

This is an electronic reprint of the original article. This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

Fit to govern? Comparing citizen and policymaker perceptions of deliberative democratic innovations

Koskimaa, Vesa; Rapeli, Lauri

Published in:
Policy and Politics

DOI:
[10.1332/030557320X15870515357288](https://doi.org/10.1332/030557320X15870515357288)

Published: 01/10/2020

Document Version
Accepted author manuscript

Document License
CC BY-NC-SA

[Link to publication](#)

Please cite the original version:
Koskimaa, V., & Rapeli, L. (2020). Fit to govern? Comparing citizen and policymaker perceptions of deliberative democratic innovations. *Policy and Politics*, 48(4), 637-652.
<https://doi.org/10.1332/030557320X15870515357288>

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Fit to govern? Comparing citizen and policy-maker perceptions of deliberative democratic innovations

Introduction

Evidence suggests that people are growing increasingly disappointed with the functioning of representative democracy (Norris 2011). Despite being a contested issue, the current crisis of representative democracy is nevertheless, almost without exception, associated with the alleged de-attachment of elites from citizens' everyday problems, coupled with citizens reacting through a growing disregard for established politics (Ercan & Gagnon 2014). As a cure, many have called for augmenting the policy-making process with democratic innovations based on more direct, unmediated political participation (Newton 2012). Such institutions and practices are intended to deepen and improve public involvement in democratic decision-making (Smith 2009: 1).

Among them, applications based on the theory of deliberative democracy have probably received most scholarly attention in recent literature. Deliberative democracy refers to a decision-making process, which emphasizes informed, reflexive and egalitarian interpersonal communication (Bächtiger et al. 2018), often seen as a contrast to the crude interest-based bargaining that is assumed to characterize existing policy-making processes. To apply the theory in practice, concrete institutions have been introduced, which employ the ideals of deliberation. Deliberative democrats believe that these practices could invigorate representative democracies struggling to engage with the populace with democratic policy-making (e.g. Dryzek 2000; Grönlund, Bächtiger, & Setälä, 2014). Taking many different shapes and sizes, mini-publics, like citizen initiative reviews, juries and assemblies, gather together a group of randomly selected individuals to discuss and decide upon a specific political issue on the basis of best expert knowledge and argumentation (e.g., Jäske 2019; Setälä 2017).

A considerable number of studies have discussed whether deliberative bodies could remedy the problems faced by contemporary representative democracy (e.g., McLaverty 2009; Setälä 2017). Several other studies have used experimental methods

to examine the internal proceedings and effects of deliberative bodies (for recent examples, see Strandberg et al. 2019; Christensen et al. 2017a; Himmelroos et al. 2017; Grönlund et al. 2015). However, much less scholarly attention has been paid to the more fundamental issues concerning a shift towards more inclusive, deliberative democracy. What is particularly striking is the almost complete absence of studies looking at the policy-making elites, whose views on democracy eventually determines the shape of new democratic institutions. If deliberative mechanisms are expected to fix the gap between citizens and elites, scholars need to assess the attitudes and behaviors of both groups. Among the key questions yet to be answered is just how much demand for more direct involvement is there among citizens and, perhaps even more important, are policy-makers prepared to share some of their political power and to provide such opportunities to meet this demand?

Only very few studies have looked at the perceptions the policy-making elites in terms of the desirability of more participatory democracy, let alone compared those attitudes with the views of ordinary citizens. Studies based on diverse data (surveys and interviews), emanating mostly from the US context, suggest that citizens want to engage more, but elites are reluctant to provide new possibilities for participation. Due to the lack of direct comparisons with equal measures, our current understanding of the congruence of citizen and elite attitudes towards more direct citizen participation through deliberation is, therefore, only indicative at best. Given that introducing participatory mechanisms into real-life policy processes is practically impossible without support from decision-makers, we argue it is necessary to start examining their role in more detail.

To contribute to this research agenda and to gain an understanding of the level of congruence between citizen and elite attitudes towards deliberation, we utilize identical question batteries to compare Finnish elites' and voters' perceptions of citizens' capacity to directly engage in democratic governance through a deliberative mini-public. Combining two unique datasets, we analyse representative samples of Finnish voting-age citizens and national-level policy-makers, comparing their answers to a survey battery, which asked respondents to assess how much they would trust the decisions of a deliberative citizen jury or assembly. The survey items varied in terms of how much the citizen jury decisions restricted the powers of the decision-makers, from merely making a public statement to voting on a decision that would be binding.

In terms of generalization, Finland provides a particularly suitable context for a case study. We would expect the gap between voters and elites to be narrow in Finland, because the country is known for having a population with “high civic literacy”, and therefore it should have more deliberative capacity than most other countries (Milner 2002). Compared to other Nordic democracies, Finland has also suffered from a relatively deep democratic malaise, which incentivizes policy-makers to include ordinary citizens more in the democratic process.

Yet, we show that while voters place a high degree of trust in their own capacity to make decisions in deliberative bodies, elites are highly sceptical of this. Findings strongly suggest that the conditions for deeper citizen engagement through deliberation are rather poor, from the viewpoint of the policy-making elites. Instead, we identify a “trust gap”, which suggests that a significant distance exists between policy-making elites who try to manage increasing political complexity, and the influence-seeking masses that feel estranged from institutionalized, democratic politics. Our results also indicate, however, that the elite trusts some deliberation-based decisions more than others – namely, the more general and less binding ones over the detailed and obligatory –, leaving some room for the development of practices of deeper citizen involvement.

Citizen input in democratic policy-making

An extensive and ever-growing body of literature argues for the use of participatory innovations to salvage democracy (for an overview, see Jäske 2019). These innovations take on various forms, but what they all have in common is that they provide ordinary citizens with new ways to influence public decision-making beyond just voting, with the aim of restoring public faith in the democratic process (e.g., Fishkin & Mansbridge 2017). Theoretically, there are several reasons why increased citizen participation could have a positive impact on democratic policy-making. As summarized by Michels (2011: 279), citizen participation 1) gives citizens a say in decision-making; 2) gives individual citizens a sense of inclusion in the policy process; 3) develops civic skills and virtues; 4) facilitates rational decision-making based on public reasoning; and 5) increases the legitimacy of decisions.

This line of thinking assumes that the level of citizens' engagement in political decision-making processes is a significant component when citizens assess their level of satisfaction with democracy. According to empirical research, however, it is somewhat unclear how deeply citizens themselves really want to engage. In a study that has spawned much subsequent research, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) argued that US citizens *do not want* to become more involved in policy-making through deliberation and that *this is good* because most do not possess the capacity to engage in a meaningful way. In other critical accounts of deliberative democracy, Posner (2003; 2004), for example, has claimed that it is simply unreasonable to expect that citizens who do not even bother to vote would spend significantly more resources on debating policy in detail. However, in a more recent, comprehensive study, Neblo et al. (2010) found that US citizens' willingness to deliberate is actually "much more widespread than expected". Moreover, the study revealed that the group most willing to deliberate consists of people "who are less likely to participate in traditional partisan politics", i.e., not the ones who are already engaged, as is often believed. Setting aside internal motivators like sociability, learning and civic duty, citizens seem motivated to deliberate in order to strengthen (but not replace) the representative link between voters and decision-makers (Jacquet 2019).

While citizens might think that their deeper involvement with politics is important and desirable, the scarce existing evidence on elite attitudes suggests that elites are unenthusiastic about increasing citizen participation, despite the optimism among deliberation scholars who seem to assume that elites are receptive to deliberative practices rather than empirically examining whether this is actually the case (Hendriks & Lees-Marshment 2018). According to empirical accounts of participatory practices, decision-makers typically ignore citizen input (e.g., Goodin & Dryzek 2006; Rose 2009). In a rare empirical study of elite perceptions of more participatory democracy, based on 51 in-depth interviews of senior state officials in five countries, Hendriks and Lees-Marshment (2018) found that while elites value interaction with citizens in order to improve their understanding of policies and to reach beyond political "bubbles", elites are sceptical about new formal participatory channels (which they consider too mechanistic and antagonistic) and prefer more informal interaction. In a similar vein, Nabatchi and Farrar (2011) found through interviews of 11 US state legislators and 13 federal advisors that elites doubt citizens' capacity to debate

complex policy issues. Given the high technical demands of contemporary policy processes, it may not sound too surprising if the elites are not ready to increase lay citizens' formal and direct involvement in detail-level policy development. However, this does not preclude the possibility that elites could be willing to support new forms of citizen engagement, which connect to policies in a less binding and more general manner, as they could provide for the elites useful insight and also enhance their legitimacy to govern.

Taken together, existing research, which is scarce and inconclusive, suggests that citizens are more active in demanding opportunities to deliberate than elites are in providing these. As far as scholarly discussion is concerned, there is a strong focus on citizens' experiences of deliberative practices, while little attention has been paid to elite attitudes toward these measures.

To be fair, be duly noted that the perspectives of politicians on deliberative mechanisms have been debated by some previous scholarship. The highly publicized deliberative processes in Ireland are a case in point. As Farrell et al. (2019) explain, the Irish Constitutional Convention included self-selected politicians as participants in the deliberations, in order to better embed the assembly in the actual policy process. A key driver of this choice has undoubtedly been to address the issue of skepticism toward ordinary citizens among political elites. Moreover, what the balance in participation by citizens, politicians and experts should be in such conventions, has been discussed by others as well (e.g. White 2017). Nonetheless, empirical accounts of elites' attitudes toward deliberative mini-publics are very rare in the scholarly literature, which, as we argue, reflects the overall bias in the field toward the citizens' perspective.

Data and analysis

For the empirical inquiry, we combine two datasets, which provide a unique opportunity to compare (with equal measures) public and elite attitudes towards increased citizen participation via deliberation. The two sets of survey data are based on identical question batteries and were conducted only a few months apart, thereby ensuring that variations in external conditions did not confuse the findings.

Compared to earlier studies which relied heavily on US data, Finland provides an interesting counter-case. First of all, the country has experienced significantly more democratic malaise than many other established Western democracies, especially the other Nordic countries. Since the mid-1960s, turnout in parliamentary elections has decreased by 20 percentage points, while electoral volatility has increased significantly (Drummond 2006), and since the early 1980s, party memberships have halved (Mickelsson 2015). Compared to other Nordic countries, Finland is faring much worse on these traditional measures. Furthermore, populists have been more successful in elections in Finland than in many other countries, with many polls reporting that they have been the largest party in Finland since May 2019. On the other hand, given the public emphasis on investing in universal basic education, Finland is a nation with a “high [degree] of civic literacy” (Milner 2002) and a citizenry that can be expected to be well-informed about politics and thus well prepared for deliberation. The elite has also generally been favourable towards increasing citizen engagement. At a municipal level, there has been plenty of experimentation with various participatory and deliberative practices (Christensen et al. 2016), and, at a national level, the citizens’ initiative has been widely used by ordinary citizens since its introduction in 2012 (Christensen et al. 2017b). Thus, in contemporary Finland, there is a dire need for citizens to be activated politically, a citizenry that possesses the necessary civic skills to make this a meaningful course of action and plenty of real-life experience in participatory practices. Consequently, Finland seems to be a good benchmark for an examination of the gap between elite and citizen attitudes towards the use of deliberative practices.

The survey of elite respondents was conducted in November 2018 with the aim of measuring elite opinion on, among other topics, citizen deliberation. The target population in the elite survey was national-level decision-makers: members of parliament (including government ministers) and central governing organs of extra-parliamentary parties, people working in the offices of parliamentary party groups and national party headquarters, mid- to high-ranking public officials from all government departments, special government bureaus and governmental research agencies (such as the Finnish Environment Institute) and the largest special interest groups. This population consisted of 2,555 individuals, who were all contacted via personal work emails with an invitation to respond through a link. The survey was fully completed

by 675 respondents (26.4%). The respondents were categorized into three groups according to their occupation – politician/party official, public official or special interest group representative. A post-survey weight was calculated to make the sample representative of the target population in terms gender and occupational type. To the best of our knowledge, the resulting data (n = 675) is unique in being representative of national-level, policy-making elites in an established Western democracy. A survey among the general public was then carried out by a commercial actor in March 2019. The 1,701 respondents who completed the survey were representative of the Finnish voting-age population in terms age, gender and place of residence.

Although respondents in the survey of elites should also count as “citizens”, it was made clear to them in the invitation that they had specifically been contacted because of their professional role. Consequently, they responded from the viewpoint of a decision-maker, and the responses should be considered as their reflections on citizen engagement from that particular perspective. In contrast, the general survey provides data about attitudes towards citizen engagement from citizens’ viewpoints. Among other measures of political attitudes and behavioural patterns, both surveys included the following introduction and question battery:¹

In different parts of the world, deliberative forums, such as citizen reviews and meetings, have been tried out in support of national-, regional- and local-level decision-making. In these forums, randomly selected citizens carefully examine a certain policy issue and then give recommendations or make decisions. The forums listen to experts and representatives of different sides in the issue. Participants are also given several days to deliberate on the issue.

How much would you trust a citizen forum that had national-level authority to...

1. make statements to the general public about political issues; 2. offer voters advice in elections and referendums; 3. give advice to decision-makers on how they should make decisions about particular political issues; 4. give advice to decision-makers on which problems should be given priority; and 5. oblige elected officials to vote in a certain way on specific political issues? (Response options include 1. Would have full

¹ We thank Maija Setälä for suggesting the battery, which we slightly modified to fit the purpose of our study.

trust; 2. Would have a lot of trust; 3. Would have some trust; 4. Would have little trust; 5. Would not have any trust; 6. Cannot say.)

Although the five statements do not perfectly fit the idea of an ordinal scale as they encompass a variety of audiences (voters and decision-makers) and choices (agendas and policy choices), the ordering of the statements intends to convey a sense of ascending degree of citizen involvement. Beginning with the proposal that deliberative forums could make statements about political issues to the public is a very subtle and unbinding way of influencing policy. At the other extreme is the rather radical proposition that a deliberative forum could effectively force policymakers to make a certain decision.

Table 1 below reports the response frequencies (%) for each item in both surveys. The column furthest to the right shows the difference in percentage points between elite and citizen responses. A negative difference means that fewer elites chose this response. For example, the negative difference of 2.5 percentage points on the first line means that elites were less inclined to place full trust in a deliberative forum in terms of making statements to the public about political issues.

--- Table 1 here ---

The pattern is unmistakable. Citizens have much more trust in a deliberative forum than elites. Whereas a majority of citizens show that they would have at least some trust in a deliberative forum for all questions, among the elite respondents, there is a marginal majority in only two cases, namely a deliberative forum making a statement to the public and advising decision-makers on which matters should be given priority.

Although there is less disagreement over these two items, overall, there is a huge distance between the two sides. The contrasts are substantial when it comes to the capacity of a deliberative forum to advise decision-makers on issues and especially regarding obliging them to vote in a certain way. Making binding decisions about how decision-makers should decide would essentially entail the deliberative forum having total control, and there seems to be a lot of support for such a drastic idea among citizens. More than 20 percent would have full or a lot of trust in such a measure, with another 30 percent indicating some trust, meaning the majority support

this idea overall. Among the elites, support is under 10 percent, marking a very dramatic consensus gap.

It is also worth noting that the level of elite trust towards citizens' capacity to make decisions through deliberation appears to differ according to what types of decisions the citizens are expected to make. If we only look at decisions that concern political issues (statements 1, 3 and 5) and set aside elections and referendums (Statement 2, "offer advice to voters") and agenda-setting (Statement 4, "advise decision-makers on priorities"), we see that the elite's trust towards citizens' deliberative capacity decreases as the power of the deliberative body increases (i.e. its decisions become more concrete and binding). In regard to the weakest form of influence, making "statements to the general public about political issues", 52.6% of the elite trust citizens at least to some extent. When the question turns to advising *decision-makers on particular issues* (Statement 3), trust declines rather significantly (only 37.6% trust at least to some extent). Elite trust reaches the bottom when it is asked if they would trust a deliberative citizen body's capacity to *oblige* decision-makers to vote in a certain manner on particular issues (only 9.8% trust at least to some extent). While the elite's trust over citizens' capacity for self-government is generally very low, these differences suggest the elite's support for deeper citizen engagement depends, at least to some extent, on the level of generality of the decision that the deliberative body takes and how binding the decision is in relation to elite decision-making.

The consensus gap can also be addressed in terms of opinion congruence (see, e.g., Mattila & Raunio 2006). In order to bring the analysis to a more detailed level, we assess the opinion differences in Figures 1a-e below by distinguishing between different types of elites, instead of grouping them all together as we have done so far. The group 'politicians' (n=164) includes MPs, the members of extra-parliamentary parties' governing organs and party office workers (from parliamentary groups offices and national party headquarters). 'Public officials' (n=442) consists of mid- to top-level civil servants from all government departments and agencies. 'Advocacy group representatives' (n=58) includes mid- to top-level leaders from the key pressure groups in Finnish society, who are an important part of the corporatist policy process in the country.

These groups might differ in the extent to which they support the notion of increased citizen involvement in the political process. While politicians are likely to feel they have been given a popular mandate to make decisions, and therefore be particularly unenthusiastic about more public involvement, public officials might see things differently. They have not been appointed by popular vote and they may have plenty of experience of interacting with the general public in policy issues. In addition, in policy preparation, the issues of citizen involvement are likely dominated by bureaucrats, as such procedural questions relate only vaguely to everyday ‘bread-and-butter’ politics. Organized interest groups, especially their leadership, are arguably furthest apart from ordinary citizens. Although such groups represent the interest of various citizen groups, their existence does not directly depend on popular support and their activities are typically focused in the political process itself, not on keeping direct contact with ordinary citizens. People working in advocacy groups are typically policy experts, that is, accomplished professionals in a particular policy area. Only loosely attached to citizen demands and with strict focus in specific policy questions that require expertise, they seem the group least likely to support deep popular involvement.

Differences in the mean opinion between the different elite groups and citizens are all statistically very significant for each question (t-test, $p < .001$). Figures 1a to 1e visualize the lack of opinion congruence for each item by showing the group means with 95% confidence intervals on a 1 to 5 scale.² The lower the value, the less support for the suggestion in the statement.

--- Figures 1 a-e here ---

The figures show sizable gaps in elite-citizen opinion congruence. Moreover, the relatively narrow 95% CIs suggest reasonably robust findings. CIs are wider among advocacy group representatives due to the low n in the group. The findings regarding this particular group should therefore be approached with a little more caution.

However, the findings partly corroborate the loose assumptions that we presented. Advocacy group representatives are indeed more sceptical of citizen participation

² To enable calculation of the group means, responses were coded as follows: Agree completely = 5; Agree to a large extent = 4; Agree somewhat = 3; Agree only a little = 2; Disagree completely = 1.

through deliberative forums than the other groups. Surprisingly, politicians seem slightly more positive than public officials, although the differences are small.

Although analysing individual-level determinants of attitudes towards deliberative mini-publics is beyond the scope of this study, the fundamental message is quite clear: elites and citizens strongly disagree on how much power deliberative forums should have. Moreover, disagreement is largest when it comes to the most direct form of control that a deliberative forum could exert on decision-makers – the power to make them vote according to the will of the forum. For this item, the attitudes among the different elite groups are also most similar, suggesting that elites are quite unanimous in rejecting the idea of direct citizen control. Understandably, the differences are smaller when the proposed powers of a deliberative forum are not as strong or binding for the elite. This suggests the elites could be more supportive of such methods.

Discussion

In this short study, we have, for the first time, compared elite and voter attitudes towards deliberative mini-publics using equal measures and equally representative samples. The study addresses the broader question of democratic process preferences in contemporary Western democracies, which are currently suffering from a disconnection between elites and ordinary citizens. More specifically, the study addresses the remarkably under-studied topic of elite attitudes towards the widely held view that ordinary citizens should be given more say in democratic policymaking through deliberative practices.

Focusing on the Finnish case, which we believe will serve as a useful benchmark for future analyses due to its ‘most likely case’ characteristics, we find evidence demonstrating unequivocally that citizens are significantly more trusting of the idea of a deliberative forum as an actor in the democratic policy-making process. The findings suggest that ordinary citizens would be prepared to give voters a larger role in policymaking but that elites do not see this as a good idea.

While the main message of the analysis may not come as a shock, it is a well-timed reminder to scholars and practitioners engaged in the push for more widespread use of

deliberative practices in democratic decision-making. The gap in attitudes documented in this study is large and reflects a significant lack of congruence between elites and citizens when it comes to assigning deliberative practices more decision-making power. As we argue here, the unwillingness of political elites (who possess the power to either erect new participatory bodies or to block them) has been grossly neglected so far in scholarly debate on the use of deliberative practices. Our findings are in line with the few earlier interview-based studies on elite attitudes (Nabatchi and Farrar 2011; Hendriks and Lees-Marshment 2018).

Of further importance is the fact that our results reflect what could be termed the elite-citizen ‘trust gap’ in Finland. It is a country currently struggling to engage citizens through traditional ways of political participation, despite having a populace that is high [in] civic literacy, and which should have the capacity to deliberate. Moreover, Finnish policy-makers have generally speaking been positive towards increasing citizen involvement in political decision-making. In other words, Finland should be among the countries where the elite is supportive of citizen deliberation, yet our findings demonstrate a dramatic gap. The wideness of the gap between elite and citizen attitudes towards deliberation in this ‘most auspicious’ context casts significant doubt on the likelihood of deliberative bodies emerging in less auspicious surroundings. One way forward for subsequent research is to try and explain why the trust gap exists and to investigate in more detail how prevalent it is across the different policy-maker and citizen groups. Although this was not the task of this study (and solving this puzzle would require more sophisticated data and techniques), some hypotheses can be raised. Overall, elites might conceive participatory innovations as infringements of their power position and a questioning of their professional skills rather than a democratizing project for the good of society as a whole. Considering the complexity of the issues faced by political-administrative elites in the globalized world, elites may be genuinely sceptical of ordinary citizens’ capacity to make informed decisions through deliberation. Moreover, elites who are experienced in political negotiating might be sceptical of the very idea of democratic deliberation. Based on the findings presented in Figures 1a-3, this seems particularly true when it comes to advocacy group representatives. As policy experts, representing particular societal interests, they might be afraid of losing influence over the policy process if ordinary citizens are given a stronger voice. There is indeed a lot of research to be

done regarding the attitudes of different subsets of elites who are involved in democratic decision-making.

Citizens, too, might be motivated by a genuine wish to exert more influence over the democratic decision-making process. As ordinary citizens are unlikely to have first-hand experience of the challenges and deliberative wrangling of decision-making processes, their distance from actual decision-making might generate plenty of confidence in their capacity to tackle real political problems. Furthermore, inexperience of genuine political negotiations might more generally enhance belief in the alleged virtues of deliberation. Of course, rather than reflect a desire for more direct control over decision-making, the findings could also simply reflect a lack of trust in political elites.

Whatever the specific reasons might be, the trust gap reflects a potentially perilous breach that has formed between political elites and ordinary citizens in Finland, and, in all likelihood, elsewhere in the developed West, too, where the basic configuration of political decision-making is similar. Tension between those who are in power and deem the citizenry incapable of comprehending issues of government, and citizens who trust their own capacity to self-govern, may be used by political entrepreneurs who may exploit the masses' sense of self-conviction – but for draconian purposes rather than a genuine desire for democracy. As policy-making in the contemporary world is unlikely to become any less complicated, other methods for filling the democratic vacuum might be hard to create. It is possible that modern developed societies have reached a point where their governance is too complicated even for traditional representative politics – let alone through the direct involvement of ordinary citizens.

Of course, the apparent paradox is that despite of this, the use of various types of democratic innovations and methods for more direct citizen engagement in policy-making has expanded significantly during the past decade or so – also in Finland (e.g. Geissel & Newton 2012; Jäske 2019). Thus, another important question for subsequent research is when and why, exactly, elites may become willing to support a more direct citizen engagement in politics?

An optimistic scenario is that traditional decision-makers, whose mediating role between the citizens and the state broadened and institutionalized deeply during the

20th century along with the consolidation of representative democracy, are only in the process of getting used to dealing with more direct citizen input and the trust gap will slowly but surely diminish with time, as citizens and policy-makers find ways to communicate and collaborate. The new methods of citizen engagement, which at least in Finland have been mainly driven by democracy experts of various administrative branches, might merely operate as “pilot tests” designed to facilitate such a convergence of views and needs.

Another, more cynical possibility is that although we are witnessing a growth in the use of deliberative mini-publics, policy-makers only tolerate them and see them as a necessary evil in the fight against democratic malaise. In this case, the negative attitudes among policy-makers are very real and stable, and mini-publics are merely a way for political elites to pay lip service to popular concerns without actually giving away any power. In other words, the elite will only support the building of powerless facades.

A middle-ground option could be that policy-makers are currently in the process of learning how to deal with the popular demands calling for more direct involvement in decision-making. While their attitudes are still very sceptical, the widespread use of mini-publics and other innovations nevertheless show that even policy-makers at some level recognize that more inclusive policy processes are on their way. This does not, however, mean that the attitudes of policy-makers will necessarily become significantly more positive as a result of more experience with e.g. mini-publics. For all we know at this point, they might become even more unconvinced.

Our findings suggest that elites are more willing to support new forms of citizen involvement in politics when they deal with issues on a general level and in non-binding fashion. This is compatible with the findings of Hendriks and Lees-Marshment (2018), which indicated that although elites tend to be sceptical towards new formal avenues of citizen involvement, they value citizen input, as it allows them to stay in touch with the problems of ordinary voters. These observations suggest that instead of elevating citizens to authors of detail-level decision-making, elites would more likely support deliberative citizen bodies, which raise, discuss and order citizens’ general concerns on topical matters. While such decisions or declarations have no binding force over particular policies, they would provide valuable insight for

the decision-makers and their publicity would incentivize decision-makers to pay attention. As Jacquet (2019) has demonstrated, citizens are not hoping to replace representative institutions, they wish to supplement them. Widely representative advisory deliberative bodies could be the solution. More thorough research on elites' process preferences is direly needed to flesh out an equilibrium that satisfies both ends and is practically feasible.

To conclude, then, we argue that the democratic innovation literature should have paid much more attention to the attitudes of policy-making elites, not only to the needs and desires of citizens. Moreover, the wishes and motivations of the two groups need to be examined in tandem, to assess the demand and supply of democratic innovations. As the use of democratic innovations seems likely to keep expanding, we see the need to include decision-makers in this booming research agenda that examines the real-life applications of such measures. As we believe our results to demonstrate, citizens and policy-makers are currently far apart in terms of their attitudes toward the use of mini-publics, and only looking at one side of the equation leads to a dangerously incomplete picture.

References

Bächtiger, A., Dryzek, J., Mansbridge, J. and Warren, M. (2018) 'Introduction', in A. Bächtiger, J. Dryzek, J. Mansbridge, and M. Warren (eds), *The Oxford handbook of deliberative democracy*, Oxford: University Press Oxford, pp. 1-31.

Christensen, H.S., Himmelroos, S. and Grönlund, K. (2017a) 'Does Deliberation Breed an Appetite for Discursive Participation? Assessing the Impact of First-Hand Experience', *Political Studies*, 65(1): 64-83.

Christensen, H.S., Jäske, M., Setälä, M. and Laitinen, E. (2017b) 'The Finnish Citizens' Initiative: Towards Inclusive Agenda-setting?' *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 40(4): 411-433.

Christensen, H.S., Jäske, M., Setälä, M. and Laitinen, E. (2016) 'Demokraattiset innovaatiot Suomessa – Käyttö ja vaikutukset paikallisella ja valtakunnallisella

tasolla' [in Finnish: Democratic innovations in Finland - Use and effects on local and national level]. *Publications of the Government's analysis, assessment and research activities* 56/2016.

Drummond, A. (2006) 'Electoral Volatility and Party Decline in Western Democracies: 1970–1995', *Political studies*, 54(3): 628-647.

Dryzek, J. (2000) *Deliberative democracy and beyond. Liberals, critics, contestations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ercan, S. and Gagnon, J.P. (2014) 'The Crisis of Democracy, Which Crisis? Which Democracy?' *Democratic Theory*, 1(2): 1-10.

Farrell, D. M., Suiter, J., Harris, C., and Cunningham, K. (2019) 'The Effects of Mixed Membership in a Deliberative Forum: The Irish Constitutional Convention of 2012–2014', *Political Studies* (OnlineFirst).

Fishkin, J.S. and Mansbridge, J. (2017) 'Introduction', *Daedalus*, 146(3): 6-13.

Geissel, B. and Newton, K. (eds) (2012) *Evaluating democratic innovations: Curing the democratic malaise?* London: Routledge.

Goodin, R.E. and Dryzek, J.S. (2006) 'Deliberative Impacts: The Macro – Political Uptake of Mini-Publics', *Politics & Society*, 34(2): 219-244.

Grönlund, K., Bächtiger, A. and Setälä, M. (2014) *Deliberative mini-publics – Involving citizens in the democratic process*. Colchester: ECPR Press.

Grönlund, K., Herne, K. and Setälä, M. (2015) 'Does Enclave Deliberation Polarize Opinions?' *Political Behavior*, 37(4): 995-1020.

Hendriks, C. and Lees-Marshment, J. (2018) 'Political Leaders and Public Engagement: The Hidden World of Informal Elite - Citizen Interaction', *Political Studies*, 67(3): 597-617.

Hibbing, J. and Theiss-Morse, E. (2002) *Stealth Democracy. Americans' Beliefs About How Government Should Work*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Himmelroos, S., Rapeli, L. and Grönlund, K. (2017) 'Talking with like-minded people: Equality and efficacy in enclave deliberation', *The Social Science Journal*, 54(2): 148-158.

Jacquet, V. (2019) 'The Role and the Future of Deliberative Mini-publics: A Citizen Perspective', *Political Studies*, 67(3): 639–657.

Jäske, M. (2019) 'Participatory innovations and maxi-publics: The influence of participation possibilities on perceived legitimacy at the local level in Finland', *European Journal of Political Research*, 58(2): 603-630.

Mattila, M. and Raunio, T. (2006) 'Cautious Voters – Supportive Parties: Opinion Congruence between Voters and Parties on the EU Dimension', *European Union Politics*, 7(4): 427-449.

McLaverty, P. (2009) 'Is Deliberative Democracy the Answer to Representative Democracy's Problems? A Consideration of the UK Government's Programme of Citizens' Juries', *Representation*, 45(4): 379-389.

Michels, A. (2011) 'Innovations in democratic governance: How does citizen participation contribute to a better democracy?' *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 77(2): 275-293.

Mickelsson, R. (2015) *Suomen puolueet – vapauden ajasta maailmantuskaan* [in Finnish: Parties in Finland – from an era of freedom to 'weltschmerz'] Tampere: Vastapaino.

Milner, H. (2002) *Civic literacy: How informed citizens make democracy work*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.

Nabatchi, T. and Farrar, C. (2011) *Bridging the Gap between Public Officials and the Public (DDC)*. A Report of the Deliberative Democracy Consortium. Available at: <http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/Bridging-the-Gap-between-Public-Officials-and-the-Public—DDC-exec-summary.pdf>

Neblo M. A., Esterling, K. M., Kennedy, R. P., Lazer D. M. J. and Sokhey A. E. (2010) 'Who wants to deliberate – and why?' *American Political Science Review*, 104(3): 566-583.

Newton, K. (2012) ‘Curing the Democratic Malaise with Democratic Innovations’, in K. Newton and B. Geissel (eds), *Evaluating Democratic Innovations: Curing the Democratic Malaise?* London: Routledge, pp. 3-20.

Norris, P. (2011) *Democratic Deficit: Critical Citizens Revisited*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Posner, R. (2003) *Law, Pragmatism, and Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Posner, R. (2004) Smooth Sailing. *Legal Affairs* 1/2004.

Rose, J. (2009) ‘Institutionalizing Participation through Citizen’s Assemblies’, in J. DeBardleben and J. Pammett (eds), *Activating the Citizen: Dilemmas of Participation in Europe and Canada*, Basingstoke: PalgraveMacmillan, pp. 214-232.

Setälä, M. (2017) ‘Connecting deliberative mini-publics to representative decision making’, *European Journal of Political Research*, 56(4): 846-863.

Smith, G. (2009) *Democratic innovations: Designing institutions for citizen participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Strandberg, K., Grönlund, K. and Himmelroos, S. (2019) ‘Do discussions in like-minded groups necessarily lead to more extreme opinions? Deliberative democracy and group polarization’, *International Political Science Review*, 40(1): 41-57.

White, S. (2017) ‘Parliaments, constitutional conventions, and popular sovereignty’, *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 19(2): 320–335.

Funding information

This work was supported by the Strategic Research Council of the Academy of Finland under Grant 312676.

Conflict of interest statement

The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank the anonymous reviewers and the editors for their useful comments. We also thank Professor Maija Setälä for help with the survey measure used in the analysis.

Table 1. Elite and citizen attitudes towards the power of deliberative forums (% of respondents)

| | Elites | Citizens | Difference |
|---|--------|----------|------------|
| <i>Statements to the public</i> | | | |
| Full (trust) | 1.8 | 4.3 | -2.5 |
| A lot | 9.9 | 19 | -9.1 |
| Some | 40.9 | 40.6 | 0.3 |
| Little | 32.3 | 12.2 | 20.1 |
| None ¹ | 11.9 | 2.4 | 9.5 |
| <i>Offer voting advice</i> | | | |
| Full (trust) | 1 | 4.5 | -3.5 |
| A lot | 7.4 | 21.7 | -14.3 |
| Some | 30.4 | 37.4 | -7 |
| Little | 34.2 | 11.5 | 22.7 |
| None | 23.7 | 4.8 | 18.9 |
| <i>Advise decision-makers on issues</i> | | | |
| Full (trust) | 0.7 | 5.3 | -4.6 |
| A lot | 5.8 | 22.9 | -17.1 |
| Some | 31.1 | 36.1 | -5 |
| Little | 40.7 | 12.2 | 28.5 |
| None | 18.7 | 2.8 | 15.9 |
| <i>Advise decision-makers on priorities</i> | | | |
| Full (trust) | 2.2 | 7.6 | -5.4 |
| A lot | 16.3 | 23.9 | -7.6 |
| Some | 39.1 | 34 | 5.1 |
| Little | 29.3 | 11.9 | 17.4 |
| None | 10.5 | 2.5 | 8 |
| <i>Oblige decision-makers to vote a certain way</i> | | | |
| Full (trust) | 0.3 | 5.7 | -5.4 |
| A lot | 1.9 | 16.7 | -14.8 |
| Some | 7.6 | 30.3 | -22.7 |
| Little | 23.3 | 14.7 | 8.6 |
| None | 62.7 | 9.8 | 52.9 |

¹ "Cannot say" responses have been excluded from the table for readability.

FIGURES 1a-e

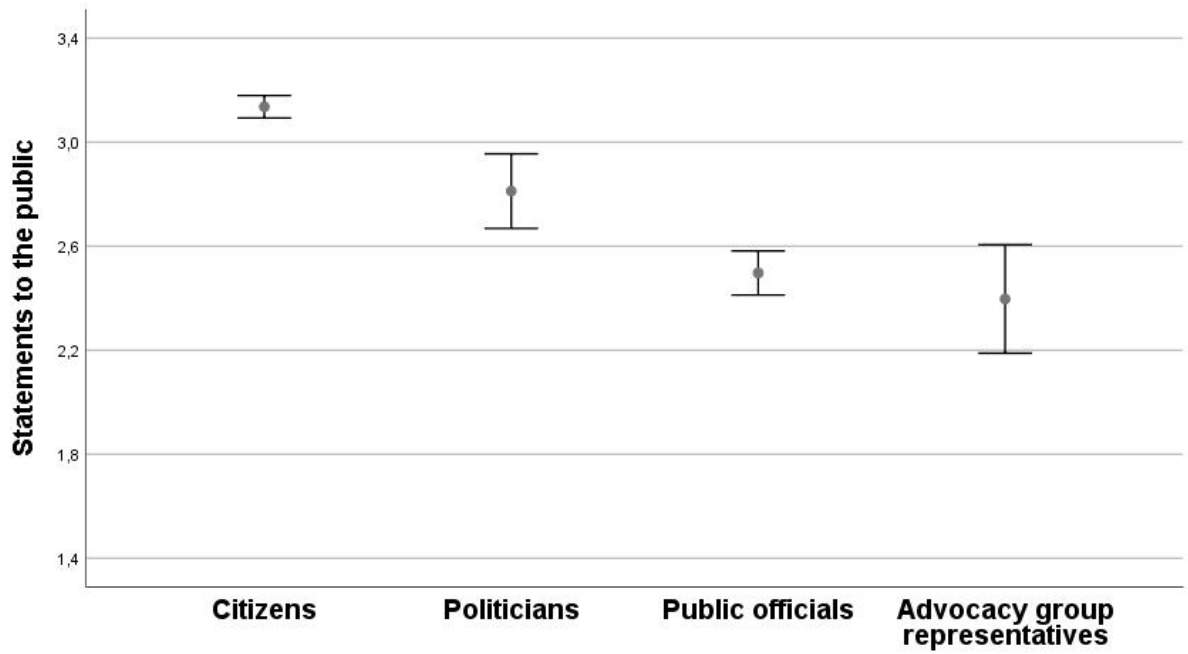


Figure 1a Group means for “Statements to the public”

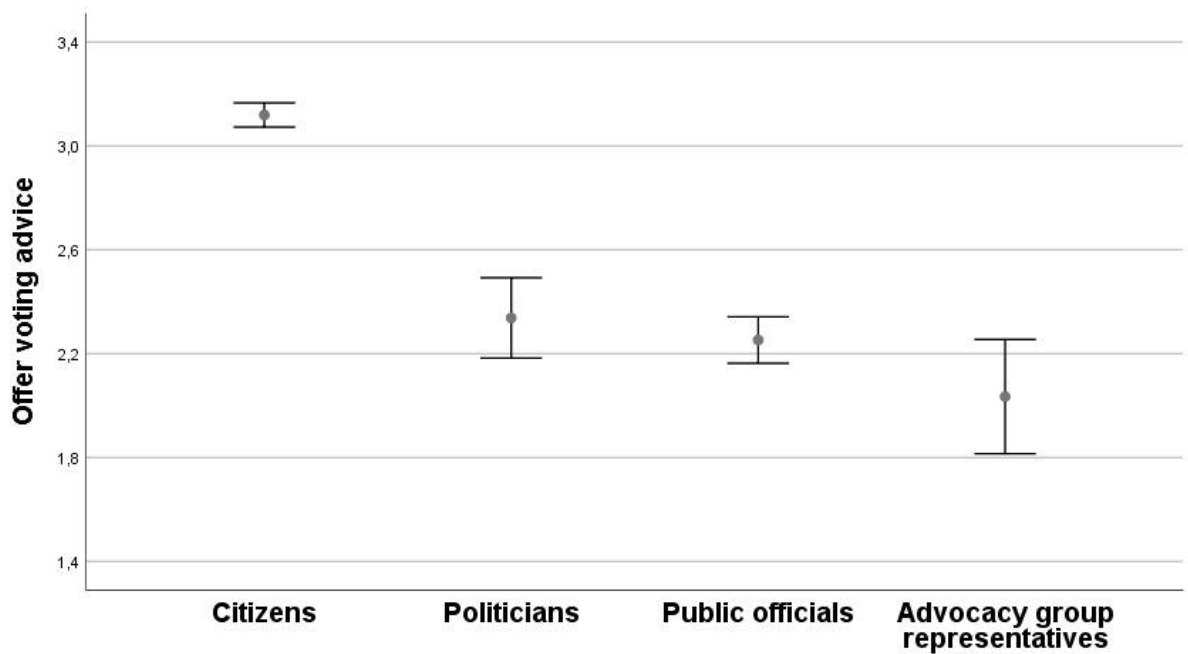


Figure 1b Group means for “Offer voting advice”

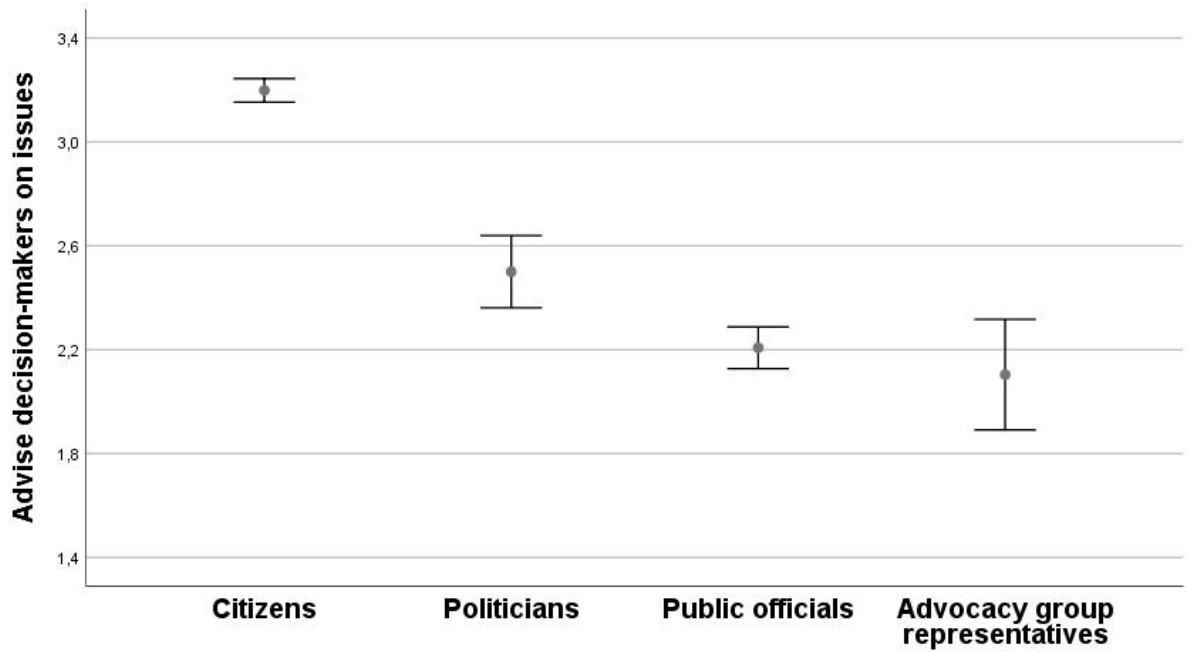


Figure 1c Group means for “Advise on issues”

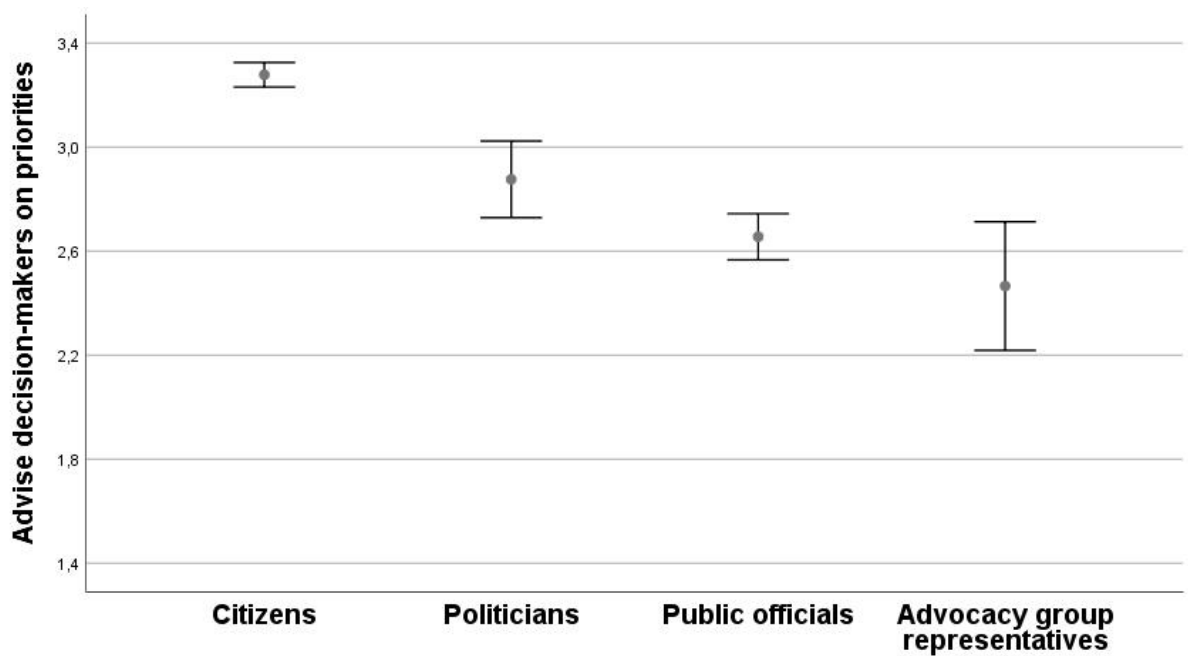


Figure 1d Group means for “Advise on priorities”

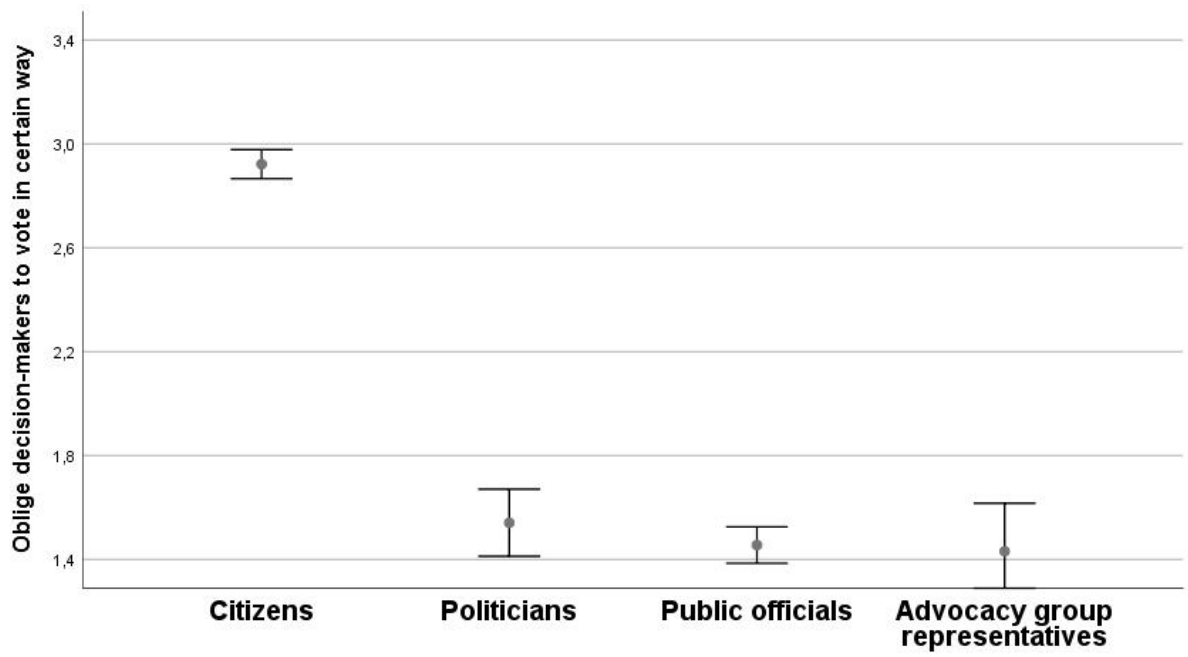


Figure 1e Group means for “Oblige to vote a certain way”