



Exploring transformative social innovations for a wellbeing economy: insights from citizens' juries in Vienna and Oxford

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Abstract The Wellbeing Economy has emerged as an alternative development approach that focuses on human and ecological wellbeing instead of material growth, but its implementation, particularly at the local level, remains underexplored. This paper argues that Democratic Innovations as specific forms of Transformative Social Innovations can help operationalise the Wellbeing Economy by fostering participatory, place-based interventions. Transformative Social Innovations can challenge, alter, or replace dominant institutions in specific socio-material contexts. However, their transformative impact and ability to change institutional configurations is hampered if their inherent ‘paradoxes’ are not adequately addressed.

Using the cases of citizens' juries in Vienna and Oxford, the paper examines how Democratic Innovations align normative visions, enable mechanisms of exchange, and operationalise transformative change to achieve more just governance outcomes. We highlight whether, and how, these deliberative democratic processes contribute to a Wellbeing Economy in place and how they dealt with their paradoxes and contradictions. Our findings indicate the relevance of socio-material, political-institutional, and cultural-discursive contexts for these types of innovations. We thus contribute to a more nuanced understanding of transformative impact for wellbeing in place and argue that Transformative Social Innovations can help bridge the gap between global and abstract notions of a Wellbeing Economy and local implementation if their paradoxes and contradictions are adequately considered.

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Transformative soziale Innovationen für eine Wellbeing Economy: Lernen aus Bürger:innenjurs in Wien und Oxford

Zusammenfassung Die Wellbeing Economy positioniert sich als alternativer Entwicklungsansatz, bei dem menschliches und ökologisches Wohlergehen anstatt materiellen Wachstums im Vordergrund stehen. Sie bietet einen positiven Rahmen für eine mögliche nachhaltige Zukunft. In ihrer Umsetzung, insbesondere auf lokaler Ebene ist sie allerdings noch wenig erforscht. Demokratische Innovationen als spezifische Formen transformativer sozialer Innovationen können zur Operationalisierung der Wellbeing Economy beitragen, indem sie partizipative, lokale Interventionen befördern. Transformative soziale Innovationen verändern, überwinden oder ersetzen dominante Institutionen in spezifischen sozio-materiellen Kontexten. Ihre Wirkung und Fähigkeit, institutionelle Konfigurationen zu verändern, werden jedoch beeinträchtigt, wenn die ihnen innewohnenden „Paradoxien“ nicht angemessen berücksichtigt werden.

Am Beispiel von Bürger:innenjurs in Wien und Oxford untersuchen wir in diesem Forschungsbeitrag, wie demokratische Innovationen normative Visionen ausbalancieren, Interaktionen verändern, und transformativen Wandel operationalisieren, um gerechte Governancestrukturen zu erzielen. Wir zeigen, ob und wie diese deliberativen Prozesse zu einer lokalen Wellbeing Economy beitragen und wie sie mit ihren Paradoxie und Widersprüchen umgehen. Unsere Ergebnisse zeigen die Relevanz sozio-materieller, politisch-institutioneller und kulturell-diskursiver Kontexte für diese Art von Innovationen. Damit tragen wir zu einem differenzierteren Verständnis von transformativen sozialen Innovationen auf lokaler Ebene bei und argumentieren, dass diese Innovationen dazu beitragen können, die Diskrepanz zwischen globalen und abstrakten Vorstellungen einer Wellbeing Economy und ihrer lokalen Umsetzung zu überbrücken, wenn ihre Paradoxien und Widersprüche angemessen berücksichtigt werden.

1 Introduction

In the face of escalating climate and health concerns, the Wellbeing Economy (WE) has emerged as a concept that emphasises sustainable human and ecological wellbeing instead of material growth (Fioramonti et al. 2022; Kortetmäki et al. 2021). It addresses the urgent need to cope with increasing inequalities while moving towards more sustainable systems (Hensher 2023; Lamb and Steinberger 2017). In line with similar paradigms (e.g., post- and de-growth, doughnut economics, foundational economy), it provides a framing and vision of where a sustainable future might lead us (Büchs and Koch 2017; Crisp et al. 2023; Domazet et al. 2023; Durrant

et al. 2023; Wahlund and Hansen 2022). Addressing planetary and human health and aiming to reduce the environmental impacts of human activity, the WE re-focuses human health and wellbeing aspects of prosperity through a holistic approach to development (Helne 2021; Knickel et al. 2021). However, scholars recognise the substantial transformations this shift requires to institutions, governance systems and our general ways of life (Costanza et al. 2018; Coscieme et al. 2019; Mason and Büchs 2023; Sharpe et al. 2023).

One crucial step towards a WE is meaningful participation and deliberative decision-making (Sharpe et al. 2023). In recent years, there have been a plethora of innovative approaches to incorporate a more deliberative approach to democratic institutions and governance. Participatory budgets, as one example of innovative deliberation approaches, have been around for decades with their emergence in Porto Alegre and diffusion around the world (Novy and Leubolt 2005). Deliberative “mini-publics” have also gained prominence, particularly to address climate emergency (Elstub and Escobar 2019). Through these deliberative processes, 40–160 people in the case of climate assemblies and 12–40 people in the case of citizens’ juries are randomly selected to discuss a contentious issue and develop policy recommendations (Wells et al. 2021; Machin 2023). These democratic innovations (DI) broaden the way we govern and are seen by some to exhibit great potential for transforming institutional systems (Eneqvist and Karvonen 2021; Fastenrath and Coenen 2021; Galego et al. 2021; Suitner and Krisch 2023). As specific forms of governance innovations they seek to reimagine and deepen the role of citizens in governance processes by increasing opportunities for participation, deliberation, and influence. They are tools and approaches to help co-shape and co-own the direction of future developments—something that WE scholars have repeatedly highlighted as a key factor for its success (Abdallah et al. 2024; Zeidler et al. 2021).

While the WE has been explored around the world in different territorial contexts (Wellbeing Economy Alliance 2024), its implementation has predominantly focused on national and global scales. Its implications for urban governance and planning on local levels are still largely unknown (Abdallah et al. 2024; Hough-Stewart and Janoo 2024). To enable wellbeing on all scales, a local perspective is crucial to think about place-based implications of transformative change (Atkinson et al. 2016; Onyango and Kangmennaang 2020). Although the WE offers a normative stance that captures a broad perspective on development beyond growth, the actual mechanisms of how to achieve this transformation demand further analysis. Recent studies on Transformative Social Innovation (TSI) provide a promising entry point in this regard. Defined in relation to social innovations that aim to purposively find new ways of doing, organising, framing, and knowing to satisfy social needs and move towards economic, environmental, and social sustainability (Avelino et al. 2019; Howaldt and Schwarz 2021; Jalonen 2022; Moulaert et al. 2013), TSI are place-based, and challenge-driven, meaning that they are intricately connected to their specific locale (McFarlane et al. 2023; Suitner and Krisch 2023). This can include a wide variety of attempts to change how we live, work, and govern and thus provide hopeful approaches for moving towards a WE in place.

TSI literature understands transformation as a procedural dimension to challenge, alter, or replace dominant institutions in specific socio-material contexts (Avelino

et al. 2019, 2020; Pel et al. 2020). TSIs are thus well suited as a heuristic to analyse whether they develop transformative impact that contributes to a WE in place. However, the transformative impact of social innovations and their ability to change institutional configurations are contested (Swyngedouw 2005). Critical scholarship highlights the inherent ‘paradoxes’ of innovation that are often not adequately considered (Coad et al. 2022; Pel et al. 2023a, b). Similarly, scholars caution that the WE agenda risks being hollowed out and DI literature highlights dangers of misappropriation of governance innovations by challenges that persist in designing and delivering these innovations (Spada and Ryan 2017). Building on these perspectives, this paper argues that a closer look into the processes of TSIs and their paradoxes is necessary to understand whether DIs, as examples of TSI, are able to fulfil their promise of more democratic engagement that contributes to wellbeing in place. We take the example of citizens’ juries as specific illustrations of these deliberative forums in two cities, Vienna, AT and Oxford, UK to understand their contribution to a WE, how they support and develop a vision in accordance with this line of thinking and to what extent they shape transformative change in different socio-material, political-institutional, and cultural-discursive contexts.

Both projects were initiated around the same time, but from different institutional contexts, with the Oxford case originating from within the University of Oxford, whereas the Vienna citizens’ jury was implemented by the public administration. They both aimed to navigate complex and interrelated issues around environmental and social challenges in the respective cities. These two cases are used to illustrate whether the process of mutual learning between different actors designing and implementing the initiative led to institutional changes. The analysis aims to deepen our understanding of DIs and their transformative impact and critically engage with contradictions within these processes. We therefore seek to answer the following research questions: How can we operationalise a transformation towards a Wellbeing Economy through Democratic Innovations in their specific locales? To what extent are citizens’ juries able to deliver on their promise of wellbeing in place and to adequately address their potential paradoxes? To answer these questions, the two cases of Vienna and Oxford serve as illustrative rather than comparative case studies given the differences in how they were designed and delivered. We however think that both cases are nevertheless useful for learning through contrasting different examples of deliberation in TSIs.

We first outline a conceptual framework that builds on debates around the WE and how DI can contribute to achieving a WE. We operationalise these discussions through TSI as the procedural dimension for understanding the sequence of emergence and implementation of DIs in place, as well as their potential paradoxes and contradictions. In the subsequent part, we present our case studies and methodology in more detail, leading into the empirical analysis of both cases in the following section. We conclude by contrasting both cases and drawing conclusions on the implications for operationalising the WE in place through TSI. Through analysis of these two cases, we contribute to a more nuanced understanding of TSIs and their emergence, implementation, and potential impact on wellbeing in place. We examine whether they can cope with their paradoxes and what a critical engagement

with these contradictions in innovation processes can contribute to advancing a more comprehensive understanding of transformative change towards a WE in place.

2 Literature review

2.1 Contextualising democratic innovations for sustainable wellbeing

The Wellbeing Economy (WE) has emerged in response to the inherent flaws in the current economic system, which are seen as the root cause of escalating crises and growing inequalities (McCartney et al. 2023; Raworth 2012; Waddock 2021). Evidence shows that beyond a certain level of prosperity, economic growth provides little added benefit to human wellbeing (Abdallah et al. 2024; Fioramonti et al. 2022). Inspired by feminist and ecological economics (McCartney et al. 2023) and influenced by human scale development (Max-Neef 1992) and needs theories (Gough 2020) that focus an anthropocentric perspective (Bohnenberger 2023), the WE aims to reframe the economy to prioritise the wellbeing of people and the planet (Costanza et al. 2018; Hough-Stewart and Janoo 2024; McCartney et al. 2023; Wellbeing Economy Alliance 2021). It advocates for transformative change to live within planetary boundaries, equitably distributing wealth and opportunity, and effectively allocating resources (Coscieme et al. 2019; Hough-Stewart and Janoo 2024). The WE has gained political traction due to its forward-looking, strength-based narrative focused on achieving sustainable wellbeing for current and future generations (Constanza et al. 2018; Hayden and Dasilva 2022; Roy 2021; Sharpe et al. 2023). Although it has been adopted primarily at national and regional levels (e.g., see WE strategies in New Zealand, Scotland, Iceland, Finland or Wales) (Waddock 2021; Wellbeing Economy Alliance 2021; Hayden 2024), there is increasing interest in a locally contextualised approach, that can better address historical, geographical, and cultural factors, to aid implementation and impact through place-based interventions that align with local values and community interests (Lang and Marsden 2018; Roy 2021; Waddock 2021).

Instead of providing a prescription detailing the ways in which economies and societies should be redesigned, the WE is deliberately and explicitly non-prescriptive, thus putting a genuine participatory democratic process centre stage to determine the design and priorities for transformative change (Janoo et al. 2021). This democratic repurposing necessarily requires space and methods for public discourse on questions around what a 'good life' means, and how best to live within planetary boundaries. With the increasing erosion of trust in policymaking in advanced industrial democracies (Bedock and Pilet 2021; Davidson and Elstub 2014), deterioration of citizen-government relationships (Mannarini and Fedi 2018), and detachment of political and economic elites from citizens (Koskimaa and Rapeli 2020), deliberative democratic innovations (DI) act as cornerstones for achieving a WE (Sharpe et al. 2023; McCartney et al. 2023). Taking on various forms (e.g., as citizens' juries, participatory budgets, or mini publics), they aim to improve community cohesion (Campbell et al. 2018; Džinić et al. 2016), deepen public involvement in democratic decision-making (Koskimaa and Rapeli 2020) and increase empowerment and trust

(Jo and Nabatchi 2021). Citizens' juries as one form of DI can help to identify more nuanced and in-depth public opinion through collaborating with and empowering citizens in decision-making (Wells et al. 2021; Ross et al. 2021). They can distribute voice and control over the public sphere and expand decision-making processes that strengthen citizen-government relationships by promoting institutions to be more open to citizens' direct input (Mannarini and Fedi 2018). This helps to negotiate contentious and expert-driven topics (e.g., planetary boundaries) in context of diverse values and community needs (Pickering and Persson 2020; Roberts et al. 2020).

Although the ambitions of democratising economic development are well intended, they often rely on abstract political-economic and social-economic claims that lack contextualisation. While normative visions are important for framing a particular vision or imaginary for current or future development of places (Murphy 2015), implementation of transformative change needs context-sensitivity, relating to the specific locale, built environment and socio-cultural factors (Feola et al. 2023). Transformative Social Innovations (TSI) can help to ground abstract notions of the WE in lived experiences and local contexts. Social Innovations have long been explored to understand how they contribute to long-term social change within systems (McGowan et al. 2017). TSI go a step further to challenge, alter, or replace dominant institutions through new modes of community engagement, business practices, and provisioning systems that satisfy basic needs without exceeding planetary boundaries (Webb et al. 2023) by reconfiguring the institutional structures that shape these conditions (Rogge and Stadler 2023; van Wijk et al. 2019). TSIs are more likely to fulfil their transformative aspirations and develop impactful outcomes if they take a place- and needs-based approach, are well networked, embedded into their political-institutional context, and take account of existing spatial and institutional frameworks (Suitner et al. 2024). By developing novel ways to trigger an ongoing process of change through adaptive governance systems (Castro-Acre and Vanclay 2020; Spijker and Parra 2018), TSI can promote new forms of decision-making and institutional change, thereby enabling innovative ways of addressing complex crises (Haxeltine et al. 2016; Sovacool et al. 2023).

2.2 Bridging conceptual understandings for transformative change

To better understand how TSIs can pave the way for a WE, we build on the framework developed by Castro-Arce and Vanclay (2020), who emphasise four critical success factors needed to assess the transformative impact of TSI for eco-social regional development. We combine this framework with the work by Sharpe et al. (2023) on the application of WE principles for a case study design, adapting these two framings to account for the specific case of a citizens' jury as a democratic governance innovation. This enables us to understand the procedural dimensions of DIs and trace the sequence of transformative change. We then critically reflect on specific paradoxes that are associated with TSIs, identifying factors that hinder the transformative potential of initiatives (see Fig. 1). This guides our empirical work on the two cases of deliberative democratic innovations in Vienna and Oxford.

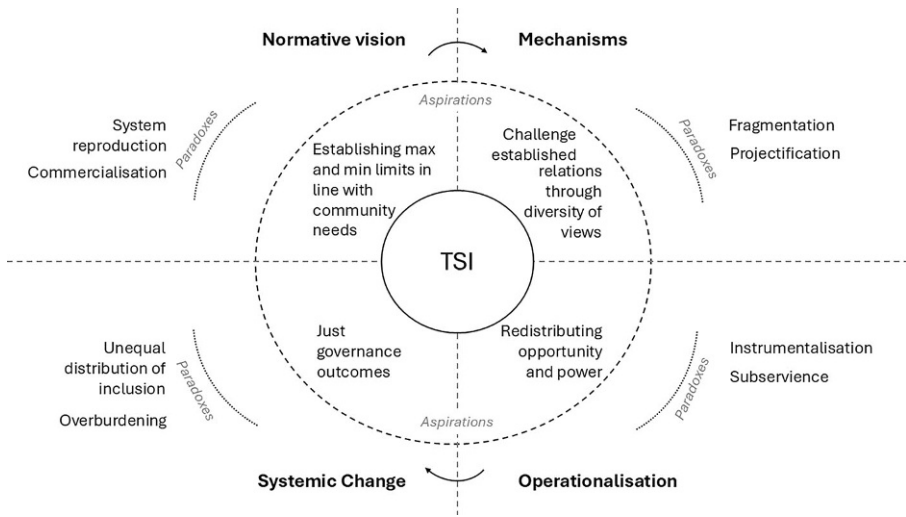


Fig. 1 Aspirations and paradoxes of Transformative Social Innovations, illustration by the authors

Aligning normative visions: The WE emphasises the importance of establishing maximum and minimum limits of production and consumption to achieve high levels of wellbeing. A large body of work on the WE is concerned with developing new indicators of wellbeing for meeting fundamental human needs (e.g., mental and physical health, housing, quality work, opportunities for community and political participation etc.), while engaging with maximum quality of life within planetary boundaries (McCartney et al. 2019). Establishing limits requires careful, managed steps of learning how to live within environmental limits through continuously negotiating what minimum and maximum standards for living well mean within specific contexts (Sharpe et al. 2023). Democratic innovations (DI) can inform citizens about this complex interrelation between human and planetary health by helping to reimagine alternative ways of living and contribute to policy development (Machin 2023). Rooted in ethical considerations, deliberation can encourage individuals to value collective over individual self-interests (ibid.). Scholarship on governance and transition studies has long emphasised the critical role of collective imaginaries in aligning diverse actors around transformative visions, enabling shared understanding and coordinated action for sustainability (Beck et al. 2021; Beckert and Bronk 2018). These imaginaries provide a valuable lens for examining how visions of change are not only constructed but also operationalised through deliberative and participatory processes. In TSI debates, this normative framing is seen in relation to local community interests, needs, desires, and aspirations within their specific social-ecological contexts. TSIs as challenge-driven, locally embedded processes trialling novel forms of organised practices that strive to meet community needs. TSI thus can help ground abstract normative framings of WE and DI through addressing over-consumption and -production in place (Castro-Arce and Vanclay 2020).

Mechanisms of exchange: Both WE and TSI frameworks enact this normative vision through new mechanisms of exchange that challenge established relations between state, market and civil society (e.g., through social businesses and entrepreneurship), but also within these spheres (e.g., through exchanges between citizens). These mechanisms are more likely to create social and environmental value that fits more naturally with a more-than-growth perspective. In DI literature, scholars emphasise that exchanging insights and perspectives between diverse groups on complex issues, such as wellbeing or climate change, may enable collective negotiations that can potentially create more agency in democratic processes (Novy and Leubolt 2005). With deliberation as the central mechanism, diverse voices can be better recognised, understood and integrated into discussions (Machin 2023). In a similar vein, TSI scholarship advocates for changed interactions through experimentation and iterative learning (Sengers et al. 2019; Schot et al. 2019). Trialling new forms of exchange to circulate wealth more equally and ensure fair access to material and social resources (e.g., financial capital, knowledge, decision-making power etc.) can counter overproduction and over-consumption by shifting focus away from individual gains and towards collective wellbeing. Through experimenting with different mechanisms that relate more directly to lived realities, institutional redesign can be more effectively negotiated to achieve a WE (Braby and Mangundu 2022; Hough-Stewart and Janoo 2024).

Operationalising transformative change: To achieve a common vision of transformative change and make its mechanisms more effective, resources, power, and opportunity need to be redistributed at local, regional, national, and global as well as intergenerational levels. The WE recognises that there are stark wealth inequalities within and across countries, which some argue can be partly addressed using new participatory decision-making procedures (Sharpe et al. 2023). Adequate procedures of sharing power and decision-making could lead to co-ownership of visions and development objectives, particularly for contentious issues including establishing limits that require contextualisation of community needs. Although DI may not always lead to the expected outcomes, collective debate and decision-making and sharing knowledge and power can lead to more positive future imaginaries, and an alternative way of achieving this future through better coping with complexity (Machin 2023). Distributing tasks and resources, promoting cooperation, conflict resolution and the empowerment of all actors requires TSIs to navigate across political levels, geographical scales, and economic sectors (Castro-Arce and Vanclay 2020). This, however, necessitates endorsement by formal institutions to enable and sustain a transformative path, as TSIs need support, including funding, legislation, and regulations to encourage transformative change and to be scaled-up and/or rolled-out at multiple levels. DI are thus operationalised through mobilising local knowledge addressing place-based challenges but accompanying them with resources from formal institutions to enable wider and multilevel outcomes.

Systemic change through just governance outcomes: The success of a WE largely depends on just governance approaches. Deliberative forums can ensure that a proposed transformation is inclusive and open to debate. This however requires

major system-level changes and robust participatory approaches, building diverse skills and capacities to ensure that a broad range of participants can contribute. Proponents of the WE emphasise that focusing on the positive narrative of abundance, wellbeing, conviviality, and a 'good life' can aid the negotiation process, instead of creating fear and distrust around sufficiency limits and steady-state developments. This requires a multi-actor perspective to co-develop bottom-linked governance through combining top-down policies with bottom-up initiatives, where actors involved and associated with TSI take on different roles to share decision-making (Avelino and Wittmayer 2016; Castro-Arce and Vanclay 2020). Such roles are: 1) Network enablers who foster deliberative collaboration by bringing participants together to become aware of the needs and opportunities of all involved parties; 2) Knowledge brokers who exchange local knowledge, skills, and expertise to co-create information through DI; 3) Resource brokers bridging economic sectors, civic actors, and political levels to disseminate resources between all parties to reduce economic, political, and social transaction costs for DI, and 4) Transparency and conflict resolution agents to build trust through common understandings and agendas, developing a shared vision that is represented and addressed by all involved actors in DIs, thus providing a space for negotiation and resolving conflicts (Castro-Arce and Vanclay 2020).

Aligning conceptual understandings of transformative change from WE and TSI debates offers valuable insights into the procedural and sequential analysis of DIs in their specific locale. It enables the identification of important notions in different discourses that point to impactful levers for change. However, TSIs have drawbacks that, left unattended, can hamper the transformative impact of well-intended initiatives. For this reason, we now turn to the paradoxes of innovation to understand and critically engage with the pitfalls of more-than-growth development.

2.3 Critically engaging with paradoxes in more-than-growth development

Critical scholarship on TSI highlights paradoxes and dark sides of innovation that, if left unattended, risk creating negative rather than transformative effects (Pel et al. 2023a, b). Similarly, a body of work on the WE points to the danger of 'window dressing' the WE agenda in ways that could hollow out transformative outcomes of changing institutions and governance systems (McCartney et al. 2023; Hayden 2024). Although democratising innovation is crucial for achieving a WE, DI such as citizens' juries are not a new phenomenon and have been used for some time¹. Despite using deliberation as one method for contributing to fairer decision-making processes on contentious and complex issues such as climate change, their transformative impact must be questioned in light of increasingly deteriorating citizen-government relations (Mannarini and Fedi 2018) and the challenges of anti-politics (Flinders et al. 2019; Stoker et al. 2017). Scholars have previously highlighted the dark sides of innovation Pel et al. (2023a). However, we argue that in our understanding, TSIs exhibit more nuanced dynamics than a dichotomous view on dark and

¹ The first citizens' juries were implemented in the 1970s in the United States independent of governments and universities (Crosby 1995), and in Germany by the University of Wuppertal (Smith and Wales 2000).

bright sides might suggest. We thus build on Pel et al. (2023b) to guide the conceptualisation of TSI paradoxes in relation to debates on the WE and DI. They identify three distinct contradictions inherent in TSIs, although they are often overlapping domains.

System reproduction and transformation: Although TSIs are thought to challenge the existing social order, participatory governance arrangements can simultaneously reproduce existing power asymmetries (Swyngedouw 2005). Visions and normative framings can be diluted and co-opted by political or business interests, non-democratic and non-participatory institutions failing to negotiate and balance conflicting principles of bottom-up community action and top-down institutional work of governmental actors (Novy and Leubolt 2005). Although they are often linked to hybrid institutional arrangements, reconciling institutional logics and co-operation, TSI often proceed along market logics without fundamentally changing how we define maximum and minimum wants and needs (Pel et al. 2023a). Deliberation in DI and participatory decision-making thus risk being reduced to mere consultation hidden behind emancipatory terminology, often reproducing assumptions and values of economic efficiency and growth and preventing the emergence of radical ideas (Novy and Leubolt 2005; Westman and Castan Broto 2022). This highlights that TSIs must balance between being radical enough to transform social relations, while also navigating existing institutional and social realities to remain socially acceptable, ensuring they are incremental enough for practical implementation (Pel et al. 2023b). While these contradictions exist regarding the outcomes of TSI, they are also prevalent within DI and the processes they adopt, presenting practical problems such as fair selection of participants or hearing diverse voices (Machin 2023).

Temporal and spatial contextualisation: TSIs are relational, process-based phenomena that are embedded in specific timeframes and contexts (Pel et al. 2023b), usually hanging together with other TSIs across time and space. TSIs might be novel in one place at a specific time, but not elsewhere. They thus demand a context-sensitive approach to understand whether they can initiate a process that leads to different outcomes in a different context. With separate innovations being embedded in larger processes, TSIs go through different phases of experimentation and institutionalisation, changing narratives and cultures of growth-dominance (Hewitt et al. 2019). They need to overcome the contradiction of time and context-sensitive emergence, thus fragmentation and projectification (Torrens and von Wirth 2021). Otherwise, they may turn into transient, local projects that only lead to incremental change. Although TSIs are arguably small-scale initiatives that rely on proximity to develop collective action, they need to be embedded into wider policy to ensure they do not become small solutions for just the few. Flinders et al. (2019) highlight that DIs are highly context-dependent, with the social and institutional environments of their emergence being crucial for their success. These contexts often reveal contradictions within deliberative processes, which are at risk of being hollowed out when citizens remain unresponsive, or when formal governmental institutions fail

to adapt, making successful implementation less likely. Critical inquiry thus needs to ask: transformative where, for whom and when?

Construction and interpretation of reality: TSIs exist both as a concrete activity as well as the interpretation of this activity through the projection of reality. Pel et al. (2023b) highlight that contradictions in this regard can result from observation, interpretation, and performativity. With practitioners and researchers involved in TSI taking on different roles for creating and diffusing innovations, they structure the framings of how TSI processes evolve, thus determining TSI realities. For DIs, this could mean that they could become subservient to policy programmes through projected realities of science-policy interactions focusing on narrow low-carbon transitions rather than broader deep seated socio-economic change (Pel et al. 2023a). Community engagement through DIs often runs the risk of being instrumentalised for political purposes (Moulaert et al. 2013). Relatedly, although sharing power through empowerment can shift passive consumers to active conscious drivers of a more just transformation, this can also potentially lead to overburdening individuals who may not possess the resources or capacities to live up to this self-organisation narrative. It might also mask an abdication of responsibilities of government (McCartney et al. 2023). Rather than fulfilling their political mandate to provide welfare support, political leaders could potentially transfer that responsibility to TSI and community-led organisations as arms-length organisations of government, thus instrumentalising them rather than democratising control over transformative change (McCartney et al. 2023). DIs build on the assumption of full representation of diverse actors to settle on a set of policy recommendations although DI practitioners cannot be certain whether all political positions and perceptions of reality have been included (Machin 2023). Thus, critical questions remain concerning which reality is represented and by whom. Lastly, DIs are often closed processes with predetermined agendas of varying degrees of rigidity and procedures set within traditional institutions and knowledge structures (Machin 2023; Pfeffer 2024). It thus invites the question of whether radical realities beyond growth that differ from a status quo can be constructed if TSI rely on financial means, socioeconomic status, social capital and expert knowledge. Relying on democratic institutional foundations paradoxically might contradict the transformative ambitions of DIs to change these very institutions (Flinders et al. 2019).

In summary, these contradictions and paradoxes are inherent aspects of TSIs. The urgency of climate action requires quick solutions to pressing problems, while at the same time calling for transparent and democratic procedures that are usually more time-consuming. This demands robust enquiry to understand whether TSIs can address the paradoxes adequately and respond to aspirations. Our framework, summarised in Fig. 1, helps to understand TSI as a process, engaging critically with how paradoxes might emerge at different points (see Fig. 1).

We now apply our analytical framework to the specific cases of two citizens' juries in Vienna and Oxford, studying the particular processes and paradoxes of each initiative to understand whether and how these TSI have inspired and initiated transformative change (or failed to do so), and what can be learnt from the similarities and differences between the cases.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introducing the cases

Our study takes two examples of citizens' juries in Vienna and Oxford, to better understand how they work towards a WE and whether they address and manage their paradoxes. Guided by case study design (Yin 2012, 2018), we examine two cases of TSI initiatives, Klimateam in Vienna, and the Street Voice citizens' jury in Oxford, initiated by different actors in each city.

In 2022, the City of Vienna initiated the city-wide climate action-oriented governance innovation 'Wiener Klimateam'. Klimateam integrated participatory budgets and citizens' juries at the district level (Ahn et al. 2023), trialling the co-production of urban climate adaptation through collaboration between civil society and public administration. In a three-year funding period, three districts were chosen each year to trial these deliberative processes. Despite Vienna's alleged eco-social preparedness (Vienna is portrayed as the greenest city in the world, see Magistrat der Stadt Wien 2022a, p. 5), challenges persist in achieving inclusive urban transformation, emphasising the need for localised interventions driven by citizens' lived experiences. The city administration's preceding 'Grätzlmarie' initiative already addressed these challenges by implementing a low-threshold submission of ideas by citizens which were then discussed and selected by a citizens' jury and implemented through a co-produced multi-stakeholder process. Klimateam became the city's largest participatory budgeting process, with guaranteed implementation of ideas selected by citizen juries complemented by an open-to-all online voting (Ahn et al. 2023). Klimateam followed a multi-stage process, involving submission of ideas by the general public, assessment of their feasibility by the public authority, and co-creation of projects to be implemented with residents, public administration and district representatives. The selection of the final projects took place through citizens' juries including 25 jurors, followed by open-to-all voting including the broader public, with the final selected projects guaranteed to be implemented. These deliberation efforts reflect a shift towards participatory methods in Vienna's urban planning policies, signalling a departure from traditional top-down approaches anchored in a social-democratic tradition and a strong local state (Novy et al. 2001; Suitner 2021).

In Oxford, the 'Street Voice' citizens' jury was conceived by researchers at Oxford University in response to public resistance and division over the introduction of measures to reduce the climate and health impacts of traffic in the city by Oxfordshire County Council, the local authority responsible for transport policy in the city of Oxford (Dudley et al. 2022; Chisholm et al. 2023; Dorling 2023; Gravett and Mundaca 2021). Three Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) were introduced in Oxford in March 2021, supported by the central Government's Active Travel Fund, a scheme introduced during the pandemic to make active travel more attractive and safer as an alternative to bus or private car use (Department for Transport 2020; Carpenter and Howard 2024). The aim of 'Street Voice' was to evaluate the potential role of a citizens' jury as a DI method to explore this contentious local issue, of how to address the city's transport challenges in the context of poor air quality in the city

and the climate crisis. The University of Oxford funded the project given its links to climate and health, which are key areas of interest for the University, and of high societal importance (Romanello et al. 2023; UK HSA 2023). Organising a citizens' jury was seen by the research team as a potentially effective process to engage residents in deliberations about traffic reduction measures such as LTNs. The 'Street Voice' citizens' jury was held over four weekends in the summer of 2022. A total of 16 jurors were selected from five electoral wards centred on the Headington neighbourhood of the city. This area was chosen because a number of transport schemes had already been implemented in the area, but it had not been the focus of the LTN policy, and so was perceived as a relatively 'neutral' neighbourhood of the city in which to hold the initiative. Due to the controversy surrounding the introduction of LTNs in Oxford (BBC News 2021), the University team delivering the citizens' jury maintained clear independence from the Council. The Council agreed to receive the jury's recommendations and to respond to them, but the project was positioned as being outside the local planning regime.

3.2 Methodological approach

The two case studies were each born out of different processes, which provide an opportunity to contrast TSIs from different perspectives.

The case study in Vienna was part of a wider research project from 2021 to 2023 by researchers from TU Wien and the Centre for Social Innovation (Suitner et al. 2022a) and focused on identifying socially innovative climate and sustainability experiments in Austria. The study involved a screening ($n=1400$), pre-selection ($n=218$), and comprehensive online survey ($n=116$) of climate experiments (Suitner et al. 2022b) that collected detailed information on the experimental, socially innovative and transformative character of those experiments. The case of Klimateam was chosen for this paper because of its transformative potential as an innovative governance approaches for climate action. The case study aimed to better understand the underlying Theory of Change, using Urmetzer et al.'s (2020) three distinct knowledge types in transformation research: 1) System knowledge as the framing of a certain system, its strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and challenges; 2) Normative knowledge as the imaginary and vision of a sustainable future; and 3) Transformative knowledge as the narrative of how we could get from an unsustainable system to a sustainable state.

For the Klimateam case study, we applied thematic analysis (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006) to 11 planning documents on national, state, and local levels addressing climate mitigation and adaptation to understand the discourse surrounding the DI initiative. Thematic analysis allowed us to identify recurring themes and patterns across our textual data to explore how normative visions and transformative ambitions were framed and operationalised across policy levels. It provided a structured but flexible approach to capture the diverse imaginaries embedded in the chosen core policy documents relevant to the case study. We identified frames, imaginaries, and narratives within these in addition to agency in (climate) governance, policies and regulation of (climate) governance, alternatives to established climate action, and specific climate facts mentioned in the documents. We then

conducted five narrative interviews (denoted by V1–V5) with key actors, including public administrators (2), a jury participant (1), and actors from the broader climate governance landscape in Vienna (2) (cf. Appendix Table 1) to explore the initiative's development context while it was still ongoing. We analysed the semi-structured interviews using discourse analysis (Fairclough 2010; Hardy et al. 2004; Silverman 2010), following the same logic as the document analysis, with particular attention to motivations behind initiating the process, drivers and barriers, procedural dimensions, relation to the specific temporal and spatial context, perspectives on transformative change and impact, and involved actors and networks. By employing discourse analysis, we were able to examine how power dynamics and agency shaped the deliberative processes, as well as how arguments, counterarguments, and narratives were constructed and contested during the initiative. This allowed us to assess the trajectories of the innovative practice in relation to change in the regional context in which Klimateam is embedded.

In Oxford, the scope of the citizens' jury was determined by the research team in discussion with Oxfordshire County Council, to align with local transport planning documents (Oxfordshire County Council 2022, 2023a). The research team designed the process based on best practice guidance on effective implementation of citizens' juries, including process design and evaluation (Cherry et al. 2021; Climate Citizens/Lancaster University 2022; OECD 2020). An Advisory Group of 10 experts in transport, climate change, health and deliberative democracy, including local politicians from across the main political parties and activists, helped to shape the definition of the overarching question to be addressed by the jury and fed into the process design. (see GCHU (2022, p. 12) for a list of the Advisory Group members).

The evaluation of 'Street Voice' drew on three sources. First, participant surveys were conducted at four stages during the jury's four weekends: before day 1, after day 2, after day 3, and after the final day 4, using standardised questions from the OECD (2021) designed to measure experiences of deliberative processes. The data collection had three objectives: to inform the design of subsequent sessions, to compare jurors' perspectives before and after the jury, and to evaluate the citizens' jury process as a whole. Second, in-depth semi-structured interviews with five jury members were carried out following the citizens' jury by an independent researcher (denoted by O1–O5) (cf. Appendix Table 2). Third, the research team made detailed, reflexive field notes during and after the jury following the OECD guidance for jury organisers (OECD 2021, p. 40). The impact of 'Street Voice', along with follow-up activities (such as a workshop for councillors and officers) on future council decisions and policies was recorded by researchers through participant observation at council meetings, taking field notes, and analysis of policy documents and media releases. These three different sources of data offered different perspectives on the citizens' jury process, and allowed for a triangulation of findings, using thematic analysis to draw out the key themes that were salient in the evaluation.

The two cases provide contrasting perspectives on TSI. The Vienna case represents an outside view of researchers conducting an analysis of the case separate from its implementation, whereas the Oxford case represents an inside view of transformative research being undertaken by researchers who were involved in delivering the initiative. We apply the analytical framework introduced above (see Fig. 1) to both

cases to examine how governance innovation shapes deliberative processes towards a WE agenda. While the two cases act as illustrative rather than comparative studies, both initiatives offer insights into the initiation, development and institutionalisation of TSI within distinct institutional contexts. Our case selection is based on considerations of different actors taking on various roles in innovation processes, embedded in institutional contexts that impacted the emergence and potential success of these governance initiatives. This method allows for an in-depth analysis of transformative governance innovations as well as drawing conclusions on the added value of our framework for an assessment of TSI in the context of a WE. It also provides a guideline for implementing such TSI, reflecting on their potentials as well as their paradoxes.

4 Transformative processes and local wellbeing outcomes: drawing lessons from citizens' juries

4.1 Vienna's Klimateam procedure towards wellbeing in place

Aligning normative visions: Klimateams' objectives align with addressing both climate change and social inclusion (V4), aiming to "create a social neighbourhood, social infrastructure and community empowerment, which contribute significantly to the quality of life in crisis situations" (V2)². It raises awareness among people "who have never before thought about climate change and the climate crisis" (V4), addressing specific local challenge of heat stress, surface sealing, lack of green infrastructure, tensions between old and new building patterns, and lack of community cohesion between long-established and newly arrived communities (Magistrat der Stadt Wien 2022a, p. 117, 2022b, p. 82; Stadtentwicklung Wien MA 18 2018, p. 5; V1; V2; V4).

"The question is what to do with the existing building fabric to make it climate-compatible. This requires rethinking how space is used, involving building owners, property managers and occupants." (V2)

The initiative encourages participation from systematically excluded groups to better understand changes in residential environments and community needs (Magistrat der Stadt Wien MA 21 2017), helping to effectively overcome social barriers to sustainability by co-designing the city through experimenting with deliberative decision-making processes (Magistrat der Stadt Wien 2022b).

"The challenge is that up to two-thirds of the population is not eligible to vote, and there are 70,000 16–24-year-olds living in Vienna who are not eligible to vote. But climate issues affect these people just as much." (V4)

The initiative thus addressed social limits of lacking democratic participation and trust in policymaking and physical limits of land-use in dense urban environments by involving residents of specific neighbourhoods in the decision-making process.

² All interviews in German were translated by the authors.

Mechanisms of exchange: While some actors within and beyond city administration question whether participation can achieve transformations at the speed, depth, and breadth needed, deliberative processes are seen as essential to integrate climate mitigation with social inclusion through collective negotiation of this complex interrelation (V5). Klimateam was set up as a pilot project with selected districts in each distinct phase that lasts one year. Through the multi-stage process, different expertise from different actors were included in the process at various stages, circulating knowledge and social and financial capital from the city's traditionally paternalistic planning authority to a more diverse group of actors. "Klimateam determined from the outset what would happen to the submitted ideas, how they would be screened, selected by a citizens' jury and implemented by citizens." (V5) This enabled small and easy to implement climate actions and cross-cultural and inter-generational knowledge-sharing about local production and consumption processes (V3). Politically endorsed, it helped to distribute decision-making power and ensure fairer access to resources for implementation. "Political accountability was created, the political will to try new things." (V4) Although it institutionalised deliberation in decision-making and increased participation expertise within the city administration, partly also stemming from a generational shift, evaluation mechanisms remain underdeveloped (V4; V5).

Operationalising transformative change: Klimateam's multi-stage processes, including idea submission, co-creation workshops, and citizens' juries comprising a small number of residents (14 for Grätzlmarie and 25 for Klimateam), facilitated continuous exchange between officials, decision-makers, and residents. It ensured socio-economic diversity by adjusting sortition processes after Grätzlmarie's lack of representation, offering multilingual information, and financial and care support (V2; V4). This highlights the importance of inclusive approaches to reach diverse communities beyond the white middle class, including local knowledge in governance for informed decision-making and consensus-building (BMNT 2017; Magistrat der Stadt Wien 2022a; Magistrat der Stadt Wien MA 21 2017). By reallocating financial and decision-making resources, Klimateam not only aimed at broader inclusion through deliberation, but also at breaking traditional siloed structures to challenge established governance structures. The objective was twofold:

"On the one hand, the idea is to activate residents, to inform them and invite them to contribute their own ideas. With a fixed budget and guaranteed implementation. That is a key factor. On the other hand, it is aimed at the municipal authorities, forcing them to work together across municipal departments as a condition for the process." (V5)

Klimateam thus negotiated decision-making across political and geographical levels (i.e., district and city scale) and policy areas. Since its initial pilot phase in 2022, the initiative has been rolled out in different districts each year. However, both preceding initiatives and Klimateam lack appropriate evaluation mechanisms so far, although an evaluation was started in 2023 for Klimateam (V5).

Systemic change through just governance outcomes: The composition of the citizen jury was critical to public administration uptake, with emphasis on equal representation and preventing party politics from influencing decisions, although not always successful³ (V3). Klimateam improved upon Grätzlmarie by prioritising a broad range of participants and compensating them for their time, which ensured low dropout rates (V4). Unlike previous participatory district budgets, Grätzlmarie and Klimateam both transcended district boundaries and implemented a budget at city level, introducing a new governance and funding model that challenged existing power structures (V4). Public administration in Vienna played a key role as network enabler in recruiting participants and securing commitment from officials across sectors and levels of government (V2; V4; V5). Residents acting as knowledge brokers in citizens' juries helped bridge understanding between local needs and public priorities, refining ideas for feasibility through co-creation with decision-makers and public administration. Given varying awareness of the climate crisis across districts (V5), knowledge brokers played a crucial role in framing jury decisions. Funding continuity facilitated cross-sectoral project implementation through brokering resources, but challenges with transparency in fund allocation, influenced by political ties, persisted within Grätzlmarie (e.g., well-established organisations with close political ties got significant funding in the beginning) (V3). The lack of robust evaluation mechanisms makes it difficult to assess how conflicts were resolved (V5).

4.2 Paradoxes within Vienna's Klimateam

Klimateam represents both system reproduction and transformation. While it introduced a novel cross-sectoral approach, bridging policy domains and political power dynamics to transform governance structures, the citizens' jury setup often led to small-scale interventions with limited transformative potential. Simple projects like greening initiatives were favoured over more complex ones requiring scientific input. The failure to address economic limits adequately led to small-scale interventions that often fell short of radically transforming urban space. The mismatch between narratives of resource reduction and the city's further growth has in some cases led to the commercialisation of small-scale initiatives serving economic outputs by projects being selected based on their marketability and fast and promotable implementation rather than their potential for substantial transformative impact. While the guaranteed implementation ensured that the interventions were carried out and avoided cherry-picking by the public authorities, the prior feasibility assessment of the submitted ideas by the public authority meant that the ideas presented to the jury and selected by the residents only worked within the existing structures rather than transforming them. Criticism arose around the time and expertise required to both set up and implement the citizen jury process, which was constrained by political demands and bureaucratic delays (V1). The realisation that participation and deliberation are necessary to create acceptance for urban development and climate

³ One third of jurors in Grätzlmarie's citizen jury came from institutions affiliated with the social-democratic party, which was changed in Klimateam, where the jury was made up entirely of residents.

measures is often met by the realities of slow urban change, where it takes “decades and generations for this understanding to reach institutions” (V4).

Klimateam built on previous projects (e.g., Grätzlmarie, participatory district budgets), learning from past failures and introducing city-wide coordination to overcome administrative rigidity (V5). Though selected projects were small scale, Klimateam navigated structural constraints and risks of fragmentation. Yet, its fixed funding period for each district cycle reflects the city’s tendency towards projectification, potentially limiting long-term impact by different initiatives competing for funding. The transformative impact also often depended on district officials’ awareness of the urgency of the climate crisis. While some districts focused on individual actions (e.g., façade greening), others with environmental engagement history and contextual knowledge embraced a more comprehensive approach of transformation (V5). Thus, while Klimateam in its specific temporal and spatial context can be seen as a novel solution to eco-social crises, relying on contextual knowledge to navigate structural conditions, it struggles to alter fundamental power structures.

Klimateam also faced challenges in engaging diverse cultural communities, many of whom often develop their own support networks outside public deliberative processes (V3). This limited the diversity within the citizens’ jury and hindered the creation of alternative visions for urban development. Additionally, the positionality of policymakers and the media often led to the promotion of easily marketable interventions rather than radical solutions, compounded by the open-to-all voting system, which risked undermining equity efforts (V3). Despite these issues, the initiative proved impactful in reaching public administration and political decision-makers. Klimateam can to some extent be regarded as an educational innovation “for district councillors, to ask for ideas from the citizens and to check, whether they are in line with the district councillors’ ideas (e.g., parking space)” (V5). As a paternalistic city with a strong caring mentality rooted in social-democratic values, Klimateam thus opens debates around how problems and solutions are framed, who is involved in imagining alternative futures, and how change in participation culture can be initiated (V4).

4.3 Oxford’s Street Voice procedure towards wellbeing in place

Aligning normative visions: The Street Voice citizens’ jury was a research project that aimed to explore whether a deliberative democratic process could help find common ground on a contentious policy issue. The objectives were various. Firstly, they came from the University which funded the initiative. The University was seeking to support pilot projects that would address the key global challenges of climate and health, which are high on the University’s research agenda. Secondly, the research team was keen to examine the potential for more consensual and deliberative approaches to address policy issues that have reached an ‘impasse’, in particular those related to climate action, and questions of just urban transitions. Underlying these normative visions was an interest in exploring the concept of limits, within the context of arguments of a just urban transition, such as the safe environmental limits for air pollution related to health, and the physical limits of space for the transport

network. In particular, in the citizens' jury a distinction was made between 'wants' and 'needs', as the jurors' statement in the Final Report illustrates:

"We knew that reaching agreement on how to balance people's travel needs with environmental and health considerations would be challenging and would involve much negotiation, including arriving at a greater understanding of the difference between 'needs' and 'wants.'" (quote from jurors' statement agreed by all jurors from the Street Voice Final Report, GCHU 2022)

The jury was also underpinned by a normative understanding of access to mobility, that citizens should not be disadvantaged in relation to restrictions on mobility, due to gender and caring responsibilities, disability or socio-economic disadvantage.

4.3.1 Mechanisms of exchange:

The citizens' jury design represented a shift in decision-making for the local authority, introducing new methods such as participant selection through sortition. The jury process integrated local knowledge, expertise based on professional and lived experience, and combined these with the resources of the University and the local authority. During the Street Voice jury sessions, mutual understanding was advanced through exchanges between citizens and commentators (e.g. council officers, campaigners/advocates and academics) who might not have had the opportunity or mandate to explore these issues together. Additionally, expertise was shared among the advisory group, comprising politicians from different parties, the lead facilitator, and experts in deliberative democracy, transport and health, who worked together to define relevant selection criteria for jury members and identify commentators to contribute to the jurors' deliberations.

The process as a whole was relatively novel, the citizens' assembly model having been used only once before in Oxford. Street Voice was the first instance to the organisers' knowledge where Convergent Facilitation was applied in the context of a citizens' jury. Convergent Facilitation seeks to develop consensus through a careful process of proposal development and amendment/alteration, ensuring all voices are heard and reflected. Despite an initial lack of awareness of the potential of deliberative processes and reservations due to tensions over the installation of LTNs, discussions between the research team and the County Council resulted in the Council's endorsement of the process. They also committed to consider the resulting 41 recommendations, which spanned the five themes of public transport, active travel, private car use, infrastructure and logistics, and public engagement and participation (Street Voice Final Report, GCHU 2022). The Council (Oxfordshire County Council 2023b, c) responded positively, stating:

"We welcome the recommendations of the citizens' jury. Travel, health and climate change are key issues for Oxford residents and will be for years. Many of the recommendations from this jury are already being acted upon and will provide us with crucial guidance to help us shape future policy in a way that

reflects the needs of the wider population.” (Councillor Duncan Enright, Cabinet Member for travel and development strategy, quoted in Oxfordshire County Council press release 2023d)

Recognising the benefits of deliberative processes, many politicians and officers were keen to explore the potential of this experimental project further. In May 2023, local politicians and officers from both the County and City Councils attended a Deliberative Democracy Workshop organised by the research team as a knowledge exchange event to explore the value of deliberative processes for local government. Subsequently, the County Council voted to hold a further deliberative process in 2024–2025 with a budget of £150,000, ten times the budget of the University-funded Street Voice. At the time of writing, a citizens’ assembly on the future of transport across Oxfordshire is being commissioned, indicating that this form of governance innovation is moving from experimentation towards more acceptance within the County Council (Oxfordshire County Council 2024).

Operationalising transformative change: Street Voice engaged a stratified sample of 16 residents, selected through sortition, and broadly representative of the city’s population. The project oversampled areas of high deprivation (Index of Multiple Deprivation levels 1–3; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2019) to include traditionally marginalised voices often excluded from community engagement. Measures including remuneration and covering caring costs aimed to lower barriers to participation.

Transformative change was embedded into the citizens’ jury process by bringing together different actors to provide evidence to the jurors. Selected by the researchers and informed by the Advisory Board, they were critical to informing the jurors’ deliberations, shaping their understanding of salient issues and arguments impacting their proposed recommendations. The actors presented evidence from two ‘spheres’: ‘experts by profession’ (e.g., specialists in transport planning, climate change, and public health), and ‘experts by lived experience’ (e.g., residents living near LTNs, who did not benefit from the reduced traffic and pollution within the LTNs, professional caregivers negotiating daily traffic congestion). Jurors’ understanding of the issues addressed, such as transport planning, net zero and public health, increased significantly as reflected in pre- and post-process survey results (cf. Appendix Table 3). As one juror noted:

“There were aspects of it that I have never heard of, that now I know more about because I’ve come home and I thought, gosh, I will look that up. And I looked up even more.” (O3)

Jurors also reported greater trust in local government and an increased likelihood of future engagement in decisions that affect their community (cf. Appendix Table 4), as expressed by one participant: *“It definitely spurred me to look into more the local connectivity and the investment that’s going on locally, and how residents can get involved in demonstrating support or concerns.”* (O2) Although evidence of broader community-, city- or county-wide impacts remains limited, the evaluation results

suggest increased wellbeing for jurors and potential long-term impacts on local governance processes, with the County-led citizens' assembly scheduled for 2024.

Systemic change through just governance outcomes: The Street Voice citizens' jury was led by researchers who were not linked to local government, who aimed to explore the potential of deliberative processes in addressing complex policy issues. The researchers thus acted as network enablers, fostering awareness among various actors about the needs of local communities and opportunities for local policymaking to address them. Limited engagement with County Council members was maintained for project independence and legitimacy, although officer turnover in the Council hindered organisational memory and capacity-building. Initial reservations within the Council were to some extent overcome with the support of new senior management, which facilitated knowledge exchange and the promotion of systemic change through engagement with the subsequent Deliberative Democracy Workshop. The jury and subsequent workshop can be seen as playing a critical role in a shift towards the adoption of more deliberative processes in the County Council's engagement strategy. Key leaders in the Council were motivated to explore the potential of deliberative democratic processes, in order to engage more meaningfully with residents. While system-level change progresses incrementally, the County Council's commitment to holding a citizens' assembly demonstrates their intention to scale up the use of deliberative processes in their array of local governance practices.

4.4 Paradoxes within Oxford's Street Voice citizens' jury

Oxford's Street Voice citizens' jury demonstrates few of the paradoxes highlighted by scholars of TSI and DI. Unusually, the process was initiated by researchers rather than the local authority. Despite caution related to their involvement due to the sensitivities surrounding the local transport policy, the jury represented a radical departure from the County Council's traditional engagement methods. The Council's subsequent commitment to a wider citizens' assembly at the County level further illustrates the transformative impact of Oxford's citizens' jury on local governance.

In response to the 41 Street Voice recommendations (Oxfordshire County Council 2023b, c), the Council was already working on, or planned to work on, 18 of the recommendations (44%), had 7 'under consideration' (17%), and found 5 'possible to consider' (12%), though 11 were deemed infeasible (27%) due to financial constraints or jurisdictional limits. However, this last category included some of the more progressive recommendations, such as 'providing bikes for disadvantaged school students' or 'asking universities and hospitals to give over some of their land for safe walking and cycling routes'. Land ownership in Oxford is a controversial issue, with the University of Oxford and its constituent colleges owning vast areas of the city, affecting wealth inequalities related to land and housing. The power held by the University through land ownership is not an area that can conceivably be challenged through Council initiatives.

The Street Voice citizens' jury was not the first foray into deliberative democracy locally. Oxford City Council held a climate assembly in 2019, but the pandemic dampened its momentum and limited the follow-up after the assembly. Little in-

stitutional knowledge and innovation from that process transferred to the County Council, reflecting a lack of coordination between institutions in deliberative initiatives. The researchers leading ‘Street Voice’ were in the unusual position of being ‘insiders’, initiating, designing and implementing the process. Although from the outside, Street Voice might appear as ‘predetermined’ by an institutional ‘authority’ through funding by the University, the implementation of the citizens’ jury was governed by international standards for running a citizens’ jury, including setting up an Advisory Board which included councillors from the three main political parties, to oversee the process and ensure rigour in recruitment and information provision. The outcomes and recommendations (realities) emerged from the jurors’ deliberations over four weekends rather than from a predetermined agenda set by the University. The Council officers’ observations on the recommendations reflected a pragmatic response, considering financial constraints, policy remit, and a realistic assessment of what is possible in the local context.

5 Discussion

The two cases described above offer contrasting perspectives on TSI from both inside and outside angles, providing insights into deliberation in policymaking. We thus explore our first research question on how to operationalise a transformation towards a Wellbeing Economy (WE) through Democratic Innovations (DI) in their specific locales by highlighting the importance of place-based approaches. Operationalising a WE requires DI that seamlessly integrate normative visions with inclusive and participatory governance mechanisms. Both case studies illustrate how Transformative Social Innovations (TSI) can leverage local experiential knowledge, engage diverse stakeholders, and build collective ownership of solutions to complex socio-ecological challenges. Klimateam’s emphasis on intertwining climate action with social inclusion, and Street Voice’s focus on transport equity and public health, underscore the critical need for governance practices that are deeply responsive to local contexts while aligning with overarching WE principles of sustainability, equity, and well-being. Both citizens’ juries addressed contentious policy issues and were seen as tools for tackling “wicked problems”. While Vienna’s Klimateam was underpinned by the normative understanding that only by addressing climate change and social inclusion in conjunction can crises be managed effectively, Oxford’s ‘Street Voice’ aimed to explore whether a deliberative democratic process could help find common ground on the contentious issue of transport policies to address climate and health issues. In both cases, citizens’ juries helped navigate complex and interrelated issues by engaging residents to better understand lived realities and imagine alternative solutions. They both mobilised local knowledge, challenging established relations between state, market, and civil society. By facilitating participation and taking local community interests and needs seriously, they redistributed opportunities for “others” to engage in local transformations. While tensions existed in both cases over how to deal with pressing crises, the discussions between residents and wider knowledge exchange with policymakers and officers created political accountability and led to a commitment to integrate deliberation into future policy design.

Regarding their operationalisation, both initiatives implemented citizens' juries with a relatively small number of jurors, 25 for Klimateam and 16 for 'Street Voice', representing a stratified sample of the wider city population. 'Street Voice' oversampled in areas of high deprivation, ensuring marginalised voices were included, while Klimateam aimed for diversity and inclusion through its open-to-all voting mechanism, which likely skewed decisions towards more politically active voices. 'Street Voice' jurors reported increased understanding of contentious policy issues and trust in local government, but Klimateam's evaluation is still pending, making it unclear whether its aim to raise climate change awareness among disadvantaged groups has been achieved. However, Klimateam guaranteed implementation of selected interventions, whereas 'Street Voice' only secured commitment from decision-makers to consider its recommendations, reflecting the different origins of each jury. Klimateam's multi-stage process included a feasibility check before jury decisions, whereas 'Street Voice' focused on exploring the role of deliberation in navigating and negotiating complex issues. While collectively developed recommendations may lead to a shared sense of ownership, the lack of implementation might contribute to concerns of 'anti-politics' (Flinders et al. 2019). Participants may be sceptical of the effectiveness of deliberative processes, viewing them as disconnected from actual power and decision-making, and thereby failing to address the deeper systemic issues they are concerned about. Even if citizens engage in these deliberative processes, institutions failing to act on the recommendations might reinforce public cynicism, making the process seem symbolic or performative rather than transformative.

In terms of systemic change, Vienna's initiative was driven by public administration, mobilising departments across sectors, while Oxford's 'Street Voice' was led by university researchers, emphasising independence from political influence. In Vienna, officers built on prior deliberative successes and failures, creating networks between political decision-makers, public administration and residents. In contrast, 'Street Voice' was deliberately independent from political and administrative institutions to ensure legitimacy of the process, although it secured the Council's commitment to consider the jury's recommendations, enhancing their understanding of the benefits of deliberative processes for future policymaking. Despite emerging from different societal actors, both initiatives transitioned from one-off experiments to working towards institutionalisation within a short period of time in their specific locale, driven by the WE principles implicit within the aims of the initiators. By focusing on local community interests and needs, both projects mobilised local and experiential knowledge to address issues of local transformation that might otherwise have been devised in a top-down technocratic manner. In this way, they redistributed opportunities to engage in local innovative activities, rather than just changing power hierarchies and roles between 'developer/planner' and 'user'. This also created a higher degree of commitment on both sides. Key outcomes were the development of new actionable knowledge about community needs within local administrations and the inclusion of the citizens' jury approach in the local governance repertoire. Both cases demonstrate the importance of key actors for the success of DIs, specifically, network enablers, knowledge and resource brokers, and transparency and conflict resolution agents (Castro-Arce and Vanclay 2020). In Oxford, researchers were key advocates for the novel governance approach, ensuring

its proper implementation and working towards impact. In Vienna, public administration actors used their knowledge and networks to dispel reservations, ensure rationalities and interests were transparent, and distribute resources. In our view, this illustrates a concrete need for such roles in DIs if they are to be institutionally established and strengthened by the public sector and by concrete WE policies. This involves not only building the capacities of various actors with the necessary competencies, but also ensuring they fully embody and sustain all aspects of DIs. This, however, creates a paradox: If TSIs rely on individual actors with access to resources, power, knowledge and expertise, it raises concerns about their motives, and the potential instrumentalisation of DI processes for individual agendas and interests. Thus, policy support for DIs is a balancing act between supporting, equipping and empowering lead agents to promote “their” TSI, while ensuring fair selection, new exchanges, broad participation and just outcomes also remain a priority.

Prompted by the optimistic discourse on deliberative democratic innovations, our second research question focuses on critical enquiry into the contradictions of such initiatives (Flinders et al. 2019; Machin 2023; Pel et al. 2023a, b) and whether and how citizens’ juries are able to adequately address their potential paradoxes. Our cases illustrate that by creating platforms for dialogue, increasing trust in governance, and initiating systemic shifts in decision-making, they were able to foster wellbeing in place, although paradoxes and contradictions can also be traced throughout the process. Both the Vienna Klimateam and Oxford’s Street Voice citizens’ juries encountered concrete paradoxes that highlight the challenges of achieving transformative change. In Vienna, the guaranteed implementation of projects ensured tangible outcomes but often favoured smaller, marketable interventions, limiting the potential for radical systemic change and reinforcing existing power dynamics. Similarly, Oxford’s Street Voice revealed a paradox in its progressive recommendations, as some of the most ambitious ideas, such as addressing land-use inequities linked to institutional power, were deemed unfeasible due to financial and jurisdictional constraints. These paradoxes underscore the tension between fostering deliberative inclusivity and navigating entrenched structural and institutional barriers. In Vienna, the focus on smaller-scale interventions constrained the transformative potential of such deliberative processes, while Oxford’s Street Voice faced jurisdictional limits and pragmatic challenges in implementing radical recommendations. However, Oxfordshire County Council’s first-time involvement in such processes suggests a radical departure from traditional engagement methods. In Vienna, while previous projects laid the groundwork, Klimateam was the first large-scale deliberative process, bridging policy domains and challenging political power dynamics. Temporal and spatial contextualisation are thus important factors that make these initiatives innovative in their specific locale, though they may not meet the criteria for novelty and radicality elsewhere. However, in these temporal and spatial contexts, we argue that deliberation was a crucial step towards a WE, where participation and engagement with local needs and community interests were taken seriously.

However, both initiatives faced institutional power realities that could not be bypassed. Klimateam’s design and implementation was often constrained by political demands and bureaucratic delays, while one of the more radical recommendations from ‘Street Voice’ was limited by long-established land ownership structures be-

yond the council's remit. Both processes required significant resources in terms of time and personnel as compared to the amplitude of their direct policy impact, raising questions about their strain on already stretched public resources. While rapid change is necessary to address eco-social crises, meaningful collective decision-making and ensuring legitimacy of the outcomes take time. It could be argued that these processes may push local systems to their limits, but the political costs of not engaging meaningfully with the public on complex and contentious public policy issues can also be high, resulting in low uptake or backlash.

Relatedly, multi-level governance arrangements shape the ability of local authorities to drive transformative change towards a WE. Vienna, with its significant autonomy, financial resources and power as both a city and regional authority, was able to bridge governance levels relatively easily, while Oxford, in a highly centralised country faces greater constraints of limited local powers. Thus, while citizens' juries are valuable, they cannot replace the need for formal regulations to set non-negotiable limits aligned with planetary boundaries. Transformative change depends not only on the quality of deliberation but also on how effectively local decisions can overcome existing power structures and ensure compliance with broader environmental and social limits, thus striking a balance between top-down regulations and bottom-up deliberation. The two cases highlight that while citizens' juries can reconfigure governance practices and promote cultural and political shifts, addressing deeper systemic inequities and achieving structural change requires sustained institutional commitment and resources often beyond localised deliberative processes.

6 Conclusion

In this paper, we engage the concept of a Wellbeing Economy (WE) that requires fundamental changes in social practices and interactions. While we support WE discourse, we note that it often focuses on national and global scales, with little attention to urban governance and the mechanisms for achieving "development beyond growth" at the local level. We thus introduce the concepts of Transformative Social Innovation (TSI), and within that, Democratic Innovations (DI) as a specific form of TSI, to ask whether they are suitable to operationalise a transformation towards a WE in their specific locale. From the respective literatures, we carve out four common aspirations of WE and DI: aligning normative visions, mechanisms of exchange, operationalising transformative change, and systemic change through just governance outcomes. Accounting for the growing critical debate around TSI and DI, we also point to respective paradoxes of such innovations. Applying this framework to citizens' juries in Vienna and Oxford, we explore the extent to which they were able to deliver on their promise of wellbeing in place and address their potential contradictions and paradoxes.

We argue that WE discourse need not remain an abstract academic or political debate about global or national minimum and maximum limits. Through DIs that address concrete challenges associated with the local lifeworlds of different actors, WE principles can be operationalised and the targeted issues become tangible, discussable and solvable problems in empowered, inclusive and co-productive governance

processes. Both cases discussed in this paper illustrate the importance of integrating “expertise by profession” and “expertise by lived experience” for transformative initiatives. It is particularly this integrative function that makes DIs a valued instrument from the perspective of decision-makers. However, it remains uncertain whether the uptake of deliberative processes by local decision-makers reflects a conviction about their transformative potential, or whether it only signals an innovative spirit and a willingness for change, without deep confidence about the capacity to bring about that change.

TSI, with its emphasis on place-based interventions, offers a link between a mostly national or even global debate on WE and the manifestation and operationalisation of WE principles in specific locales. Both from the perspective of an “outside” researcher ex-post studying a governance innovation to understand how and which WE principles came to fruition, as well as from an inside perspective of researchers involved in the design and delivery of a DI, the TSI framework and the categories we carved out helped to grasp how concrete visions were aligned, modes of exchange were remodelled, change was instigated and more just governance mechanisms were established. Critically reflecting these insights from the perspective of paradoxes further helped to differentiate and nuance how DIs actually facilitated a WE or rather sustained unsustainable and unjust systemic patterns.

Through contrasting both initiatives and their paradoxes, we have contributed to a more nuanced understanding of how the WE can be operationalised in place. Although both initiatives triggered cultural and political shifts, structural changes such as the redistribution of resources have not been fully realised. This suggests that while deliberation can reshape decision-making structures, the resulting interventions may still face rigid institutional, economic or legal barriers. Correlation between recommendations by citizens’ juries and subsequent policy adoption doesn’t prove causation. Nor does a strong alignment between already existing policies and recommendations developed by the DI necessarily mean that the recommendations are redundant, as they may give confidence to policymakers and legitimacy to existing policies. Assessing the impact of these complex deliberative processes in messy and changing contexts remains challenging, and demands careful evaluation. These unresolved challenges warrant further investigation exploring their long-term impacts, particularly regarding their capacity to achieve structural change in entrenched power dynamics and systemic inequities. This includes assessing how citizens’ juries and similar governance innovations can scale beyond pilot projects to create sustained institutional transformations, bridging the gap between deliberative decision-making and actionable policy implementation. The paradoxes identified in the Vienna and Oxford cases—including the tension between inclusivity and feasibility, or the risk of privileging easily marketable solutions over systemic interventions—offer rich terrain for examining how governance innovations can better balance competing demands. Another critical avenue is the risk of misappropriation in governance innovations, particularly in contexts where dominant actors may co-opt deliberative processes to serve narrow interests or reinforce existing hierarchies. This calls for critical enquiry into procedures that ensure equitable participation to prevent instrumentalisation of TSIs. Furthermore, the constraints imposed by institutional and jurisdictional boundaries, as seen in both cases, underscore the need

to investigate how multi-level governance arrangements can better support localised innovations while aligning with broader regulatory frameworks. While our cases demonstrate how governance innovations can indeed trigger relevant changes, especially at the cultural-discursive and political-institutional level, and that TSI can play a crucial role in advancing a WE in place into the future, these research directions could strengthen the conceptual and practical foundations of TSI through engaging further with their paradoxes and contractions and their effects for implementing a WE.

7 Appendix

Table 1 Pseudonymised list of interviewees (Vienna)

| Code | Institutional Role | Date | Mode |
|------|--|-------------------|--------|
| V1 | Representative of Vienna Neighborhood Management Team | October 25, 2022 | Online |
| V2 | Representative from Municipal Department of Technical Urban Renewal, City of Vienna | November 21, 2022 | Online |
| V3 | Participant of the citizens' jury | December 05, 2022 | Online |
| V4 | Representative of Vienna Climate Team, City of Vienna | December 12, 2022 | Online |
| V5 | Expert in participatory methods of the Austrian Society for Environment and Technology | March 29, 2023 | Online |

Table 2 Pseudonymised list of interviewees (Oxford)

| Code | Role | Date | Mode |
|------|-----------------------------------|----------------|--------|
| O1 | Participant of the citizens' jury | August 2022 | Online |
| O2 | Participant of the citizens' jury | August 2022 | Online |
| O3 | Participant of the citizens' jury | September 2022 | Online |
| O4 | Participant of the citizens' jury | September 2022 | Online |
| O5 | Participant of the citizens' jury | September 2022 | Online |

Table 3 Evaluation of 'Street Voice': Participants' feeling of being informed on issues; Question: On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means "not at all informed" and 10 means "very well informed", to what extent, if at all, do you feel that you are informed at the moment on the following issues?

| Issue | Mean, pre-process (<i>n</i> = 14) | Mean, post-process (<i>n</i> = 11) |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Transport planning | 2.5 | 5.8 |
| Public health | 3.3 | 6.2 |
| Air pollution | 3.5 | 6.2 |
| Climate change | 5.1 | 7.5 |
| Net zero | 2.6 | 6.4 |

Table 4 Evaluation of ‘Street Voice’: Participants’ views on statements; Question: On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means “not at all” and 10 means “very much”, to what extent, if at all, do you agree with the following statements?

| Statement | Mean, pre-process (<i>n</i> = 14) | Mean, post-process (<i>n</i> = 11) |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| I have trust in local government | 4.9 | 6.6 |
| I am likely to be engaged in decisions that affect my community in the future | 4.4 | 7.3 |

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