

## ARTICLE

# From Deliberation to Headlines: Media Coverage and Framing of the 2022 Luxembourg Climate Citizens' Assembly (Klima-Biergerrot)

Emilien Paulis, Lisa Verhasselt & Raphaël Kies\*

## Abstract

*Climate Citizens' Assemblies (CCAs) have become a valuable tool for directly involving citizens in addressing the pressing challenges posed by the climate crisis. Central to their legitimacy is their capacity to engage a broad audience with the complexities of participatory and environmental politics. In this respect, the media plays a crucial role in influencing whether and how CCAs are portrayed. Recognizing a lack of research connecting media and (C)CAs, this study aims to advance the research agenda through a case study of the Luxembourgish Klima Biergerrot (KBR). Analysing 120 media pieces, we aim to better understand which factors influence both the volume and framing of a CCA in media discourse. Our findings are three-fold. First, coverage tends to be more extensive and positive when the media focuses on the CCA's outcomes rather than procedural aspects. Second, media outlets with left-leaning ideologies tend to provide more extensive coverage but frame the CCA more negatively compared to right-leaning counterparts. Third, while the gender of journalists does not affect the extent of the coverage, it influences the framing: women journalists tend to present CCAs more positively. This research underscores the role of the media in communicating CCAs and climate action.*

**Keywords:** media coverage, media framing, Maxi-public communication, Climate Citizens' Assemblies (CCAs), Luxembourgish Klima-Biergerrot (KBR).

## 1 Introduction

Climate change has risen to the forefront of global concerns, with its far-reaching impacts necessitating urgent and collective action. In this era of environmental crisis, traditional modes of decision-making are often said to fall short of adequately addressing the complexities of climate-related issues (Willis et al., 2022). In

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response, Climate Citizens' Assemblies (CCAs), a format of deliberative mini-publics focusing on climate policy, have emerged at all levels of governance as innovative, participatory instruments designed to bridge the gap between expert knowledge, public opinion and policy action. CCAs serve as critical platforms of participatory democracy, bringing together a randomly selected representative group of individuals to engage in informed discussions and generate recommendations on climate policies. In recent years, the rise of citizens' assemblies to address climate change has been remarkable, resulting in a global proliferation of CCAs across various levels of governance.

However, since these assemblies typically involve only a small fraction of the population, it is crucial to connect their outcomes and significance with the broader society effectively. This is where the role of media becomes indispensable. As society's primary information source, media is a powerful tool for disseminating knowledge about various topics. Notably, by disseminating CCA outcomes beyond their immediate participants, the media contributes to raising awareness of CCAs and the climate crisis (Lage et al., 2023). This dissemination is essential because, despite widespread opposition to stringent climate mitigation policies (Fairbrother, 2022), public acceptance may increase when these decisions stem from citizen-led policy recommendations. Additionally, media visibility can exert pressure on decision-makers to implement CCA outcomes (Junius, 2023). Put differently, as the concept of CAs has gained traction in addressing pressing societal challenges, including climate change, the framing of CCAs in media coverage has become increasingly significant.

Media thus serves as a critical intermediary, influencing how these deliberative processes are portrayed, perceived and, ultimately, integrated into the broader discourse on climate action. More precisely, the media holds significant power by determining whether a story is newsworthy, and how it is framed. Indeed, through framing, media heavily shapes how we view the world, how we interact with the news topic, and even determining our (in)actions (Bennet & Etman, 2001, Scheuffele, 1999). In this regard, framing dictates how CCAs are reported: positive, balanced coverage can portray assemblies as vital contributors to climate action, bolstering the assembly's legitimacy and influencing policymakers to consider its recommendations seriously (Delap, 2001; Capstick et al., 2020). Hence, framing CCAs in media coverage has substantial implications for how CCAs are portrayed, as well as the effectiveness and impact of these deliberative processes.

However, research on the interplay between CCAs and their framing in media coverage is relatively scarce. We therefore aim to fill that gap by exploring the nuances of media coverage and its framing of CCAs. To that end, this article critically examines how the media reported on the Luxembourgish climate citizens' assembly, the Klima-Biergerrot (KBR). Taking place in 2022, the KBR provides an interesting case to compare media coverage across outlets and examine variation. Through an analysis of 120 media pieces, we aim to answer the question: What factors influence the media coverage and framing of CCAs? Our findings are divided into two parts: first, we explore the volume of coverage, focusing on the visibility and timing of articles about the KBR. Second, we delve into the framing of this coverage, examining the articles' tone. That is, we analyze whether journalists

portrayed the processes neutrally, positively, negatively or in a balanced manner. Overall, our study seeks to elucidate the factors behind the variation in both the quantity and content of media coverage of the KBR. To achieve this, we consider the characteristics of the CCA (process versus outcome), the media's ideological orientation and the journalist's gender.

## 2 Theoretical Framework: Media and (C)CAs

Like many other policy fields, environmental policymaking has been affected by the deliberative turn. Over the last two decades, established democracies have increasingly implemented deliberative instruments like mini-publics in which a randomly selected body of citizens learn, deliberate and come to decisions on a matter of public interest. Interestingly, they have particularly been used to cope with environmental issues (Paulis et al., 2020), a domain where current governments seem to fail to respond effectively (Willis et al., 2022). The most recent and visible developments in this direction are the spread of citizens' assemblies on climate, with well-documented examples in Ireland, France, the UK, and many other EU countries.

Although many deliberative theorists have acknowledged the democratic importance of transmission and communicative mechanisms to connect formal and informal spheres of deliberation (Chambers, 2009; Chambers & Costain, 2006; Habermas, 1996), we know little about the media coverage of these deliberative instruments. Indeed, research on deliberation and media studies have long been separate fields of inquiry. More precisely, the literature on deliberative processes was mainly interested in visibility and publicity. That is, attracting media attention to processes such as mini-publics (Escobar & Elstub 2017; Karpowitz & Raphael 2014; Pomatto 2019; Rinke et al., 2013). With the systemic approach, deliberative processes and media studies were brought closer. Most scholars agree that deliberation as a societal-wide process requires a deeper understanding. Consequently, a deliberative system cannot exist without an enlarged public sphere (Dryzek & Hendriks, 2012; Habermas, 1996; Mansbridge et al., 2012; Neblo, 2015; Niemeyer, 2014; Parkinson, 2012; Thompson, 2008; Warren, 2007). Within the framework of deliberative systems, media then assumes a crucial role (Maia, 2018). Yet, the relationship between media coverage, its drivers, and (C)CAs remains largely unexplored.

Reports evaluating CCAs in France, the UK and Austria show that these deliberative events receive attention from traditional media (Buzogany et al., 2022; Elstub et al., 2011). The reports also indicate that media coverage increases and becomes more positive after the final report is publicly released and delivered to the commissioning bodies (Buzogany et al., 2022; Elstub et al., 2021; Elstub et al., 2022). LeDuc (2011) analysed how three major Canadian newspapers covered the 2006 Ontario Citizens' Assembly. His findings suggest some negative bias in the coverage, undermining the public legitimacy of the process. Rinke et al. (2013) examined print media coverage of the Australian Citizens' Parliament, focusing on the number of articles, tone and perspectives. They found that although the overall

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tone of the press coverage was positive with frequent connection to demands for more citizen participation, the process and recommendations received limited coverage. More recently, McGovern and Thorne (2021) focused on the Irish Citizens' Assembly to examine its impact on climate reporting in the Irish media. They found that the media coverage of the Irish CCA was predominantly positive, although frequently superficial and lacking in detail regarding the deliberative process.

Following Pomatto (2019), media logic plays a vital role in determining news coverage. This logic revolves around the concept of newsworthiness and the favouritism towards events that can maximise readership and audience engagement. Fournier et al. (2011) argued that citizens' assemblies lack core elements that attract media attention, such as conflict and polarisation. The media may selectively emphasise parts of deliberative processes that are most newsworthy, neglecting what went well or the process itself. For instance, Parkinson (2006) illustrated how TV channels polarised and dramatised discussions among participants in a deliberative poll.

Based on previous findings, we find media coverage intensifies and becomes more positive once the final reports of CCAs are made public. Additionally, media logic emphasises newsworthiness, prioritising events that maximise readership and audience engagement. Therefore, we anticipate that the media will favour covering the outcomes of CCAs more extensively and positively than the procedural aspects.

*Hypothesis 1: Media coverage of a CCA will be more extensive and positive regarding the outcomes than procedural aspects.*

Aiming to explain the disparity in media attention towards (C)CAs and democratic innovations in general, researchers propose various suggestions. One line suggests that design elements play a crucial role. This can include the allocation of (financial) resources for a media and public information strategy (Leduc, 2011; Elstub et al., 2021) or having a dedicated spokesperson (Fournier et al., 2011). The entity that initiates the deliberative process is also believed to have a significant impact on media coverage, with processes commissioned by governments having a higher likelihood of press coverage than those initiated by civil society. Some authors have also mentioned the potential impact of specific structural traits. For example, Pomatto (2019) suggested that political culture and system could play a role. Other authors similarly argue that political sponsorship can introduce a partisan bias (Leduc, 2009; Boswell et al., 2013; Carson, 2013).

As per Rinke (2016), media outlets may display bias in their reporting by either supporting or undermining the credibility of these assemblies based on their editorial stance. Political parallelism refers to a pattern in which certain media systematically echoes the views and agenda of political groups (Albuquerque, 2013), reflecting the alignment of newspapers along the lines of different ideological, political and cultural views (Mancini, 2015). While the "political tendencies of European newspapers are fuzzier today than they were a generation ago" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, 27), studies suggest that coverage in Western Europe

can still significantly differ depending on the political orientation of the media outlet (Paksoy, 2013; Kaiser & Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2016; van der Pas et al., 2017; Grassmuck & Thomass, 2023). Research focused on Luxembourg has also stressed media-party connections (Lamour, 2023; Kies & Lukasic, 2023). Despite a decline in formal partisan affiliations over the past decade alongside stricter media regulations, political biases continue to influence Luxembourg citizens' perceptions of media neutrality (Kies, 2024). Moreover, among journalists, there persists a perception that editorial stances often reflect the historical political leanings of their respective outlets.<sup>1</sup> This emphasises that media coverage is likely to be influenced by the political alignment and associated ideologies of specific media groups.

Kostelka and Rovny (2019) point out that left-wing movements and parties, as advocates for greater equality, have historically shown a stronger inclination towards participatory practices and instruments. Moreover, left-wing politicians and parties are more supportive of implementing participatory processes than their right-wing counterparts (Rangoni et al., 2021; Gherghina et al., 2022), as are leftist citizens (Paulis & Rangoni, 2023). Furthermore, left-wing parties typically prioritise post-materialist issues, such as environmental concerns. For instance, the Green Party has long been the foremost advocate for addressing climate change and more participatory, citizen-led forms of democracy (Van Haute, 2018). In other words, the fight against climate change is more salient to left-wing parties (Farstad, 2018; Schwörer, 2024) and voters (Chan & Tam, 2023; Fisher et al., 2022).

The above theoretical findings underscore that media outlets often align with political ideologies, influencing their editorial lines and, hence, their coverage and framing of certain issues. For example, left-leaning media provides more extensive coverage of climate change compared to conservative media (Bohr, 2020). Given these insights, we hypothesise that left-leaning media outlets will cover climate citizens' assemblies more extensively and positively than right-leaning media outlets, reflecting the prioritisation of environmental issues and citizen participation.

*Hypothesis 2: Media outlets with a historical left-leaning orientation will provide more extensive and positive coverage of CCAs compared to those historically leaning right.*

In addition to media logic and – historical – political parallelism, there are numerous variables that shape journalistic reporting. These include economic pressures (McManus, 1994; Cook 1998), organizational structures within newsrooms (Altmeyden, 2000; Sigelman, 1973), genres of journalism (Jaakkola, 2018), and the journalists' profiles (Patterson & Donsbach, 1996; Weaver, 1998). Their profiles encompass their political beliefs, opinions, and various demographic factors among which gender has received considerable attention in the literature. Gender encompasses socially defined roles for individuals who identify as men, women, and those who do not adhere to this binary classification.<sup>2</sup>

While discourse on women's representation in the news early revealed government their underrepresentation and portrayal in stereotypical gender roles

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(Tuchman et al., 1978), the inclusion of women's voices in news coverage remains a significant topic in academic research on journalism (Armstrong, 2004; Fröhlich 2007; Baitinger, 2015; Kian et al., 2011; Niemi & Pitkänen, 2016; Carter et al., 2019; Sjøvaag & Pedersen, 2019; Klaas & Boukes, 2020; Van der Pas & Aldering, 2020). A specific strand of research delves into the differences in content and tone by gender (Sunoo 1994; Peiser, 2000). The Global Media Monitoring Project investigates the types of stories that men and women reporters typically cover, revealing that women are most commonly assigned stories related to science and health, but the least likely to cover politics (Macharia, 2015). These findings underscore that men tend to cover hard news topics such as politics and economics, while women are more likely to write about soft news topics related to society, culture, and feminine issues (Craft & Wanta 2004; Poindexter & Harp, 2008; Armstrong et al., 2012; North, 2014; Sjøvaag & Pedersen, 2019; Tomasic & Gottfried, 2023). Similarly, Rodny-Gumed's (2015) study reveals that while women and men frequently cover similar beats and stories, they tend to prioritise different story angles and articulate their societal roles in distinct ways, women being particularly more balanced in their portrayal of women athletes and politicians, for instance (Kian & Hardin 2009; Kim & Yoon 2009).

Because journalism research has long underscored that gender has an impact on coverage, we assume that it might affect the coverage of CCAs. Indeed, public opinion research on CAs indicates that women generally exhibit greater support for citizen-led policy instruments (Talukder & Pilet, 2021), and are more actively involved when participating in mini-publics (Harris et al., 2020). Women also tend to hold more positive attitudes towards CAs than men. Additionally, studies by the UNDP have demonstrated that women are disproportionately affected by climate change and, therefore, play a crucial role as advocates in combatting it (Baumwoll et al., 2016). Psychological research further suggests that women demonstrate a higher level of concern for environmental issues and engage in more conservation efforts than men (Descrochers et al., 2019). They also exhibit less skepticism towards climate change (Whitmarsh, 2011; Tranter & Booth, 2015) and generally hold more positive environmental attitudes. Therefore, given the observed differences in media coverage between men and women journalists, and considering that women generally hold more positive views on climate change and environmental issues, we hypothesise that women journalists will cover CCAs more extensively and frame them more positively.

*Hypothesis 3: Women journalists, compared to men, will provide more extensive coverage and frame CCAs more positively.*

In conclusion, journalistic reporting is a complex field influenced by a myriad of factors, as shown above. Indeed, Harcup (2009) claims that "journalism is not produced in a vacuum" (p. 17). In this article, we consider three variables: the characteristics of the CCA (process versus outcome), the media's ideological orientation, and the journalist's gender.

### 3 Data and Methods

#### 3.1 *The Klima-Biergerrot (KBR)*

To examine the hypotheses mentioned above, we focus on the Luxembourgish Klima-Biergerrot and its media coverage within Luxembourg. Commissioned by the Luxembourg Government,<sup>3</sup> the KBR was composed of a representative sample of 100 citizens working or living in Luxembourg. With the help of professional facilitators and a wide range of experts, they were tasked with discussing Luxembourg's current commitments as regards combating climate change and providing recommendations regarding potential additional measures or proposals for climate policy. The KBR started in January 2022 and concluded in September 2022, with the participants delivering and presenting their final report and 56 recommendations to the government and the media.

The KBR presents an interesting topic for analysing media coverage of a CCA. Studying how the KBR is framed helps to understand how the assembly and its recommendations are portrayed, offering insights into how media influences public understanding of climate change and willingness to support or participate in climate initiatives. Specifically to Luxembourg, the KBR marks the first occurrence of a CCA of such scale at the national level (Paulis et al., 2024). Analysing its media coverage highlights how novel democratic processes are presented to the public, potentially influencing public perception and acceptance of such mechanisms. Despite ownership concentration, Luxembourg's media landscape is expansive compared to potential demand (Kies & Lukasic, 2023), fuelled by the Grand Duchy's internationalisation and linguistic diversification (Lamour, 2023). This diversity of media outlets and audience demographics positions the KBR as an intriguing case study for CCA research, providing various avenues for visibility and audience engagement. Overall, the KBR offers a rich context for exploring media framing of climate citizens's assemblies, providing valuable lessons for climate communication, public engagement and participatory democracy.

#### 3.2 *Data*

We monitored the media coverage of KBR over almost two years: from the Prime Minister's initial announcement in October 2021 to September 2023, six months after the government provided a formal update on the implementation of the recommendations. We considered all national mass media (including print, online, TV and radio), which provided KBR-related content that could be accessed retroactively on their websites. We compiled these materials into a dataset, in which each entry corresponds to a specific media piece covering the Luxembourg CCA. Considering Luxembourg's multilingual nature, we translated all titles and content into English. Additionally, we manually stored various raw information, such as publishing date, media outlet and journalist's name, as well as systematically coded several variables on the content of each media piece (see Appendix 1, Table A for further details). To minimise personal bias, particularly concerning subjective assessment, we combined a strategy of collective, consensus coding of the media pieces with a procedure of intercoder reliability, where two authors later individually recoded a random selection of the collective media pieces, ending up with an

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acceptable rate of 84% of agreement with the initial coding on average (see Appendix 2).

### 3.3 *Variables and Analytical Strategy*

Our analysis of the media coverage of KBR involves examining the variations in two aspects. The first dependent variable we consider is the quantity of media attention, which involves assessing the extent of coverage. This is done by gauging how often KBR is mentioned in Luxembourgish media to get a general idea of the number of press articles mentioning the KBR over the studied period. We identified and gathered 120 media pieces that directly referenced the KBR from 18 different national outlets (see Appendix 6 for the full list of articles). This indicates a relatively high level of interest in KBR within Luxembourgish media.<sup>4</sup>

The second dependent variable we are examining is the content of media coverage. More precisely, we scrutinise the media's framing of the KBR. For this study, we define framing as the strategic positioning of reported events within a particular perspective (Scheufele, 1999; Pérez, 2017). Accordingly, framing categorises how information is presented: positive, negative, neutral, or balanced. Positive framing highlights favourable aspects, outcomes, or interpretations to emphasise achievements or positive developments. Conversely, negative framing draws attention to unfavourable aspects, problems, or criticisms associated with the KBR. Neutral framing presents information objectively, without value judgment, focusing on factual accuracy. Balanced framing integrates both positive and negative elements to provide a comprehensive view that acknowledges diverse perspectives or facets of the KBR. These framing strategies are pivotal in influencing public perception and understanding, as they determine which aspects of a story receive emphasis or are downplayed in media coverage. Thus, each piece is coded as follows: neutral is coded as 0, negative as 1, positive as 2, and balanced as 3.<sup>5</sup>

To test our expectations, we rely on three independent variables. The first variable, 'Focus,' is categorical and indicates whether the piece focuses solely on the procedural aspects of the CCA (coded as 0), the outcomes (coded as 1), or both simultaneously (coded as 2). The second variable, 'Political leaning' (H2), is categorical and indicates the ideological stance of the outlet publishing the piece. Media aligned with socialist, green or communist parties are coded as left-wing (coded as 0), those associated with conservative or economically liberal ideologies as right-wing (coded as 1), and independent media are categorised separately (coded as 2). To support this coding, we detailed the specificities of the Luxembourg media landscape (see Appendix 4) and traced the proximity of media groups to political parties (summarised in Appendix 4, Table A). The third variable, 'Gender' (H3), indicates the gender of the journalist reporting on the CCA (women coded as 0, men as 1, and 2 assigned to pieces where gender is unknown).

In our analysis, we examined variations in volume and content by presenting descriptive and bivariate results across the relevant independent variables. We supplemented these findings with qualitative insights into the dynamics between the KBR and media coverage. This approach offers a comprehensive understanding of both the quantity and evolution of coverage surrounding the CCA. Additionally, we conducted a multinomial regression analysis to explore whether our independent



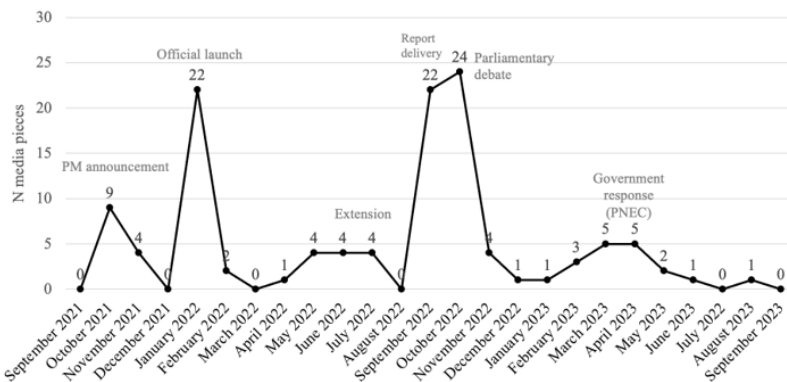
variables could explain variations in the probability of media pieces engaging with argumentative coverage and presenting a positive framing of the CCA. This allowed us to determine the extent to which our findings align with the descriptive observations, thus providing a more robust understanding of the factors driving variations in the quality of media coverage of a CCA. Given the potential variance in the number of media pieces across outlets, we clustered the standard errors of our model based on the names of the outlets. This approach ensures a more accurate estimation of the model parameters and enhances the reliability of our results. To get sense of the effect sizes, the regression table (Appendix 5, Table A) reports relative risk ratios.

## 4 Analysis

### 4.1 H1 – Characteristics of CCA: Procedural Aspects and Outcomes

Figure 1 provides an overview of the media pieces related to KBR and when they were published. The graph shows a pattern consistent with previous studies, with significant peaks in coverage at the beginning of the process (January 2022) and especially at its end – specifically when the final report was presented to the government (September 2022) and when it was debated in parliament (October 2022). In between these peaks, KBR managed to maintain visibility despite having a minimal communication strategy (Paulis et al., 2024). Additionally, there was some coverage of the KBR when the draft NECP was first presented (April 2023) and when the government provided its official response, detailing whether and how each recommendation was integrated into the climate policy.

**Figure 1** The evolution of the KBR’s media coverage



The descriptive statistics in Table 1 show that the majority of media pieces were neutral (41.7%). This trend aligns with observations from other CCAs, suggesting that journalists prioritise maintaining neutrality and impartiality, especially on

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critical and contentious topics like climate change. This approach helps cater to a diverse audience with varying perspectives on climate issues, avoiding the risk of alienating certain segments of the public and maintaining their credibility by not appearing to advocate for a specific agenda. Among the remaining pieces, 20% reported solely negative perspectives, while 28.8% reported positive perspectives.

Aligning with our expectations, 43.3% of the analysed media pieces focused exclusively on the (expected) outcomes of the KBR, without delving into the process. In contrast, 20% concentrated solely on the procedural dimension, completely omitting discussion of the outcomes. The remaining 36.7% addressed both aspects concurrently. Our findings thus support the first part of H1: media coverage of a CCA's outcomes is more extensive compared to its coverage of procedural aspects.

The media's extensive coverage of the KBR's outcomes, rather than its procedural aspects, can be attributed to several factors rooted in Pomatto's (2019) media logic, which prioritises newsworthiness and events that maximise readership and audience engagement. First, outcomes often carry significant political and societal implications, influencing public opinion and policy agendas. Media coverage of these outcomes can shape discourse and debate on climate issues, heightening their importance in public and political spheres. Additionally, given Luxembourg's high per capita greenhouse gas emissions, media attention naturally gravitates toward the environmental implications of the CCA's recommendations. Second, the public generally shows greater interest in concrete outcomes and their potential impacts rather than the procedural intricacies of decision-making processes. Media outlets cater to this preference by focusing on what the assembly proposes or achieves in addressing climate change. Third, outcomes are more straightforward to explain and understand compared to procedural details such as recruitment methods or deliberation processes. Media coverage tends to simplify complex topics for broader audience comprehension, leading to an emphasis on outcomes over procedures.

**Table 1** Descriptive Statistics of the Main Variables

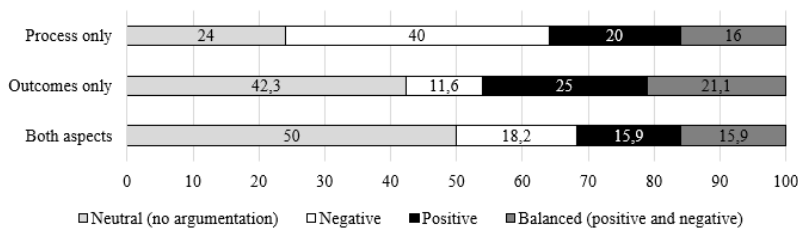
IVs	DVs	N	%	Extensiveness			Argumentation		
				Neutral	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Balanced
Aspect under consideration (H1)	Procedural aspects (0)	24	20.0	50	24	25	21		
	Outcomes (1)	52	43.3	41.7	20.0	28.8	17.5		
	Both (2)	44	36.7						
Political leaning (H2)	Left (0)	44	36.7						
	Right (1)	33	27.5						
	No affiliation (2)	43	35.8						
Gender (H3)	Women (0)	32	26.7						
	Men (1)	68	56.7						
	Unknown/NA (2)	20	16.7						

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In summary, these factors likely collectively contributed to the media's prioritisation of covering the KBR's outcomes, reflecting broader trends in media practice and audience preferences. However, the focus on outcomes over processes raises significant questions about the media's role in enhancing public awareness and understanding of how CCAs function. This understanding is yet crucial for the perceived legitimacy of CAs in public opinion (Pow et al., 2021), especially given that such policy instruments are still relatively unfamiliar.

Having validated the first part of H1, we now shift focus to framing. Figure 2 highlights that media pieces concentrating solely on outcomes were slightly more positive (25%) compared to those centred on procedural aspects alone (20%). These findings are reinforced by the regression results (Appendix 5), indicating that media pieces exclusively addressing outcomes are significantly more likely to fall into all categories except negative, in contrast to those solely focused on procedural aspects. The second part of H1 is thus also supported by our findings: media coverage of a CCA is more positive regarding the outcomes compared to the procedural aspects.

**Figure 2** The argumentation in KBR's media coverage according to the focus



Media framing of a CCA's outcomes tends to be more positive (or in any case, less negative) compared to its procedural aspects due to several factors rooted in media logic, as discussed by Pomatto (2019). Because outcomes often represent concrete decisions, recommendations or impacts that can capture public interest and influence policy discussions, the media may tend to frame them in a more positive, neutral or balanced light. On the other hand, procedural aspects, which involve logistical details, deliberative processes and administrative procedures, may receive less attention unless they involve controversies or significant disruptions that align with traditional news values of conflict or drama. Put differently, as underscored by Fournier et al. (2011), the selective emphasis on newsworthy elements can contribute to the observed difference in how media cover outcomes versus procedural aspects of citizen's assemblies.

Indeed, mainly the procedural aspects evoked criticism (see Appendix 3 for some examples). The daily newspaper *Le Quotidien* serves as a prime instance of how media logic significantly influences the coverage of CCAs. The newspaper published several negative articles with sensationalist headlines like "Strong criticisms

against the Klima Biergerrot” (16 January 2022); “The Klima Biergerrot starts under a fire of criticisms” (29 January 2022); “Disappointed citizens, the debate postponed” (15 June 2022); and “Klima Biergerrot: a painstaking job, 7 days a week” (13 July 2022). These articles explicitly criticised various procedural aspects of the KBR, such as its schedule, agenda, design, operational framework and selection of experts. The coverage, and particularly framing, prompted the conservative opposition party (CSV) to raise parliamentary questions on these procedural aspects, underscoring the influence and power of media. In response, KBR members felt compelled to issue an open letter to clarify that the newspaper’s portrayal did not represent the majority opinion within the assembly.

In Figure 2, it is evident that the media coverage of the KBR’s results was less negative. *Le Quotidien* exemplifies how when focusing on outcomes the negative narrative diminishes. Following the release of the final report, the outlet featured articles that were more positively framed, highlighting specific recommendations or the broader use of participatory processes: “Klima Biergerrot: crafts need to be valued” (20 September 2022); “Klima Biergerrot wants to make teleworking a norm” (21 September 2022); and “Do even more participation” (23 March 2023). The large share of neutral coverage post-process can be explained by the fact that the media mainly engaged in fact-based reporting of the recommendations. Additionally, the increase in balanced coverage is linked to the integration of certain KBR recommendations into policies and legislation. Overall, our findings illustrate how media framing can vary significantly depending on whether the focus is on the procedural aspects or on the outcomes of a climate citizen’s assembly, reflecting different perspectives, priorities and public interest dynamics in media reporting.

Hence, our findings confirm our initial hypothesis: media coverage of a CCA is more extensive and positive when focusing on outcomes compared to procedural aspects. In broader terms, we conclude that media coverage of the outcomes of a CCA is not only more positive but also more neutral, characterised by factual reporting and balanced, suggesting a nuanced portrayal that acknowledges both the strengths and limitations of the outcomes.

#### 4.2 H2 – Characteristics of Media Outlet: Political Leaning

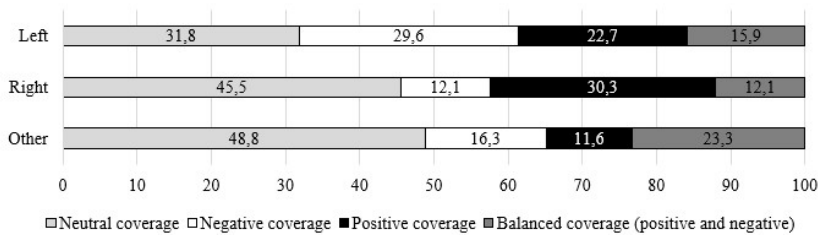
Regarding the second hypothesis and a potential ideology-based bias in the CCA’s coverage, Table 1 shows that 36.5% of the KBR’s media coverage appeared in outlets historically associated with left-wing parties and movements. In contrast, a smaller proportion of the CCA’s coverage (27.5%) was provided by right-leaning outlets. The remaining 35.8% of the coverage came from outlets without a clear political identity.<sup>6</sup> These findings suggest that left-leaning media may be more inclined to cover the KBR, possibly due to a greater alignment with environmental and participatory democracy issues, which are often central to left-wing political agendas. The smaller proportion of coverage in right-leaning outlets may reflect differing priorities or skepticism about the effectiveness and importance of citizen assemblies and climate action, common within right-leaning ideologies. Overall, these findings suggest that there is a noticeable ideological bias in the media coverage of the CCA, with left-leaning outlets providing more extensive coverage.

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The first part of our second hypothesis is thus supported: media outlets with a – historical – left-leaning orientation provide more extensive coverage of CCAs, compared to those historically leaning right.

Having established that left-leaning media outlets do indeed cover CCAs more extensively, we now turn to the issue of framing. Contrary to our expectations, Figure 3 reveals that left-leaning media outlets had the highest proportion of negative coverage on the CCA. Additionally, they featured fewer pieces with an entirely positive line of argumentation compared to right-leaning outlets. This finding is further confirmed by the multivariate analysis, which shows that right-wing media pieces had significantly higher odds of adopting a positive framing over a negative one. The second part of our hypothesis can thus not be confirmed: media outlets with a historical left-leaning orientation will not provide more positive coverage of CCAs compared to those historically leaning right.

**Figure 3** *The argumentation in the KBR's media coverage according to the outlets' political alignment*



Left-leaning media outlets might report more negatively on CCAs for several reasons. Left-leaning media and their audience often have high expectations for democratic and participatory processes, leading to criticism if the CCA does not meet these expectations. Additionally, these outlets tend to support progressive and transformative action on climate issues, expressing disappointment or skepticism if a CCA is perceived as not proposing radical solutions. Left-leaning media also emphasises the need for systemic change to address environmental issues and, hence, scrutinises the implementation and potential impact of the CCA's recommendations, questioning whether they will lead to meaningful change or merely serve as token gestures. For instance, even after the government presented new climate policy measures inspired by the KBR, left-wing journals questioned whether these measures were ambitious enough to address the urgency of climate change or if they were just a strategy to delay mitigation action and shift the burden onto citizens.

In addition, left-leaning media tends to align with critiques from environmental and social justice groups, which often hold stringent views on climate action, which can also contribute to negative coverage if the CCA is seen as insufficient in addressing the urgency and scale of the climate crisis. Indeed, both *Le Quotidien* and *Woxx* echoed early criticisms from civil society organisations, which were

concerned about potential government hijacking of the process and the marginalisation of their role in climate policymaking. In summary, negative reporting from left-leaning media on CCAs is likely to stem from their higher expectations, critical stance towards these processes and their recommendations, and alignment with advocacy groups.

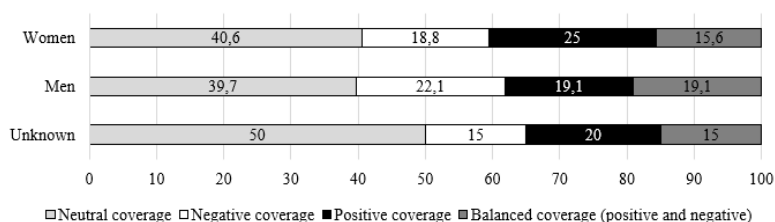
To that end, our findings partially support the second hypothesis: media outlets with a historical left-leaning orientation indeed provide more extensive coverage of CCAs compared to those historically leaning right; however, they do not frame them more positively. In fact, left-leaning media provided significantly more negative coverage of the KBR. Additionally, we observed that ‘neutral’ media outlets (i.e. those without political affiliation), namely, the public service media in Luxembourg, published the most neutral and balanced articles. This highlights how neutral media contributes to less politically biased coverage of democratic innovations like CCAs, in contrast to commercial media (Pomatto, 2019).

#### 4.3 H3 – *Characteristics of Journalist: Gender*

Our third hypothesis explores how journalists’ gender influences their framing of a CCA. Out of the 120 media pieces we analysed, 26.7% were authored by women, while men accounted for 56.7% of the coverage. The remaining pieces were either unsigned or attributed to larger journalistic teams where individual authorship was not specified (see Table 1). Census data indicate that approximately 30% of press cardholders in Luxembourg are women.<sup>7</sup> The proportion of media coverage by women journalists then roughly aligns with their representation in the field. Accordingly, the data suggest that women journalists made a substantial contribution, accounting for a quarter of the analysed media pieces. However, given this data, we cannot confirm the first part of our hypothesis: women journalists, compared to men journalists, do not provide more extensive coverage of CCAs.

Regarding the framing of media coverage, the bivariate analysis (see Figure 4) indicates that media pieces adopting a strictly positive argumentation in the coverage of the KBR were slightly more prevalent when authored by women compared to men. This difference appears also statistically significant in the multivariate analysis. In essence, our findings suggest that women were more inclined than men to present a strictly positive viewpoint or to frame the KBR neutrally in their reporting. Conversely, men tended to be more critical in their coverage of CCAs. This observation fits the literature that women and men take different story angles. Moreover, it is consistent with individual-level studies on public opinion, which indicate that women generally exhibit a more positive attitude toward the use of citizens’ participation and issues related to environmental challenges. The second part of H3 can thus be confirmed by our data: women journalists, compared to men journalists, tend to frame CCAs more positively.

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**Figure 4** *The argumentation in the KBR's media coverage according to journalists' gender*

Overall, while women journalists made a significant contribution to the coverage of CCAs, there was a higher proportion of men-authored pieces. Women journalists exhibit a slightly higher inclination toward neutrality, while men journalists tend to lean slightly more toward balanced framing. Although men journalists show a slightly higher propensity to frame their coverage negatively, women journalists are more likely to present a positive perspective in their coverage of the KBR. These findings suggest that while gender does influence the framing of coverage, it does not necessarily impact the extent of coverage itself. In other words, our findings only partially support H3: while women journalists, compared to men, do not provide more extensive coverage, they do tend to frame CCAs more positively.

## 5 Conclusion

Acknowledging the critical role of the media as a mediator between the 'mini' and the 'maxi' public, shaping and informing public discourse on CCAs, this study presents a pioneering quantitative analysis of media coverage of CCAs. Based on limited research and theoretical insights, we formulated three original hypotheses to elucidate variations in the quantity and framing of media attention given to CCAs. We tested these hypotheses in the framework of the Luxembourg CCA, namely the *Klima-Biergerrot*. Preliminarily, our study reveals that despite being the country's first CCA of this size on the national level, and the media and public's unfamiliarity with such a unique policymaking process, the KBR garnered significant attention from the Luxembourgish media. This robust media coverage is indicative of the CCA's potential impact on public opinion and policymaking, underscoring the media's fulfilling role. In fact, the media played an important role in ensuring that a significant share of the residing Luxembourgish population was informed about the KBR (Paulis et al., 2024). Moreover, we also found that the media framing went in all directions – neutral, positive, negative and balanced – thereby feeding a healthy, diversified and legitimate debate in the Luxembourg public sphere.

More interestingly, our objective was to uncover factors influencing both the extent and tone of media coverage of CCAs, revealing biases in quantity and framing. First, confirming our hypothesis (H1), media coverage of the KBR tended to be more extensive and positive when focusing on outcomes compared to



procedural aspects. This emphasis aligns with Pomatto's (2019) media logic, prioritising newsworthiness and audience engagement by highlighting concrete impacts and recommendations. Secondly, while we found support for the first part of H2 – left-leaning media outlets indeed provide more extensive coverage of CCAs – they do not necessarily frame them more positively. In fact, our analysis shows that left-leaning media often portray CCAs more negatively, reflecting higher expectations, critical stances toward processes and recommendations, and alignment with advocacy groups. Conversely, neutral media outlets, particularly public service media in Luxembourg, published the most balanced articles, contributing to less politically biased coverage (Pomatto, 2019). Third, our findings provide partial support for H3: despite a significant contribution from women journalists to CCA coverage, a higher proportion of men-authored pieces was observed. However, men journalists tended to frame their coverage more negatively, whereas women journalists leaned toward presenting a more positive perspective on the KBR. This discrepancy may stem from differences in environmental and participation perspectives, workplace dynamics, and personal beliefs.

In conclusion, our examination of the KBR's media coverage provides valuable insights into the influence and power of media in communicating about CCAs and thereby informing the public as well as shaping the public discourse. Yet, our study only focuses on one CCA – the KBR. Moving forward, systematic, comparative research is needed to generalise these findings. Incorporating qualitative, experimental and survey approaches will further illuminate the discursive dynamics and causal links between media exposure, public opinion and policy outcomes. By advancing this research agenda, we aim to contribute meaningfully to understanding how CCAs are portrayed and perceived in the media, informing future deliberative practices and environmental policymaking.

## Notes

- 1 'Les journeaux de parti, c'est fini' – *Lëtzbuerger Journal*, 2023: <https://journal.lu/fr/les-journeaux-de-parti-cest-fini>.
- 2 The representation and involvement of nonbinary genders in media remain under-researched areas that warrant further investigation beyond the scope of this article.
- 3 Three governmental bodies commissioned the initiative: the Ministry of State under Prime Minister Xavier Bettel, the Ministry of Environment, Climate and Sustainable Development led by Minister Joëlle Welfring, and the Ministry of Energy and Urban Planning overseen by Minister Claude Turmes.
- 4 For example, the Austrian CCA was featured in  $\pm 500$  media pieces, despite the media market size being 18 times larger than that of Luxembourg.
- 5 See Appendix 3 for a summary and examples.
- 6 For a more detailed overview of the newspapers and their respective ideologies that reported on the KBR, please refer to Appendix 4.
- 7 <https://www.press.lu/journalistes/liste-des-journalistes/>.

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