

Resurgentes: Climate Assemblies in Latin America



What is it?

- ▼ Global South innovation
- ▼ South-North learning
- ▼ South-South learning

Resurgentes is an initiative aiming to strengthen the democratization and decentralization of public decision-making processes for tackling the climate crisis in Latin America. In order to do so, it will organize four Climate Citizen Assemblies: one in Argentina, one in Brazil, one in Colombia, and one in Mexico. Additionally, inhabitants of the cities in which the Citizen Assemblies will occur will jointly construct, through a digital platform, an inter-city pact with priorities for a strategic vision for tackling the climate crisis in the region.

Who is it by and for?

The initiative is led by five deliberative democracy civil society organizations, spread throughout the four Latin American countries where the Citizen Assemblies will occur. In addition to the individual citizens drafted in the lottery to participate in the Assemblies, the wider population of these countries will get engaged with the process by contributing to the inter-city pact.

Implications for mutual learning

There are two main axes in which mutual learning happens in the Resurgentes project. The first is during the design and implementation phase, in which five different organizations exchange experiences and co-create a strategy based on their collective knowledge. The second occurs between each Citizen Assembly, when a moment is planned in which each Citizen Assembly “passes the torch” to the other. At the time of writing, no Citizen Assembly has occurred yet, which is why we will focus on the first axis of mutual learning.

Given that the project was jointly designed and is now being executed with shared responsibilities across five organizations in different time zones and speaking multiple languages, this makes for complex governance. Some steps were taken to ensure that all organizations could contribute to a joint, harmonized vision of the initiative, without erasing specificities that arise in local implementation. Weekly separate meetings were set up for the topics of governance, methodology, and communication. Aside from that, with help from Democracy R&D’s David Schecter, a



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prerequisite tree was built in which common milestones—that could be applied to all local processes—were agreed upon, and obstacles that would have to be overcome to reach the milestones were mapped.

The biggest underlying challenge to the collaborative decision-making and implementation processes lies in the organizations' work overload. All deal with several projects and tackle varied fronts at once, meaning there is some difficulty in purposefully dedicating time to learn a new process or methodology from the start. Because of the project's horizontal structure, organizations that have more knowledge of a specific methodology or process are concerned about the risks of seeming like they are imposing a certain way of doing things and being inflexible in the method. Additionally, this horizontal structure might at times mean that meetings are dedicated to validating a broad list of items, making them lengthy and less effective. A rotation of staff members from each organization that is present at each meeting might mean that information is lost from one meeting to the next. When people in charge of implementing the local assemblies are not present in meetings, an additional barrier is added to knowledge getting to the actual hands-on phases.

A few methods have proved to be helpful. Having one person, the project coordinator, serve as a “guardian” of the whole process is key to keeping the work cohesive and guaranteeing that no individual tasks get lost among all the individual actors. Outsourcing specific fronts has also proved to be effective: The initiative has had a great experience with a communications agency that is able to gather inputs from the different actors, with equal distance from each one, and efficiently deliver the desired outcomes. A third observation concerns the decision to divide the work, assigning clear “owners” of specific tasks, versus having everyone be co-responsible for the completion of a task. The former has a much greater chance for success. Lastly, some activities have proved to be more adequate for virtual collaboration, and specific platforms, such as Miro and Figma, allow for hands-on work sessions.

Regarding the second axis of mutual learning present in the Resurgentes project, the project foresees having one virtual meeting between Assembly participants at the closing of one Assembly and the beginning of another. It should be inspirational, energize the new participants, and create a greater sense of collective work. The platform for the Inter-City pact also has the potential to serve as a South-South mutual learning and Collaboration site, in which citizens of one country are encouraged to take the perspectives of citizens of other countries into account, hence creating a much-needed regional perspective and sense of belonging.

