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DELIBERATIVE WALKS – CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL-LEVEL PLANNING PROCESSES

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Abstract

Recently, a focus on democratic innovations emphasising an increasing and deepening citizen participation in political decision-making has been evident. Deliberative Walks offer a participatory-deliberative process in which the participants, by deliberating in small groups and joining facilitated walks, tackle a complex policy issue that has highly intertwined social and physical dimensions. Deliberative Walks builds on the principle that two participatory methods, citizens' juries and development walks, are combined. Deliberative Walks are influenced by place-based learning. And like in outdoor pedagogy, learning by moving between the abstract and concrete, as well as transforming experience into knowledge through reflection and communication, is encouraged. We analyse an implemented education-oriented version, Studentlab Deliberative Walks, with nineteen university students. The results, based on questionnaires, interviews and essays, indicate that it is fruitful to experience an issue with all senses. The development walk was seen as more important than the citizens' jury. Participating in Deliberative Walks promoted inclusion in the decision-making process, enhanced learning, boosted self-confidence and developed feelings of empowerment.

Keywords: deliberation; citizen participation; active citizenship; place-based learning; citizens' jury

Introduction

In large parts of the world, even in stable democracies, we see signs that democracy is backsliding. There is a growing disillusionment with democratic institutions, a decline in electoral turnout, lower levels of support and trust in politicians and political institutions, a rise of authoritarianism and populism, as well as a growing gap between citizens and decision-makers. In order to tackle these challenges and to increase the legitimacy of democratic decision-making, deliberative and participatory models of democracy have become more influential (Dalton, 2004; Smith, 2009). The contemporary crisis of democracy is, to a large part, a crisis of communication and citizens need to be engaged in democratic dialogue and not only act as isolated individuals when making political choices and developing opinions (Dryzek et al., 2019).

Recently, a focus on democratic innovations emphasizing an increasing and deepening citizen participation in political decision-making has been evident (Smith, 2009; Bua and Escobar, 2018). One of these democratic innovations, deliberative mini-publics are regarded by many as an instrument for democratic reform. A plethora of different deliberative mini-publics has been tested, the most influential ones being deliberative polling, citizens' juries, participatory budgeting, consensus conferences and constitutional citizens' assemblies to mention a few. They all share similar features – a random selection of ordinary citizens who are provided with objective information, i.e. a chance to listen to and question experts, in order to engage in facilitated small group discussions before making a (joint) decision (Grönlund et al., 2010: 96).

However, little research has been carried out on the learning process citizens undergo when participating in deliberation, while design and procedures are often emphasised. Even though improved learning is often stressed, typically there is not much time, space or thought focused on the actual learning process (Newton, 2012: 6; Prosser et al., 2018: 213-214). Universities can play an important role in supporting civic engagement through community-based learning and participatory action research. Approaches that bring the university into the community to facilitate discussion of important long-term political challenges are largely missing. Still, universities can provide methods for community-based learning and training in participatory approaches to policymaking and hence

develop civil society in a variety of ways. Learning to deliberate is the core to our development as democratic citizens (Harris et al., 2013).

A method that enhances both learning and deliberation is Deliberative Walks. Deliberative Walks builds on the principle that two participatory methods, known as a citizens' jury and development walk, are combined and examined through the instructive concept of Deliberative Walks. Deliberative Walks offer a participatory process in which the participants, by deliberating in small groups and joining pre-scheduled walks, tackle a complex policy issue that has a highly intertwined social and physical dimension. The potential of uniting the two different participatory methods was first explored in two pilot studies in Finland in autumn 2014 (Raiso and Ehrström 2017). In this study, we describe the central features of an education-implemented course version of the method. The educational exercise, Studentlab Deliberative Walks, included nineteen students deliberating on the development of the university campus and its surroundings in Vaasa (Finland). The exercise was carefully designed to test a new method for citizen participation while examining whether it would be feasible to teach deliberative democracy by the principle of learning by doing.

The study is no experiment with a control group and randomized treatments. Rather, it is designed according to the principles of Deliberative Walks. The aim is to provide an in-depth description of a carefully designed learning experience. We examine the participants' subjective experiences by analysing pre- and post-questionnaires. For a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the experiences, we use essays that the participants wrote a few weeks after the event. Our results suggest that Deliberative Walks can enhance active citizenship, promote learning and thus be a way to educate citizens in political participation and include them in local planning processes.

Deliberative Walks as a participatory deliberative process

In the preface to his book "Strong Democracy", Benjamin Barber (2003) states: "democracy can survive only as strong democracy, secured not by great leaders but by competent, responsible citizens." Strong democracies need great citizens, i.e. active citizens who take part in participatory processes in the political community in order to

develop their civic skills, deliberate together, and make common decisions where private interests turn into public goods (Barber, 2003: 132–133).

Participatory democracy is concerned with *who* makes the decision: is it the citizens or their representatives that have the power? Deliberative democracy focuses on *how* decisions should be made: by aggregative and majoritarian decision-making or through deliberation? The "all affected" principle in deliberative democracy creates a strong link to participatory democracy. In a participatory deliberative democracy, citizens (or all those affected by a decision) deliberate to make collective decisions (Elstub, 2018: 190-192). Demographic representativeness is important, since people from different demographic backgrounds are likely to have different views and interests. Furthermore, participatory-deliberative innovations can advance social justice, and enhance inclusion, by making disadvantaged groups more visible (Fishkin, 2018: 73). Many democratic innovations start as small-scale experiments in communities. An advantage with pilot testing of this kind is that costs are low, and effects can be closely examined over time (Newton, 2012: 5).

According to deliberative theorists, decision-making should be preceded by a process whereby citizens are involved in exchanging arguments, and that the arguments presented should be weighed according to their merits. Opinions might, as a consequence, become more informed and reasoned (Andersen and Hansen, 2007; Chambers, 2018). Arguments relating to pure and narrow self-interest become difficult to defend in a deliberative context, which might allow for a more equal consideration of interests. In this way, democratic deliberation is said to encourage mutual understanding and respect (Smith and Wales, 2000: 53-54).

Critics argue that the focus on rationality, reason-giving and consensus may exclude members of disadvantaged groups, while favouring those with a higher education and higher status in society. Concerns about inequality in deliberation have been presented by e.g. Young (2002) and Sanders (1997). Deliberation is an argument-driven endeavour and some individuals are better than others at articulating their arguments in rational, reasonable terms (Sanders, 1997: 348). Thus, equal participation requires that no person or group dominates the discussion, even if individuals and groups have unequal prerequisites to participate in the discussion (Thompson, 2008: 507). The demand for

reason tends to favour people with a higher socioeconomic status, since they are more used to speaking and presenting arguments. Political equality is usually discussed in terms of a distribution of power and resources (Knight and Johnson, 1997). There is also evidence that gender composition and the decision rule will affect the speaking time, the content of a discussion, and the group's decision. Karpowitz and Mendelberg (2014) find that women are at a serious disadvantage in deliberative bodies, where there are few women and the majority rule is employed, and where there are many women and a unanimous rule is employed. In our case, women were in the great majority (sixteen women, three men) and we employed the unanimous rule. However, most of the discussions took place in small groups where facilitators ensured that everyone could participate. We did not notice any gender gap, but participants more used to discussing in English had an advantage. We will return to this later. Now we turn to discussing Deliberative Walks as a method.

Deliberative Walks as a method

Deliberative Walks is a deliberative mini-public carefully designed to enhance learning and promote inclusion and empowerment. The working definition of Deliberative Walks is as follows: "A participatory process in which the participants, by deliberating in small groups and joining facilitated walks, tackle a complex policy issue that has highly intertwined social and physical dimensions" (Raiso and Ehrström 2017). By adding elements of place-based learning and outdoor pedagogy, as well as including different discussion formats, the participatory space might become more inclusive, and perhaps also appealing to people who do not normally participate. Ideally, the distance between decision-makers and citizens is reduced and learning is more equal.

The citizens' jury

Since the citizens' jury was developed by Ned Crosby in the United States in the 1970s, it has been used in many parts of the world and in various contexts. While the predecessor is criminal court juries, the citizens' juries do not produce explicit outcomes as "guilty" or "not guilty" but policy recommendations (Crosby and Nethercut 2005; Huitema et al., 2007: 293-294). A citizens' jury normally brings together 12-24 randomly chosen citizens

to hear a variety of expert witnesses, learn about an issue and deliberate together for several days. The jurors have the opportunity to cross-examine witnesses (experts) and occasionally call for additional information. The witnesses are selected to present different viewpoints and expertise, by presenting evidence and answering questions from the participants (Smith, 2009: 88). Sometimes the authorities are involved in the process and can be required to respond to the report.

Citizens' juries can promote a more active form of citizenship and there is evidence that some jurors are more civically active long after the event. One reason for this is the increase in political efficacy, as jurors feel more confident in their abilities to influence politics and decision-making. Opinions change as jurors become more involved in the issue under deliberation. At best, citizens' juries can enhance the democratic legitimacy of the decision-making process. Facilitators are important to make the process inclusive and empowering (Smith and Wales, 2000: 60-61).

Development walk

As the name implies, the development walk method is about place-based learning. The assumption is that the learning process is strengthened by in situ observations of specific situations and places. The origins of development walks can be traced back to women's safety audits, developed in Canada in the late 1980s as a response to increasing concerns related to insecurity and violence against women (Lambrick and Travers, 2008). Safety and security walks, developed in Sweden in the early 2000s, share many similarities with women's safety audits (Brottsförebyggande rådet, 2009). The underlying idea is that the ones who have the greatest knowledge of the local environments are those who actually live there. Development walks strive towards fuller representativeness (ideally a locality in miniature) than women's safety audits and a wider perspective than safety and security walks.

It is also important to note that there are many different methods that are solely or mostly based on walk elements, for example walking interviews. Evans and Jones (2011: 849) argue that walked interviews help to gain richer understandings of a place than conventional interviewing techniques. While we argue in much the same way for the

development walk element, it is important to note that the strength of Deliberative Walks is not only the walk element in itself, but the combination of methods as well as the variation of elements (see Table 1).

In the next section, we will focus on the following central features of the Deliberative Walks method: inclusion, learning, and empowerment.

Central Features in Deliberative Walks

Inclusion

An important feature of most mini-publics is the selection procedure. The design of the deliberative mini-public is important in enhancing inclusion, hence inclusion in terms of gender, race and ethnicity will make a major difference to the viewpoints and arguments raised (Fishkin, 2018: 16). Only students were included in the Studentlab Deliberative Walks, but it can be argued that this group represented a variety of students as the course was interdisciplinary and included both domestic and international students. Hence, the ambition was to sample a somewhat representative group of the student body at the campus.

Inclusion also implies participation in the discussion, i.e. equality of voice. All participants in the discussion should be able to participate, what they say should be considered and they should have the opportunity to present their arguments in a fair and open process. The degree to which some individuals speak out and others do not is fundamental for equality. Dominant participants, participants not contributing at all and a lack of reciprocity, i.e. when participants are not listened and responded to, are signs of internal exclusion rather than inclusion. The facilitators' task is to ensure internal inclusion and pluralism. Equal opportunities to participate increase the likelihood that different perspectives are included (Mansbridge, 1983; Burkhalter et al., 2002; Landwehr, 2014: 80-81). Inclusion is more than being formally included; it is also about respecting people and their ideas, being open-minded by challenging ideas not people, listening to understand, having a positive attitude, and having a simple, clear and concise form of communication (Smith, 2009: 86). Besides justifying their arguments, deliberative theory

also requires that deliberators consider the arguments of others with respect, also individuals that one disagrees with (Bächtiger et al., 2010: 41–42).

In Deliberative Walks, several discussion formats are included in order to enhance inclusion in the discussions. Plenum sessions, small group discussions with 8–9 participants per group, smaller group discussions with 4–5 participants per group and dialogue-based discussions during the walk clearly improved the possibilities of engaging everyone in the discussions. In plenum sessions, it might be hard for some individuals to express themselves. Smaller group discussions create a different kind of discussion and some participants might be more comfortable discussing in smaller groups than in big groups. Minorities, the young, and the less advantaged tend to participate to a lesser degree. It is therefore important to design institutions in such a way that the least advantaged actually participate. The design of Deliberative Walks might be appealing to both younger and less advantaged members because of the combination of formal and informal discussions. In addition, a combination of indoor, outdoor and place-based learning can make deliberations more inclusive, and also more interesting to participate in, especially for groups or individuals that prefer more practical forms of learning. Ideally, Deliberative Walks could make learning processes and participation more equal, since a person with challenges in terms of learning by listening to experts or reading information packages, could learn by seeing, observing and feeling.

Learning

A special focus is given to place-based learning, which is also emphasised in the method's name, *Deliberative Walks*. Place-based learning simply connects learning and communities and can boost engagement with the local community and promote understanding. The meaning of place can be studied in its various contexts; there might even be different constructions of meaning for the same spatial space (Holmberg, 2006: 21). The ambition is to give citizens an opportunity to develop their local environment. Roumell (2018: 48) argues that "place-based education is firmly rooted in the development of a local area which improves the ability of people to interact with the space and place in which they reside – a form of lived, experimental learning that has an impact on the sustainability of the place."

Furthermore, Deliberative Walks are also influenced by outdoor pedagogy. Like in outdoor pedagogy, learning by moving between the abstract and concrete, as well as transforming experience into knowledge through reflection and communication, is encouraged. Learning outside the classroom can stimulate long-term learning and a better understanding of the surrounding environment (Prosser et al., 2018: 211). This could be said to be in line with Unesco's Belém Framework for Action (2011: 44), that declares that adult learning and education are a valuable investment. Cornwall (2002: 2) connects the question of space to civic participation:

> Efforts to engage participation can be thought of as creating spaces where there were previously none, about making room for different opinions to be heard where previously there were very limited opportunities for public involvement, and about enabling people to occupy spaces that were previously denied to them. The act of participating can be seen as bringing spaces to life as well as carving out new spaces and creating new social forms with their own momentum and impetus.

There are no age limits for Studentlab Deliberative Walks. On the contrary, learning civic participation skills by combining different learning methods with deliberative democracy in Studentlabs connected to redevelopment and planning processes can start at almost any stage or age. Powers (2017: 18) argues that by grounding education in the local community, students can see the relevance of what they are learning and therefore become more engaged in the learning process. Studies demonstrate powerful linkages between grounding the learning experience in the local context, enhanced student participation in community matters, and increased student engagement in their academic studies. Similar expectations would not be far-fetched, if Studentlab Deliberative Walks was to be developed into a place-based education programme.

Empowerment

A strong democracy links local participation to real decision-making, while genuine responsibility is given to citizens. Once citizens have participated, they work to enlarge the scope of that participation. People can vote for those who will govern them, but they

should also have the power to affect the policies by which they are governed. To accomplish this, citizens need civic competence and an interest to participate (Barber, 1984: 264–268). Knobloch and Gastil's (2015: 184) study indicates that deliberation can alter how participants understand themselves as citizens and their role in governance. Faith in oneself and in government might increase as a result of deliberation, which may also affect the propensity of participants to engage in communicative and community activities.

Barabas (2004: 689) identifies the willingness to keep an open mind as a central concept in deliberation. Although opinion change is not an indicator of good deliberation in itself, informed opinions might differ from top-of-the-head opinions (Fishkin, 2018). Citizens are empowered when they have the opportunity to reflect on their opinions and judgements. In a deliberation, experts are given the opportunity to present evidence and answer questions, but they do not work alongside the citizens (Smith 2009, 88).

Research has shown that civic courses correlate with greater civic knowledge and a better understanding for how politics works. An open classroom climate can promote a disposition towards being politically engaged (Campbell, 2008). According to two international female students in the Studentlab: "Respect, tolerance, patience, empathy, and being open-minded are some of the values that we learned during the group discussions" and "Thanks to the course, I learned how to be more open-minded and to give my opinion more often. Moreover, I have seen how citizens should be the ones that rule the world and have the power." These statements highlight the fact that many participants in Deliberative Walks recognised that open-mindedness is important for empowerment. While still too early to know with full certainty, our results from the Studentlab also point to an enhanced interest to participate in community matters.

Data and methods

The topic of the Studentlab Deliberative Walks was to discuss the development of the university campus and its surroundings, including two abandoned silos, a museum of contemporary art and a sea promenade. The purpose was to design an educational exercise that could teach students about deliberation and citizen participation in the real world. In

practice, it was organised as an interdisciplinary course, combining approaches from democracy, active citizenship, and learning. The course was innovative (at Åbo Akademi University) for three reasons: a) it was arranged jointly by adult education and political science, making it possible to enhance different aspects of the deliberative process, b) the group was composed of both domestic and international students from a variety of subjects: political science, adult education, pedagogy and peace studies, and c) the course was connected to real political decision-making. Formally, the course was arranged as an optional 5 ECTS course included in the Masters' Programme within adult education, resulting in students in pedagogy and education being somewhat overrepresented. The course lasted for five days, with a total of sixteen hours. Two teachers (one from political science and another from adult education) led the course and facilitated the discussions.

The local media paid great attention to the Deliberative Walks, and both newspapers and radio reported both on the process and the results. The Studentlab Deliberative Walks was loosely connected to real political decision-making. As an outcome of the process, the participants presented a report with recommendations to politicians and decision-makers, although the politicians were not obliged to take the report into account. A total of nineteen students, including twelve international students and seven domestic students, completed the course in October 2017.

The participants completed a short survey (T1) at the beginning of the course and another survey (T2) at the end of the course. We use these surveys when analysing changes in perceived knowledge as well as subjective experiences. In addition to participating in the course, the students had to write a lecture diary and an essay, including reflections about the method. We use both the survey data and citations from the essays in order to analyse the process.

Inclusion, learning and empowerment

To analyse inclusion, we use the following three survey questions (from T2): "It was easy for me to express my opinion during the discussion", "All had equal opportunities to be heard, no one was excluded" and "Some participants dominated the discussion too much." The scale rates from 0-5, where 5 indicates complete agreement.

To analyse learning, we asked the students about their knowledge of deliberative methods and participatory democracy before and after the course. We also analyse whether their interests in participation have changed from T1 to T2. The scale rates from 0 to 5, where 5 indicates very interested/very substantial knowledge and 0 not interested/no knowledge.

To analyse empowerment, we use open comments from the T2 survey, as well as quotes from the essays. We have not analysed the essays altogether, instead we use individual quotes to describe their experiences. The students were very satisfied with the Studentlab so we hardly found any negative reflections.

Results from the Studentlab Deliberative Walks

In this section, we describe the Studentlab Deliberative Walks in more detail. First, we describe the process and for each element (i.e. for each day) we note the most important lesson learned. After this, we focus on analysing the three ideals discussed earlier: inclusion, learning and empowerment.

Deliberative Walks was realised within a short timeframe. After the introduction, the process was carried out within eight days. This had two purposes: a) to keep the energy high and the participants focused, and b) to create a sense of group feeling and to get to know each other well. The process design is described in Table 1.

[Table 1 about here]

One of the most important tasks of the facilitator is to ensure internal inclusion and pluralism without interfering too much in the discussion. Passive members should be encouraged to participate and dominant ones curtailed when necessary. Discussion rules are often used as a kind of advanced enforcement (Landwehr, 2014). Carson (2006) discusses co-facilitation, which is a method we found feasible. In the small group discussions, each group had a facilitator, and in plenum discussions, the facilitation rotated between the two teachers. The one who did not facilitate kept an eye on the overall process and took notes. This worked really well and the two facilitators could support the participants better and de-brief each other. In addition to facilitation, discussion rules (see

Appendix) clearly improved the possibility of everyone being included, as the following statements show:

"I really liked the idea of discussion rules. I think that this is one of the most important things when a lot of different people that don't know each other have to discuss. In fact, everybody was able to take part in the discussion on an equal basis. It is important that everybody knows that there are no right or wrong opinions concerning the topic" (international, female).

Day 1: Preparation day

The first day introduced the participants to the process, and they completed the first survey (T1). Most of the participants had little previous knowledge on participatory and deliberative democracy and they did not know much about the course. The two teachers introduced themselves to the course and presented the formal requirements, deliberative and participatory democracy, place-based learning, and the central features of Deliberative Walks. They also learned about the importance of including and respecting everyone's opinions (discussion rules).

We agree with Carson (2006) about the importance of working with the participants about a week or so before the time appointed for the citizens' jury. This helps the participants to start focusing on the topic and build trust in each other as they get to know one other. Knowing that they will be part of a deliberation about the university campus, they most likely began to think about the issue already during the time between the preparation day and the citizens' jury day.

Lesson learned: The preparation day is important. The confidence of the participants grows as they get to know one other and become familiar with the process before it starts. It also helps them to become more focused on the task.

Day 2: Citizens' Jury day

The second day included expert lectures, and Q&A sessions with the experts[1]. In a citizens' jury, briefing materials are sometimes sent to the participants in advance. This might help to educate the participants, albeit there is a risk that it may also scare off some participants. Therefore, a recommendation is to limit the amount of material sent in advance (Carson, 2006: 7). We only distributed advance information about the design of the process. During the citizens' jury day, a wide range of expertise was accessed and participants had the opportunity to cross-examine the experts. The experts focused mostly on the silos[2] and presented their visions on how they could be re-used, which clearly had an impact on the participants. However, it was interesting to note that they did not accept the expert's visions altogether, but started to visualise and make their own visions in the facilitated small-group discussions that followed. The discussion rules emphasised open-mindedness, respect for other's opinions, and encouraged participants to express their opinions and try to justify them. Three topics crystallised already on this second day: developing library services, creating an interdisciplinary social space on campus, and transforming the silos on the campus to a rooftop bar and space for residents, with a view over the UNESCO World Heritage site in the Ostrobothnian archipelago.

An international female student rightly raised the question about what kind of experts to include and how much the experts can influence the discussions: "Issues specific to various stakeholders and interest groups weren't adequately explored because we didn't have experts from those groups. For that reason, our deliberations weren't as holistic as they could have been".

Lesson learned: Experts can influence the process in many ways and need to be chosen wisely.

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[1] See Appendix for a list of experts and themes.

[2] Wall to wall with the university are large silos, that were left untouched when the university campus was built. These silos are now falling into disrepair. The politicians' opinions and public opinion are somewhat polarized on whether the silos should be protected and renovated or demolished (giving space for new buildings).

Day 3: Development Walk day

The third day was devoted to the development walk. A walk-leader (one of the two teachers) gathered the group on campus and guided them on a pre-scheduled route. During the walk, five experts were waiting at different locations to give a short introduction about their specific area and expertise. Finally, the participants had the chance to visit an exclusive office with a terrace on the 13th floor next to the university building and next to the silos. The main idea was to give the participants an overview of the university and the surroundings by visiting places, seeing and feeling them. The participants had the opportunity to pose questions to the experts, to discuss with them and with each other while walking to the next stop. Some of the presenters joined the walk to discuss some more and to learn new things themselves. While listening to the experts, the participants could familiarise themselves with the place. Informal discussions between the stops clearly increased the informal interaction between the decision-makers and participants as well as enhanced an open exchange of thoughts.

The walk was clearly appreciated as the following citations state: *"*I think the walk helped the group become more comfortable with each other, which made the discussions flow more naturally later on" (domestic, female). "Place-based learning was important in order to form opinions and I also think that everyone was able to acquire essential information by experiencing through their different senses on site" (domestic, female). "After seeing how Åbo Akademi integrated its history onto the campus, spending time on the seashore, and viewing the archipelago and silos from the 13th floor, I felt connected to the environment and history of Vaasa at a depth of emotion I didn't think was possible, since I've only been living here for two months" (international, female).

During the walk, the discussion was more informal than the setting in a classroom. This was appreciated by many of the participants. The following statement from one domestic female student is representative: "I liked that we worked both in small groups and in the big group – the nature of the discussions were different depending on the group size (more detail oriented in the small group and more 'big picture'-thinking in the large group) and it also meant that it was easier for everyone to get their opinion heard and not to be overpowered in a large group".

After the walk, smaller-group discussions with 4-5 participants per group followed. These discussions were not facilitated, but the aim was that the participants could reflect upon their impressions and thoughts so far. The two teachers rotated between the groups to provide guidance if needed.

Lesson learned: The development walk is an important addition to the formal classroom setting. It was clear that the mindset had changed for many of the participants after these in situ observations and getting to know more about the different places on and surrounding the campus.

Day 4: Deliberation day

The fourth day was devoted to deliberation and writing the declaration. Different discussion formats were used, starting with discussions in the smaller-groups (the same as at the end of Day 3). After this, the groups presented their ideas in plenum and all ideas were discussed together. The teachers (acting as facilitators) helped the group to reach a unanimous decision on which proposals to include in the declaration. Based on an experimental study, Grönlund et al. (2010) contend that the demand for a common statement increases knowledge, civic virtues and political trust more than allowing participants to make an individual decision.

The demand for reaching a consensus did not seem to be a problem for the participants. According to a domestic female student: "The fact that everyone must agree sends a positive message: that everyone's opinion matters the same and we will not ignore anyone's opinion when using this method." An international female student wrote:

> I learned how difficult it is to really listen to arguments and opinions that are not close to one's own. Deliberative communication is hard and mentally exhausting, but still very fascinating and I learned to step back and just listen to what was said. During the deliberations, I also noticed how important the facilitator and the common rules of discussion are in the process. Especially during the last deliberation day, when consensus had to be created in the form of a common proposal, it was necessary to have someone to facilitate the process and keep reminding

> people of the common goal and the idea of inclusivity. I came to think of the term positive pedagogy, where one focuses on the positive ways to encourage and make people think.

Lesson learned: Consensus can enhance inclusiveness. It also sends an important message that everyone's contribution is important and that every voice counts.

Day 5: Declaration day

On the fifth day, the declaration was formally handed over to decision-makers. The declaration consisted of five concrete proposals for development of the campus and the surrounding areas. Politicians, city officials and the dean of the faculty were present to receive the declaration from the students. One of the politicians who received the declaration stated early on that she will forward it to the city council, even though several of the proposals will not be realised or even taken into account since decisions had already been made (this was not entirely true, as the formal decisions had not yet been taken by the city council). The disappointment the participants experienced when the recommendations did not generate the impact they were expecting demonstrates how engaged they were in the process: "On our last day, when we had politicians and the media listening to our presentation, I realised that there was a serious debate going on. The way we had worked and discussed about different matters on our course was much more polite and easy-going than during the last day" (domestic, male). And:

> The city officials said that the silos were slated to be demolished because they were unsafe, that there were no investors, and that historical importance doesn't have economic benefit. All of these points were challenged and shown to be incorrect by audience members. Finally, one city official said she voted to demolish the silos because they were built when she was a child and they had obstructed her view of the sea. […] The deliberative walks and democracy part grew my political efficacy, and the interaction with the city officials diminished my political efficacy (international, female).

Lesson learned: The deliberation could also include discussions about economic and political constraints. The participants need to be briefed about how local politics work. The declaration day might also include a deliberation together with decision-makers to bring them and the participants closer together.

In the next section, we look more closely at inclusion, learning and empowerment in the Studentlab.

Inclusion

Over 83 per cent of the participants agreed that everyone had equal opportunities to be heard and that no one was excluded from the discussion. The mean value is 4.33, with the lowest recorded value 3, and the standard deviation is 0.77. This suggests that most participants felt included in the discussion. However, when it comes to equality in the discussion, some participants felt that some participants were dominating the discussion. Half of the participants agreed with the statement that "Some participants dominated the discussion too much." The standard deviation of 1.37 suggests that there is some variation among the answers. The mean value is 3.11. As facilitators, we noticed that a few participants had a strong voice in the large group discussions, while the small group discussions seemed more equal.

Looking at the statement "It was easy for me to express my opinion during the discussion" almost 56 per cent agreed. The mean value is 3.61 and the standard deviation is 0.78. The Studentlab was implemented in English, and some participants were more confident in discussing in English than others. We recognised that the quieter participants were those with weaker oral English skills. It seemed to be more difficult for them to express their opinion in general. The results are summarised in Table 2.

[Table 2 about here]

Carson (2006: 9) recognises the problem of dominant participants and suggests that when working with a group of ten people or more, it is helpful to split the participants into smaller groups, since this helps quieter participants to raise their voice and confidence. Our results point in the same direction. This is a quote from one of the participants:

"With fewer people in the group, I felt that it was easier to go more into detail and deliberate more profoundly. I was also somewhat surprised by the good quality of discussion in the smaller group; […]…it was easier to express oneself in the smaller group and the other participants also seemed more prone to listen to other ideas in a more intimate setting" (domestic, female).

Demand for consensus might create an expectation that the group should behave as one. Sunstein (2006) suggests that exposure to others' arguments and opinions might lead people to silence themselves, for two reasons. The first involves informational signals. If most people think something – you tend to trust in their judgement even if it differs from your own ideas. Nobody wants to be the sole dissenter, and thus learn from the majority and move in their direction. The second has to do with social influences. People might self-silence themselves because they think that others will like them more if they agree with them. We acknowledge that some participants might have felt the social pressure to conform to the dominant position in the group when writing the joint recommendations. People who are confident might be more persuasive and thus dominate the discussion. We cannot examine this in a more objective way since we do not have data on speaking time. Sunstein acknowledges that facilitators and discussions rules can prevent this from happening, and if a group still polarises (moves in the majority direction) it can be due to learning and not because of social influence. Let us now analyse whether the participants learned anything.

Learning

The participants had scarce knowledge of participation in general and of deliberative methods in particular before the Studentlab Deliberative Walks. On a scale of 0–5, where 0 indicates no knowledge and 5 very substantial knowledge, the knowledge on deliberative methods before the course reached only a mean value of 0.68 (standard deviation 0.75) and none of the participants stated that they had substantial or very substantial knowledge. After the Deliberative Walks, the mean value was 4.11 with a standard deviation of 0.66. This indicates that a large part of the participants increased their knowledge of deliberative methods. Over 84 per cent stated that they increased their knowledge a lot. Since their level of knowledge was very low before the Deliberative Walks, there was of course room for a large improvement. It is not possible to analyse

this in a more objective way since we only asked the participants to evaluate whether they felt their knowledge increased.

Their previous knowledge on participatory methods was considerably higher, reaching a mean value of 2.11 with a standard deviation of 1.20. In the post survey, the mean value was 3.68 with a standard deviation of 0.58. Over 63 per cent stated that they increased their knowledge on participatory methods a lot.

The interest in participatory and deliberative methods was fairly high before the Deliberative Walks, the mean value was 2.95. After the Studentlab , the mean value was significantly higher, 3.84. As Figure 1 clearly shows, both knowledge on deliberation and knowledge and interest in participation increased after the event. Over 47 per cent stated that their interest in participation increased a lot. All the changes are statistically significant, $p<.001$.

[Figure 1 about here]

The essays support these results, as the following quote from an international female student shows: "We have learned new ways to make a decision by respecting and understanding others. I hope that this class will be taught to many students, and that they will have an opportunity to learn about 'the real' deliberative democracy."

Empowerment

For some participants, this was a rare opportunity to engage deeply in a participatory process, and to create civic skills. They sensed that they had undergone a change and that it was due to participating in Deliberative Walks. Internal efficacy seems to have increased due to the deliberation, albeit the declaration day might have decreased external efficacy. The following statement from an international female student clarifies this point in question: "The proposal that we made is only one voice among others that decision-makers can choose to listen to […] The dialogue at the declaration handover made me doubt whether there would be a real possibility of changing anything when students are confronted with people of a higher status and position in society."

It would be important to prepare participants, especially young people, who have participated in a deliberative event and will hand over their report or recommendations to

politicians and decision-makers, that it might be difficult and challenging to get decision-makers on board. Alternatively, a commitment (or mandate) from decision-makers to take the recommendations fairly into account could be agreed on beforehand. These results from the Studentlab also generally address a common criticism towards deliberative methods as being somewhat naive and toothless in processes where power positions and power relations are often crucial for decision-making. Following this logic, the students learned a valuable lesson about the relationships between the powerful and powerless, and how political decision-making works. In the Studentlab Deliberative Walks, a media presence was included as a way to provide the participants with some additional power in raising their voice.

On the whole, participation in Studentlab Deliberative Walks seemed to have boosted self-confidence in most of the participants. The following two statements from international female students are representative: "It has been a useful course not only as a citizen but also as a future teacher, because it has made me grow as a person and also it has provided me with lots of learning, experiences and bits of knowledge." "I realised that deliberation isn't only happening in the real-life discussions with others, but it is just as much an inner process. Becoming part of a mini-public was a very positive and uplifting part of the course. The common purpose that was created through the jury sessions and the walk really boosted self-confidence and interest in improving the area around and inside Academill [the name of the university campus]."

Several international students (returning home after the semester) wanted us to stay in contact with them afterwards so that they could find out whether their proposals were realised. This indicates a big engagement in the issue, and they took their role very seriously. A female international student wrote: "This is a course which will stay in my mind. And I hope that someday I can get a chance to come back to Vaasa and see if something has changed since the day we presented our results."

Some participants reported that they were very inspired by the Deliberative Walks process and wanted to introduce it to their community and use it in their work as teachers when getting back to their homeland: "I can see myself implementing a project in my future classroom where my students engage in deliberations with the goal of presenting their

recommendations to school or city policymakers. This will increase their political efficacy and help them develop into active citizens."

Some participants suggested that the method could be implemented in local-planning processes: "If you can experience an issue with all senses you can more easily imagine what the reality looks like for the people affected by the decisions" (domestic, female). "The development walk could be used, for example, when a city plans an environmentally-friendlier area for children. The children could explore the place and tell what is possible and needed" (international, female).

Finally, we want to include some reflections about the process itself. We asked the participants about which of the elements (citizens' jury, development walk, deliberation day) they would like to emphasise more. We also asked them which of the elements that mostly influenced their learning process. In all, 43.8 per cent of the participants wanted to emphasise the development walk most, 37.5 per cent emphasised the citizens' jury, while 18.8 per cent suggested that the deliberation day was most important. The pattern is the same for which elements influenced their learning the most. One third wanted to stress the development walk. This is followed by the citizens' jury, with 22.2 per cent and last the deliberation day, with 11.1 per cent. In addition, one third wanted to highlight that it was the combination of methods that influenced their learning process the most. This can be seen in Figure 2.

[Figure 2 about here]

The following comment by a female international participant is a good summary: "I think many of my personal views have changed during the deliberative walk and citizens' jury. [..] The experts' statements played a big part in this, but also fellow students' experiences and ideas have somehow changed my view on what the area could be used for."

Conclusions

The results, based on questionnaires and essays, indicate that it is fruitful to experience an issue with all senses. Deliberative Walks offers openings both for educating students and citizens about deliberation, and for wider and deeper citizen engagement in the

democratic process. The combination of the formal citizens' jury and the informal development walk, as well as different discussion formats, allows for both rationality and emotions to be included in the deliberative process. Hence, deliberation is more inclusive.

Deliberative Walks include a strong element of variation, which might improve the learning process. Variation enhances the experience and makes it more interesting, and perhaps even more fun to participate, and thus to learn. The participants highlight the development walk element as the most important element in enhancing learning and increasing interest to participate, but it is the variation and combination of methods and learning situations that is the most important feature of Deliberative Walks. Deliberation can promote active citizenship and boost self-confidence when the participants realise that their opinions matter, that they are respected and respect others. Participating in a deliberation can enhance civic skills and raise awareness of the value of participation. Many liberal democracies are under attack from anti-democratic forces these days. Promoting active citizenship and developing civic skills seem more important than ever.

This study analyses an educational exercise. In order to generalise the findings, more studies, and especially a follow up experimental study with randomised selection in another context, would be needed. Building on the promises of the Studentlab Deliberative Walks analysed here, a second Studentlab Deliberative Walks was arranged in Hamburg in November 2019, and two further Studentlabs are planned. Students are eager to learn, open-minded and a fairly likeminded group, compared to citizens at large. Still, our case study offers an interesting window into how self-confidence, political efficacy and deliberative reasoning skills can be developed.

The fact that we see such large changes in learning and civic engagement despite the process not being fully connected to real decision-making is astonishing. Previous research suggests that civic benefits most readily occur when participants believe a deliberative process has real consequences (see Knobloch and Gastil, 2015). Many of the participants underwent a civic transformation and learned how to become active citizens as well as how to promote others in increasing civic engagement. Citizenship is a passive affair, to a large extent, although democracy requires active citizens. Deliberative Walks can enlarge the role of citizens in decision-making, both in local planning processes and in schools. But for this to happen we need open-minded politicians and officials that are

ready to listen to the citizens and teachers and facilitators that understand the value of participation.

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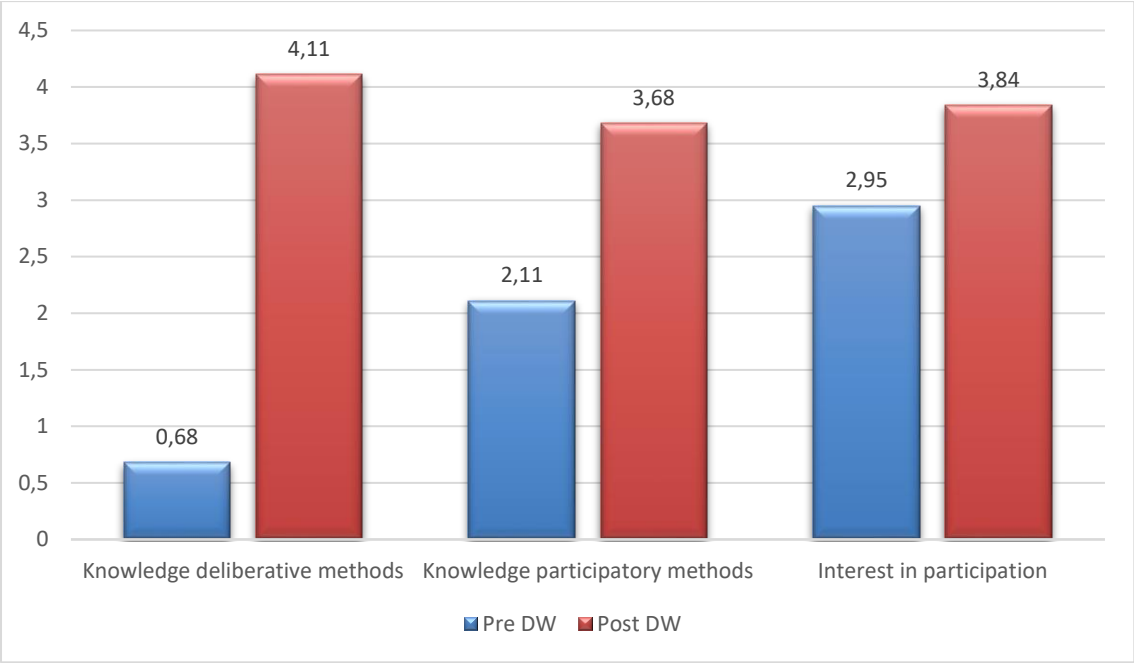

Figure 1. Knowledge on and interest in participatory and deliberative methods

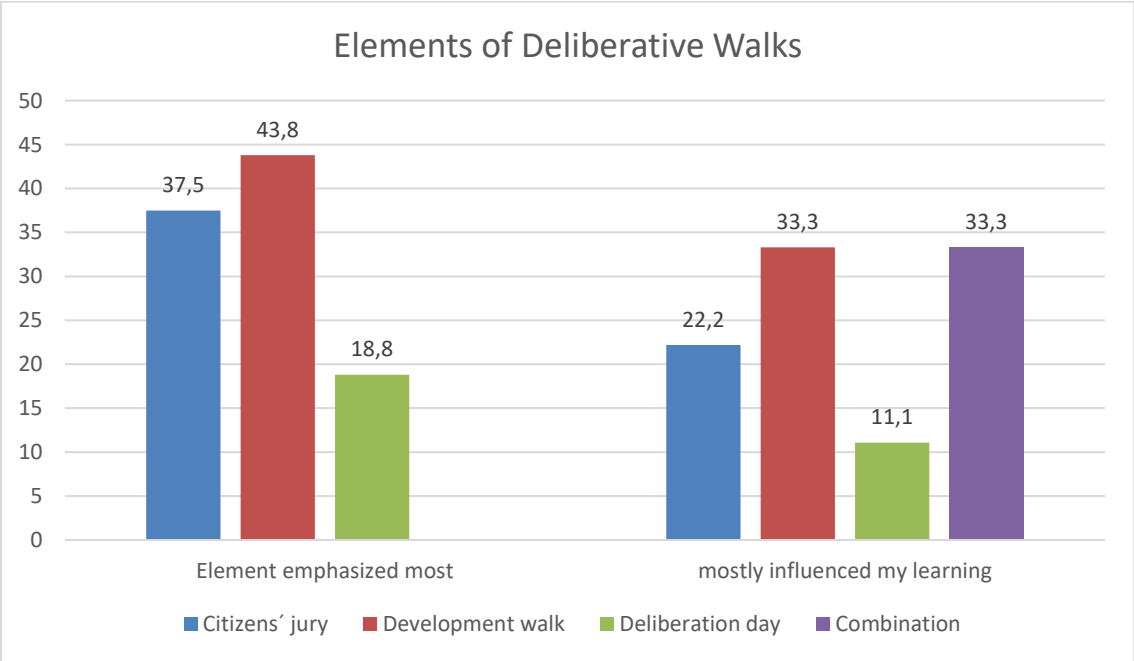

Figure 2. Elements of Deliberative Walks

Table 1. Studentlab Deliberative Walks

INTRODUCTION	
Day 1: 6 Oct	The process, deliberative and participatory democracy, place-based learning, the method Deliberative Walks, pre-questoinnaire. 2 hours.
CITIZENS´ JURY	
Day 2: 16 Oct	Q&A session with three experts followed by facilitated small-group discussions. 4 hours.
DEVELOPMENT WALK	
Day 3: 17 Oct	Facilitated development walk on campus and surrounding areas, including six stops with expert introductions. Followed by smaller-group discussions. 4 hours.
DELIBERATION DAY	
Day 4: 19 Oct	Smaller-group and facilitated plenum discussions, writing of joint declaration with five (re)development proposals for the Campus area and surroundings. 4 hours.
PRESENTATION/ DECLARATION	
Day 5: 23 Oct	The declaration with proposals was handed over to relevant decision-makers, post-questonnaire. 2 hours.

Table 2. Inclusion in the discussion

How inclusive was the discussion?	**Percentage (agree/agree completely)**	**Mean (SD)**
All had equal opportunities to be heard, no-one was excluded	83,3 %	4,33 (0,767)
It was easy for me to express my opinion during the discussion	55,5 %	3,61 (0,778)
Some participants dominated the discussion too much	50 %	3,11 (1,367)