Summary
of different participatory processes in Auroville supported by CA (or CA team members)
October 2022

The Citizens Assembly Exploration team came together in August 2019 to explore whether the Citizens Assembly model (which was starting to be used in a few places globally) could be a potential tool to support/enable participatory processes within Auroville.

This was in response to concerns that within Auroville:

- Many important issues are getting stuck
- Aurovilians feel disengaged with existing processes/ fearful to participate (especially GMs) – which means few voices being heard
- We are increasingly stuck in 'silo' mentality and groupings.
- There is potential for civic engagement in the community which is not being tapped.

The Citizens Assembly model was seen as interesting because it brings together randomly selected community members to hear from a range of different perspectives on a topic. Participants then discuss these inputs in small groups and come to a final output (which may be a decision or recommendations).

It was also seen as interesting for Auroville because of its potential to create a more informed community on key topics, potential to understand the collective will in a deeper way and also to provide an opportunity to build connections and trust within the community.

The Citizens Assembly Exploration team piloted this model in Auroville in 2020. The key features and important learning outcomes from this pilot are summarised below.

- Presentation from a diverse panel of experts/stakeholders helps to bring forth as many perspectives as possible
- Randomly selection of community members helps ensure diverse voices are heard and participation goes beyond 'usual suspects' and those with vested interests.
- Facilitated discussion/deliberation in small groups helps ensure everyone can participate and have their voice heard
- Positive participation can be promoted through capacity building through training on bias and deep listening

- Participation can be encouraged through support including translations, childcare and resources for better understanding of technical concepts (visuals, open sessions).
- Feedback from presenters/participants at multiple stages can help the process holders understand the gaps and adapt/improve accordingly
- Implementation of the outcomes of such community processes is not assured; pathways to / bodies in charge of implementation therefore need to be identified and secured early on.
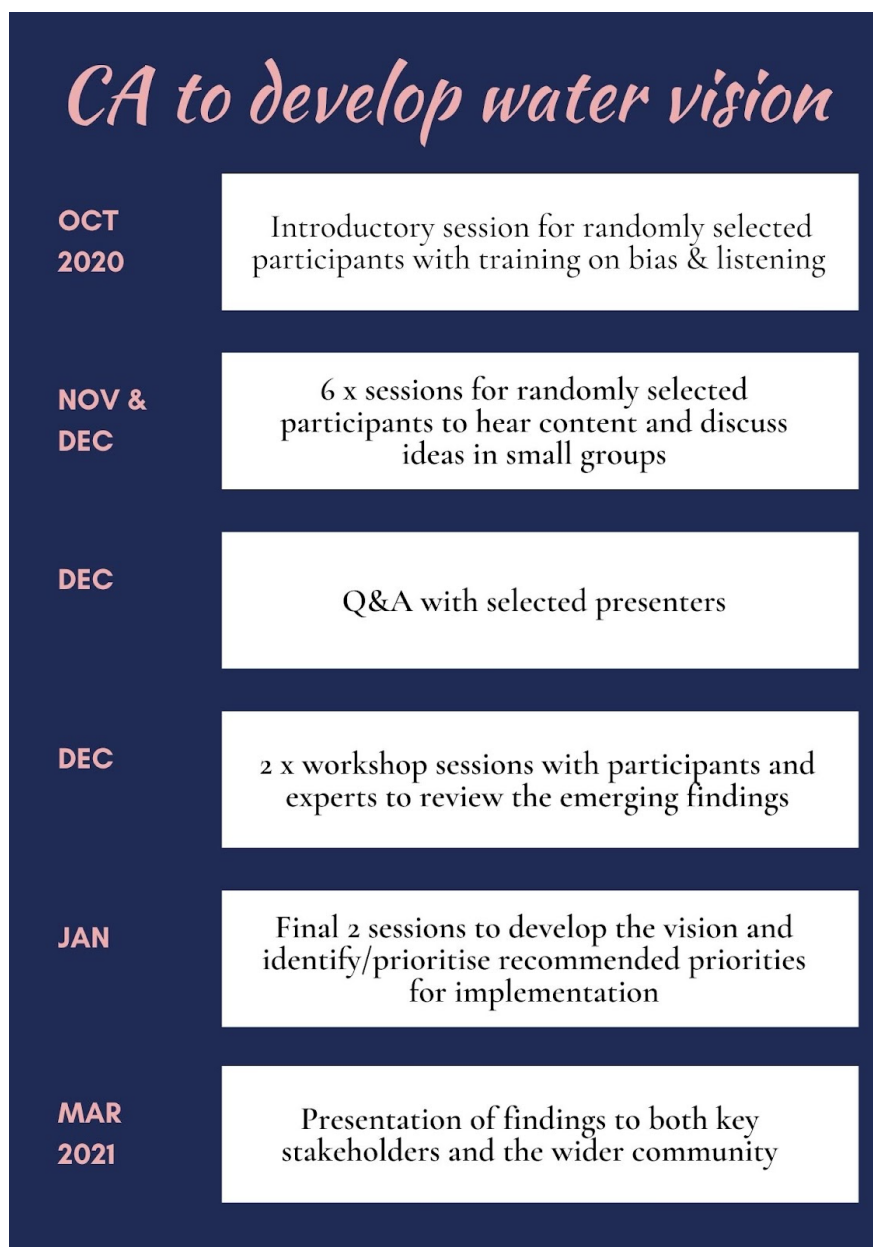
Following the pilot the Citizens Assembly team was asked to support the Dreamweaving process in 2022. Alongside this some of the team members helped BCC design and deliver their participatory budgeting process in 2022 also. This document summarises key features of these three processes.

Citizens Assembly on water (Oct 2020- Jan 2021)

What was the purpose?

To develop a water vision to help unite AV's water players around a common goal, identify some key steps/actions to move towards implementation of the vision, and build awareness and understanding in the community on this critical topic.

What was the process?

CA to develop water vision

OCT 2020	Introductory session for randomly selected participants with training on bias & listening
NOV & DEC	6 x sessions for randomly selected participants to hear content and discuss ideas in small groups
DEC	Q&A with selected presenters
DEC	2 x workshop sessions with participants and experts to review the emerging findings
JAN	Final 2 sessions to develop the vision and identify/prioritise recommended priorities for implementation
MAR 2021	Presentation of findings to both key stakeholders and the wider community

What was the key output?

A water vision agreed by the CA participants and prioritised recommendations for implementation.

Who was involved and how?

- **30 randomly selected Aurovilians/Newcomers above the age of 18** - who attended an info/training session, 6 sessions to hear the different perspectives and discuss in small groups what the key elements/priorities, and 2 workshop sessions to arrive at the outcomes (vision and the ideas for implementation).

- **Around 30 'experts'** - who were interviewed to give their perspective on what is needed in a water vision and its implementation, invited to review and provide feedback on the emerging outcomes and then following the CA to help implement the recommendations.

The wider community was not involved in the process although the content (updates, videos and reports) was shared with them and the outcomes were presented in a community meeting.

It was intended that if any aspects were to be formally adopted as a policy then the findings would go to an RAD for community review and discussion.

What was the role of the CA team?

The CA team designed and delivered the entire process. This included process design, facilitation, logistics, participant support, communications, budget and evaluation.

The CA also created an 'advisory team' to identify content/presenters and manage relationships with key stakeholders etc.

As there was no 'client' to hand implementation over to, some of the CA team members (along with some participants and 'experts') chose to support the implementation of the outcomes.

Effort/time

The time/effort required for this process was fairly intensive, with most time needed to identify/develop content (2 months) and then deliver the sessions (2 months). In addition 1 month was required to plan/design the process and a further 1 month for evaluation.

Dreamweaving the Crown (Jan - March 2022)

What was the purpose?

To provide Vastu Shilpa Consultancy with ideas and priorities from the community to inform their work on the DDP for the Crown.

The process sought not only to generate ideas from AV's architects but also to identify areas of agreement and to educate the community on this critical issue.

What was the process?

Dreamweaving

27 DEC	Community Gathering - to explain the proposed process to the wider community
4-6 JAN	Technical input - 3 day session for technical experts to provide background information
22 & 23 JAN	Dreamweaving round 1 - Architects present proposals to each other for feedback
5 & 6 FEB	Dreamweaving round 2 - Architects present updated proposals to peers, perspective representatives & randomly selected group
19 & 20 FEB	Dreamweaving round 3 - Architects present final proposals to peers, perspective representatives & randomly selected group
26 OR 27 FEB	Presentation of proposals to the wider community

What was the key output?

A report for Vastu Shilpa Consultancy which included the design ideas from the dreamweaving architects and results from the participant survey indicating which ideas/designs resonated most with them for key elements in the brief.

Who was involved and how?

- **Dreamweaving team -** 11 architect teams who generated and refined ideas for development on the Crown. They were supported by a core team (David, Omar, Mona & Allan).

- **Around 30? focus group members** - who attended the two final dreamweaving weekends to hear the presentations and provide feedback from a range of different perspectives.

- **Around 10 randomly selected Aurovilian/Newcomers above the age of 18** - who attended the two final dreamweaving weekends to hear the presentations and provide feedback from the broader community perspective.

- **Around 20? 'experts'** - who gave presentations in the initial sessions and also were invited to attend the two final dreamweaving weekends to hear the presentations and provide feedback from the peer/professional perspective.

The wider community was able to watch all the sessions live (mainly on-line due to covid restrictions) and the final report was shared with them and presented in a community meeting. They were not however able to provide feedback in the participant survey.

What was the role of the CA team?

The CA team supported the Dreamweaving team to design and deliver the process. They led on facilitation, logistics, participants support, communications, budget and evaluation.

The Dreamweaving team led on content - both in terms of the architect support and identifying the 'experts' and focus group categories. They also managed key stakeholder relations.

Effort/time

The time/effort required for this process was very intensive due to the timeframe requested and the number of different elements involved.
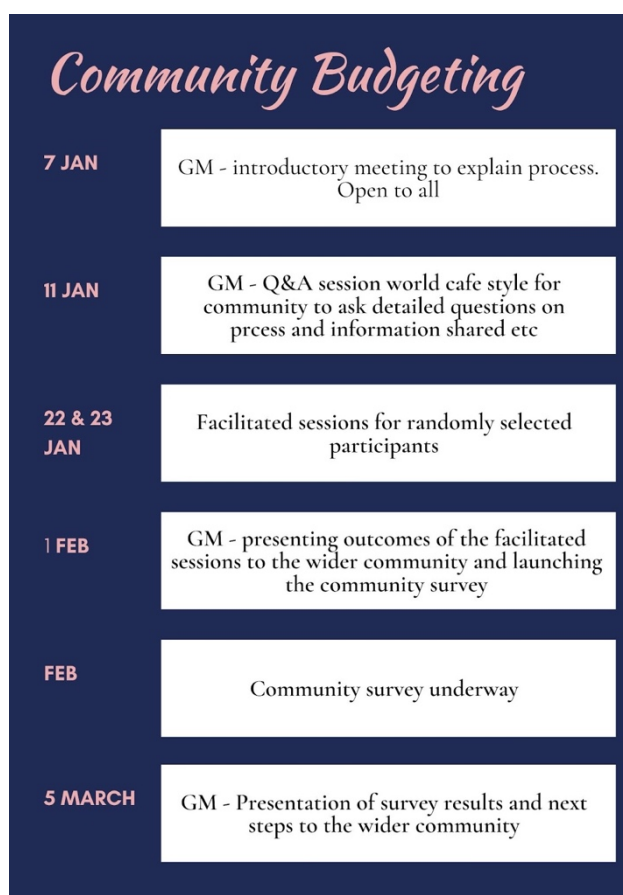
Whilst the process only took 3 months in total (including preparation of report/evaluation etc) the limited time meant that many compromises were needed, especially in terms of time needed to prepare/share content and participant recruitment/support.

BCC Participatory Budgeting process (Jan to March 2022)

What was the purpose

To provide BCC with community perspectives on budgeting priorities, missing services and inputs on where funds could come from for City Services (Auroville's 'municipal' budget). The purpose of this was to inform the City Services budget. A parallel goal was to increase education in the community about the communal budget.

What was the process?

Community Budgeting

7 JAN	GM - introductory meeting to explain process. Open to all
11 JAN	GM - Q&A session world cafe style for community to ask detailed questions on prcess and information shared etc
22 & 23 JAN	Facilitated sessions for randomly selected participants
1 FEB	GM - presenting outcomes of the facilitated sessions to the wider community and launching the community survey
FEB	Community survey underway
5 MARCH	GM - Presentation of survey results and next steps to the wider community

What was the key output?

From the sessions with randomly selected participants and the wider community survey a number of funding priorities were identified. These were shared with the community (see https://auroville.org.in/article/90599) and used to inform the budgeting process.

Who was involved and how?

- **18 randomly selected Aurovilian/Newcomers above the age of 18** - who attended all community meetings and two additional sessions where they were

presented with content followed by small group discussions to arrive at the outcomes.

- **Wider community** - they were invited to all sessions apart from the detailed discussion sessions (however the presentations from these sessions were later shared with participants). They were also invited to participate in a survey to give their input on budgeting priorities etc.

- **BCC team** - who provided background information on the existing processes etc (both in world cafe and presentations). The team also helped to draft the surveys, facilitate/present sessions and the review the outcomes

What was the role of the CA team?

The CA team was not formally involved in this project however it was supported/designed by 2 CA team members - Suryamayi (BCC lead) and Helen (process design/facilitation).

The BCC held the process throughout, identifying information/presenters and managing all communications.

Effort/time

The time/effort required for this process was much less (for the CA team) than with the other processes as BCC prepared the content (based on their ongoing work) so support was only required on designing the process and helping to deliver some sessions.