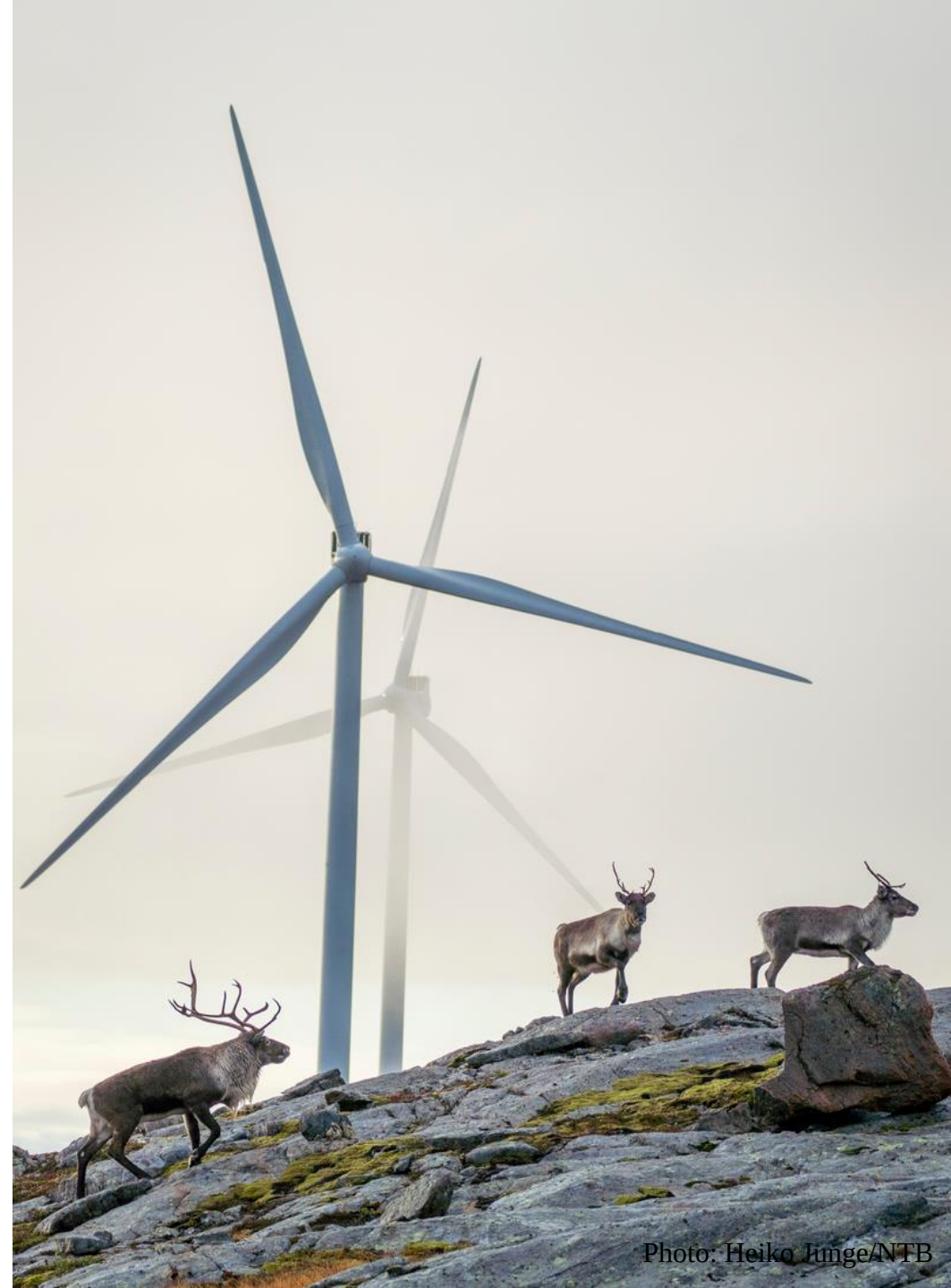
- 130 private businesses and interest groups acting as non-elected representatives off “the industry”, future generations, and their partners and customers (Hofstad et. al., 2020).
- Purpose:
 - Create a collaborative arena for dialogue between the municipality and the private sector to mobilise businesses and other organizations to contribute to achieving Oslo’s 2030 emission targets (Oslo municipality, 2024).



The risks and potential of including non-elected representatives in climate and energy policymaking

The risks of non-elected representatives

- Wrongful representation of the interests of those affected by political decisions.
- Political discussions can become biased, leading to policies that fail to reflect the public's interests (Montanaro, 2017).
 - Non-elected representatives might represent self-interests or skew representation towards the more resourceful among those affected e.g., the case of the wind farm in Fosen, Norway?



How to avoid these risks?

- Ensure democratically legitimate representation through evidence of sufficient *acceptance* of what is represented by those represented (Saward, 2010, p. 145).
- Representatives' democratic legitimacy depends on *practices* that allow those being represented to decide whether they support or reject the representative (Montanaro, 2019).



Authorisaiton

- Approval by the represented (Montanaro, 2017).
 - *Followership* e.g., participation in global school strikes.
 - *Membership* in nongovernmental organisations such as Greenpeace or Natur og Ungdom.
 - *Direct contact* such as private discussions, conversations, letters, or comments on social media discussions (Fossheim, 2022a; 2022b; Fossheim and Vollaard, 2022; van de Bovenkamp & Vollaard, 2018).



Accountability

- Representatives account for their actions to the represented (Montanaro, 2017).
 - Providing *publicly available information* such as publishing climate reports, information on websites or newsletters.
 - *Meetings* such as organising climate conferences or hosting an event at for example Arendelsuka.
- An emphasis on information sharing and ongoing dialogue (Fossheim, 2022a; 2022b; Fossheim and Vollaard, 2022; van de Bovenkamp & Vollaard, 2018).

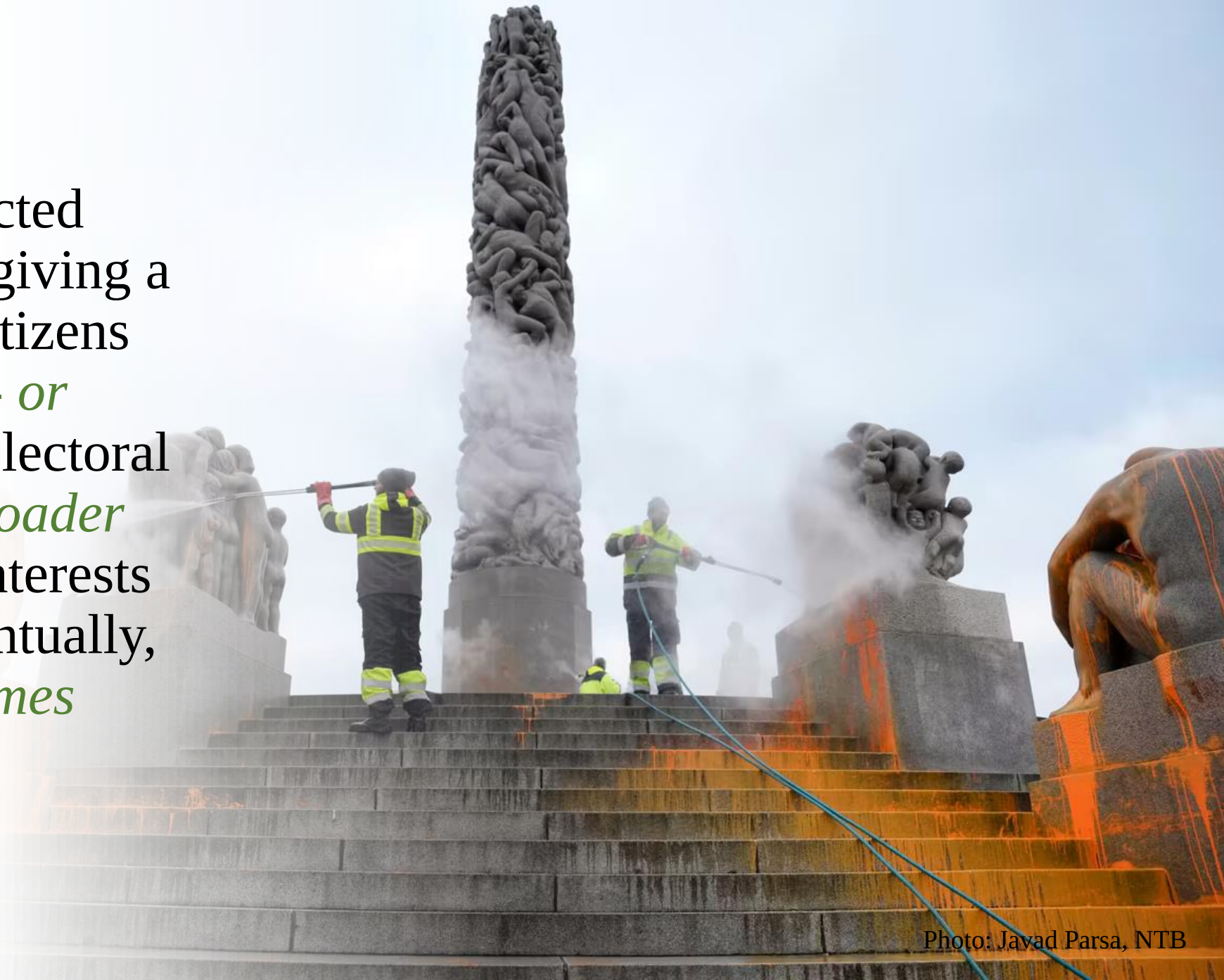


The potential of non-elected representatives

- Democratically legitimate non-elected representatives can account for (Montanaro, 2017; Urbinati and Warren, 2008):
 - limitation in representation because of territorial boundaries, e.g., representing vulnerable groups affected by climate change outside national borders such as Oxfam.
 - slow response to new, emerging or marginalised interests, e.g., Greta Thunberg emerged because of politicians lacking response to the climate crises.
 - new citizens demands who are voting less but engaging more in other forms, e.g., climate strikes.

Supplement the elected representatives by giving a political voice to citizens who may be *under- or misrepresented* in electoral arenas, ensuring *broader representation* of interests in politics, and eventually, *better policy outcomes*

(Montanaro, 2017; Severs, 2020).



To summarise

- Non-state actors, including climate activists, experts, and environmental organisations (NGOs), play a representative role in climate and energy politics.
 - These non-elected representatives are often invited to collaborate with public actors to define problems and co-create new policies and innovative solutions aimed at achieving ambitious reductions in CO₂ emissions.
- When democratically legitimate, these non-elected representatives can supplement elected officials, ultimately strengthening representative democracy.

Thank you for your attention!

karin.fossheim@psykologi.uio.no

References

- Ainscough, J., & Willis, R. (2024). Embedding deliberation: Guiding the use of deliberative mini-publics in climate policy-making. *Climate Policy*, 24(6), 828–842. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2024.2303337>
- Creasy, A., Lane, M., Owen, A., Howarth, C., & Horst, D. van der. (2021). Representing ‘Place’: City Climate Commissions and the Institutionalisation of Experimental Governance in Edinburgh. *Politics and Governance*, 9(2), 64–75. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v9i2.3794>
- Davies, A. R., & Hügel, S. (2021). Just Adapt: Engaging Disadvantaged Young People in Planning for Climate Adaptation. *Politics and Governance*, 9(2), 100–111.
- de Wilde, P. (2019). The quality of representative claims: Uncovering a weakness in the defence of the liberal world order. *Political Studies*, 68(2), 271–292. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321719845199>
- Fossheim, K. (R&R). Authorised, Accountable, and Autonomous? A Comparison of Elected and Non-Elected Representatives and Their Potential for Democratic Legitimacy. *Scandinavian Political Studies*.
- Fossheim, K. (2022a). How can non-elected representatives secure democratic representation? *Policy & Politics*, 50(2), 243–260. <https://doi.org/10.1332/030557321X16371011677734>
- Fossheim, K. (2022b). The Responsibility of an Audience: Assessing the Legitimacy of Non-elected Representatives in Governance Networks. *Representation*, 58(2), 211–227. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2021.1933150>
- Fossheim, K., & Vollaard, H. (2022). Determining the Democratic Quality of Non-Electoral Representation in Local State–Society Networks. In B. Egner, H. Heinelt, J. Lysek, P. Silva, & F. Teles (Eds.), *Perspectives on Local Governance Across Europe: Insights on Local State-Society Relations* (pp. 63–84). Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-15000-5_4

- Hofstad, H., Sørensen, E., Torfing, J., & Vedeld, T. (2022). Designing and leading collaborative urban climate governance: Comparative experiences of co-creation from Copenhagen and Oslo. *Environmental Policy and Governance*, 32(3), 203–216. <https://doi.org/10.1002/eet.1984>
- Marquardt, J., Lövbrand, E., & Buhre, F. (2024). The Politics of Youth Representation at Climate Change Conferences: Who Speaks, Who Is Spoken of, and Who Listens? *Global Environmental Politics*, 24(2), 19–45. https://doi.org/10.1162/glep_a_00736
- Ministry of Digitalisation and Public Governance, 2024. <https://folkepanel.regjeringen.no/>
- Montanaro, L. (2017). *Who elected Oxfam? A democratic defense of self-appointed representatives*. Cambridge University Press.
- Montanaro, L. (2019). Who Counts as a Democratic Representative? On Claims of Self-Appointed Representation. In D. Castiglione & J. Pollak (Eds.), *Creating Political Presence: The New Politics of Democratic Representation* (pp. 186–203). Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press.
- Pitkin, H. (1967). *The Concept of Representation*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- Sandover, R., Moseley, A., & Devine-Wright, P. (2021). Contrasting Views of Citizens’ Assemblies: Stakeholder Perceptions of Public Deliberation on Climate Change. *Politics and Governance*, 9(2), 76–86. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v9i2.4019>
- Saward, M. (2010). *The Representative claim* (1st ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Sørensen, E., & Torfing, J. (2022). Co-creating ambitious climate change mitigation goals: The Copenhagen experience. *Regulation & Governance*, 16(2), 572–587. <https://doi.org/10.1111/regg.12374>
- Vogel, C., Nkrumah, B., Kosciulek, D., Lebea, D., Booth, T., & Brown, M. (2022). ‘Empowering youth as change agents for climate change in South Africa’: Challenges, caveats and course corrections. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 25(6), 812–832. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2022.2046259>
- Oslo municipality, 2024. <https://www.oslo.kommune.no/miljo-og-klima/naring-for-klima/#toc-1>