



UNIVERSITY  
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# DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS IN FINNISH LOCAL POLITICS

Essays on the Varieties, Causes and  
Consequences of Mechanisms for  
Direct Citizen Participation

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Maija Jäske





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The originality of this thesis has been checked in accordance with the University of Turku quality assurance system using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

Cover image: Eevi Karjalainen  
ISBN 978-951-29-7436-8 (PRINT)  
ISBN 978-951-29-7437-5 (PDF)  
ISSN 0082-6987 (Print)  
ISSN 2343-3191 (Online)  
Grano Oy - Turku, Finland 2018

# ABSTRACT

Maija Jäske

Democratic Innovations in Finnish Local Politics: Essays on the Varieties, Causes and Consequences of Mechanisms for Direct Citizen Participation

University of Turku, Faculty of Social Sciences, Political Science

Doctoral Programme of Social and Behavioral Sciences

Annales universitatis turkuensis, ser. B tom. 462, Humaniora, Turku 2018

Democratic governments around the world have become interested in democratic innovations, i.e. mechanisms for citizens' direct participation in decision-making. Typical examples include referendums, citizens' initiatives, deliberative mini-publics, participatory budgeting, committees, surveys and online applications. This work examines the causes and consequences of democratic innovations in the context of Finnish local politics through an introductory chapter and three independent articles.

The first article studies the linkage between political trust and support for democratic innovations by analyzing survey data from municipal residents in Southwest Finland in 2013. The results indicate that democratic innovations may not be able to attract the most skeptical citizens, regardless of whether participation takes place online or offline. The second article investigates factors explaining the occurrence of democratic innovations, namely referendum motions and advisory referendums, with a case-control study of Finnish municipalities in 1991-2012. It shows that their occurrence is influenced by various systemic factors, such as political support, municipal size, policy diffusion and party system factors. The third article addresses the question whether democratic innovations can influence the wider public. The analyses based on hierarchical data covering 9022 individuals in 30 Finnish municipalities in 2011 reveal that citizens' evaluations of procedural fairness are higher in municipalities that offer possibilities for discursive participation. The availability of participatory mechanisms does not, however, affect satisfaction with outcomes of decision-making. Overall, the results of the three articles indicate that the details in institutional design matter for both favorable preconditions and potential consequences of democratic innovations.

The introductory chapter lays out a framework for systematically analyzing the institutional design features of democratic innovations, and discusses a number of normative justifications for deepening citizen participation in democratic governance. Through theoretical discussion and reflection of empirical findings as well previous empirical research, the introductory chapter points out that participation should not be justified only by its positive effects on those who participate, but also by its epistemic and systemic value.

**Keywords:** democratic innovations, local government, institutional design, participatory democracy, direct democracy, deliberative democracy, political trust, perceived legitimacy, municipal mergers



# TIIVISTELMÄ

Maija Jäske

Demokraattiset innovaatiot Suomen kunnissa: Tutkimuksia suoran kansalaisosallistumisen mekanismeista, taustatekijöistä ja vaikutuksista

Turun yliopisto, Yhteiskuntatieteellinen tiedekunta, valtio-oppi

Yhteiskunta- ja käyttäytymistieteiden tohtoriohjelma

Turun yliopiston julkaisu, sarja B osa 462, Humaniora, Turku 2018

Demokraattiset hallitukset ympäri maailmaa ovat viime aikoina kiinnostuneet demokraattisista innovaatioista, eli kansalaisten suoran osallistumisen mekanismeista. Tyypillisiä esimerkkejä ovat kansanäänestykset, kansalaisaloitteet, deliberatiiviset kansalaisfoorumit, osallistuva budjetointi, kuntalaisten ja hallinnon yhteistyöelimet, kyselyt ja sähköiset osallistumissovellukset. Tämä tutkimus tarkastelee demokraattisten innovaatioiden taustatekijöitä ja vaikutuksia Suomen kuntatasolla johdantoluvun ja kolmen itsenäisen artikkelin kautta.

Ensimmäisessä artikkelissa tutkitaan poliittisen luottamuksen ja demokraattisten innovaatioiden kannatuksen välistä yhteyttä Lounais-Suomessa vuonna 2013 kerätyssä kyselyaineistossa. Tulosten mukaan kaikkein kielteisimmän päätöksentekoon suhtautuvat kansalaiset eivät välttämättä innostu osallistumaan demokraattisten innovaatioiden kautta, riippumatta siitä onko kyseessä sähköinen vai kasvokkainen osallistuminen. Toisessa artikkelissa tutkitaan tapaus-verrokkitutkimuksen menetelmin, mitkä tekijät selittävät kansanäänestysaloitteiden ja neuvoa-antavien kansanäänestysten esiintymistä Suomen kunnissa 1991-2012. Tulokset osoittavat, että näiden demokraattisten innovaatioiden esiintymiseen vaikuttavat esimerkiksi kunnan poliittisen järjestelmän kannatus, kuntakoko, osallistumisen kulttuuri ja puolueiden voimasuhteet. Kolmannessa artikkelissa tutkitaan, voiko demokraattisilla innovaatioilla olla vaikutuksia laajemman yleisön kokemuksiin hallinnon legitimitietistä analysoimalla kansalaisten näkemyksiä kuntademokratiasta vuonna 2011. Tulosten mukaan kuntalaisten arviot päätöksenteon oikeudenmukaisuudesta ovat korkeampia niissä kunnissa, jotka tarjoavat kuntalaisille keskusteluun pohjautuvia osallistumismahdollisuuksia. Uusilla osallistumismuodoilla ei kuitenkaan ole yhteyttä siihen, kuinka tyytyväisiä kuntalaiset ovat päätöksiin. Kaikkien kolmen artikkelin tulokset osoittavat lisäksi, että uusien osallistumismuotojen institutionaaliset erityispiirteet liittyvät oleellisesti sekä niiden taustatekijöihin että mahdollisiin vaikutuksiin.

Johdantoluvussa luodaan viitekehys demokraattisten innovaatioiden luokitteluun ja keskustellaan kolmesta tavasta, joilla kansalaisten suora osallistuminen on oikeutettu normatiivisissa demokratiateorioissa. Arvioimalla näitä teoreettisia lähtökohtia ja peilaamalla niitä tämän tutkimuksen tuloksiin sekä aiempaan empiriseen tutkimukseen osoitetaan, että kansalaisten suoraa osallistumista ei tulisi perustella pelkästään myönteisillä vaikutuksilla osallistujiin, vaan tulisi huomioida myös osallistumisen arvo päätösten laadulle ja laajemmalle yleisölle.

**Asiasanat:** demokraattiset innovaatiot, kunnallishallinto, instituutioiden suunnittelu, osallistuva demokratia, suora demokratia, deliberatiivinen demokratia, poliittinen luottamus, hallinnon legitimitietti, kuntaliitokset



# Table of Contents

List of original publications.....	3
Acknowledgements .....	5
<b>Part I - Introductory chapter</b> .....	<b>7</b>
1. Introduction: The era of democratic innovation .....	9
2. Points of departure .....	15
2.1 Key concept: democratic innovations.....	15
2.2 Framework for studying democratic innovations .....	16
2.3 Causes of democratic innovations .....	22
3. Direct citizen participation in democratic theory and research .....	27
3.1 Making better citizens: The self-transformation thesis of participation.....	27
3.2 Knowledge and cognitive diversity: Epistemic role of participation .....	31
3.3 Public will-formation and legitimacy among the maxi-publics: Systemic role of participation .....	34
4. Empirical design .....	39
4.1 Case selection.....	39
4.2 Methodology .....	41
4.2.1 Data and methods.....	42
5. Main results by articles .....	47
5.1 Political trust and support for democratic innovations (Article 1) .....	47
5.2 Occurrence of 'soft' forms of direct democracy (Article 2) .....	47
5.3 Democratic innovations and maxi-publics (Article 3).....	48
6. Conclusions.....	49
6.1 Reflections for the theory and practice of democratic innovations.....	49
6.2 Avenues for future research.....	51
6.3 Conclusion.....	53
References.....	55
<b>Part II – Original publications</b> .....	<b>67</b>



# List of original publications

This dissertation is based on the following articles referred to in the text as Articles 1-3.

- 1 Christensen, H. S., Karjalainen, M. and Lundell, K. (2016). Democratic innovations to the rescue? Political trust and attitudes toward democratic innovations in Southwest Finland. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 39(5), 404-416.

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published online by Taylor & Francis in the International Journal of Public Administration on 15 November 2015, available online: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01900692.2015.1015560>

- 2 Jäske, M. (2017). ‘Soft’ forms of direct democracy: Explaining the occurrence of referendum motions and advisory referendums in Finnish local government, *Swiss Political Science Review*, 23(1), 50-76.

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- 3 Jäske, M. (2018). Participatory innovations and maxi-publics: The influence of participation possibilities on perceived legitimacy at the local level in Finland, *European Journal of Political Research*, online first.

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# Acknowledgements

This work would never have been started nor completed without the encouragement and guidance from many individuals. I have been fortunate to have the most committed and inspiring supervisor, who has given me freedom to explore and yet kept my feet on the ground and finish the project. Maija Setälä, thank you for encouraging me to pursue a PhD in the first place, for comments with short notice and at late hours, for mentorship in academia, for recommendations, for funding, and for breaking a few glass ceilings along the way. Professor emeritus Hannu Nurmi also played an important role in the decision to pursue an academic career, and I highly value his support at several stages of the PhD project. Furthermore, I'd like to thank pre-examiners Brigitte Geissel and Ian O'Flynn for their thoughtful comments on the dissertation, as well as André Bächtiger for agreeing to act as my opponent at the public defence.

I am grateful for the best officemates, colleagues and administrative staff at the Department of Philosophy, Contemporary History, and Political Science. Although a big portion of my research has taken place physically elsewhere, people at the department have always welcomed me to the community. First of all, Auli Kultanen-Leino, Katri Tammelinn, Marja Heinonen and others have been most patient with my questions about administrative procedures. An especially important institution has been the regular political science research seminar, coordinated by Henri Vogt, Maija Setälä, Juha Vuori, Elina Kestilä-Kekkonen and other senior faculty. Clever comments, lively discussions and opportunity to present first drafts are something I truly hope the future PhD candidates will also have access to. Fellow PhD students at the department: your feedback at the seminar, peer support and (bad) jokes made my day on the darkest moments of the dissertation process. So thank you Hannu Autto, Saila Heinikoski, Annina Kärkkäinen, Elias Laitinen, Mikko Leino, Kimmo Makkonen, Marjaana Mäenpää, Sakari Nieminen, Laura Parkkinen, Sami Pirkkala, Miira Raiskila, Teemu Rantanen, Ville Sinkkonen, Sami Torssonen, Leena Vastapuu, Juha Ylisalo and others: it's been an honor to work with such smart colleagues. Special thanks also to other senior colleagues at the department, Ville Laamanen, Rauli Mickelsson, Antti Pajala, Milla Vaha and others, for your insights. I am also grateful for the lessons in political economy taught by colleagues at the Public Choice Research Centre PCRC.

Almost like a second academic home for me has been the Social Science Research Institute Samforska at Åbo Akademi: Thank you Kimmo Grönlund, Staffan Himmelroos, Marina Lindell and others for the introduction to deliberative mini-publics and empirical democracy research. I am also most grateful to Henrik Serup Christensen, Titi Ertiö, Elias Laitinen, Krister Lundell, Laura Nurminen, Lauri Rapeli and Maija for doing research and writing together with me. As co-authors, you have taught me more about politics, statistical analysis, academic writing and publishing than any academic book. I also wish to thank wonderful colleagues in other universities – Kaisa Herne, Harri Raisio, Mikko Rask, Jenni Rinne, Maija Mattila, Taina Meriluoto and Inga Saikkonen – for feedback, collaboration and indispensable peer support.

As part of the PhD adventure I have been privileged to visit two distinguished institutes of democracy research, and these research visits have been truly unforgettable experiences. I am most thankful to Archon Fung at the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University for the invitation, and Democracy Fellows Rikki Dean, Yanilda Gonzalez, Michael MacKenzie, and Jonathan Rinne for their invaluable feedback and peer support. Special thanks to Maria Victoria del Campo and Seija Hälvä for care and companionship during the research visit. I am also most thankful to John Dryzek for inviting me to the Center for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance at the University of Canberra to finish my last research article, and kind colleagues Nicole Curato and Simon Niemeyer for making us feel like home in Canberra.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the following organizations for funding my research in Finland and abroad: Turku Urban Research Programme, Finnish Section of the Nordic Federation of Public Administration, Public Choice Research Centre PCRC, University of Turku Graduate School

UTUGS, Fulbright Finland, League of Finnish-American Societies, and Academy of Finland projects ‘Democratic Reasoning: Deliberation, Accountability and Trust in Representative Democracies’ (grant number 274305) and ‘Participation in Long-Term Decision-Making PALO’ (grant numbers 312671 & 312676). Furthermore, I wish to thank Marianne Pekola-Sjöblom at the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities for providing invaluable survey data for my research. Special thanks also to Maj and Tor Nessling Foundation for providing a friendly and productive working space in Helsinki for the final year of my PhD.

I am grateful to my friends Anni, Marika, Anna-Maria and Jenni for having me as who I am. Annika, Kaisa and Mikaela, thank you for taking me out every now and then, and giving your unconditional support in all areas of life. I also want to thank my parents for saying yes to most of my dreams, my mum Aila especially for reading bedtime stories, and my dad Hannu for showing the importance of listening. My sister Anu and my brother Mikko, thank you for inspiration and emotional support. I also want to thank my godmother Vuokko for encouraging me to study and read, and my parents-in-law Rita and Pertti for showing interest to my work as well as practical household assistance.

Finally, I am most indebted to my husband Jukka. Thank you so much for being there for year after year, making me laugh, taking me to amazing places, buying ice cream and Crisp, but most of all letting me dream big and helping to fulfil those dreams. Aava and baby boy, your smiles fill every corner of my heart, thank you for letting me be your mum.

Helsinki, November 2018  
Maija Jäske

# **Part I - Introductory chapter**



# 1. Introduction: The era of democratic innovation

We, the people, like democracy; but many of us think that it could do even better. While the basic principles of representative government – rule by the people, competitive elections, secret ballot – are supported all around the world, particularly people in established democracies have started to demand more from their governments. And I do not mean more in terms of policy outcomes, as there have always been demands for more social security, wider human rights, or less regulation on individual action. What is different in this era, however, is that citizens want more open policy-making processes. Many feel that democratic governments live a life of their own, being remote and unresponsive to us and our opinions, even if we have participated in the selection of politicians into these positions. In Finland, we observe the same symptoms as in other established democracies. Turnout in parliamentary elections is lower than in the 1980s, and compared to other Nordic countries, Finns were the least active voters in the last parliamentary elections (Grönlund, 2016). Especially at the local level, where decisions affecting people's everyday life and services have been made, dissatisfaction has become obvious. Only one fourth of adult municipality residents trust their local politicians, and less than 20 per cent think that citizens' opinions are taken into account in municipal decision-making (The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, 2015).

In the last few decades, these international trends have fueled a lively scholarly debate on democratic deficits and the future of democratic governance (Norris, 2011; Warren, 2009a). It has been pointed out that some people would prefer influencing particular policies that are important to themselves, instead of choosing between party programs. On the other hand, some citizens find that the issues and causes they care about never even find their way to the agendas of representative institutions. In some decisions, elected politicians may seem incapable of setting aside their partisan interests and search for solutions that would benefit the public as a whole, now and in the future. Increasing citizen participation with democratic innovations has been offered as one solution to misalignment between democratic citizens and their elites. Democratic innovations are designed mechanisms for citizens' direct participation in decision-making processes (Smith, 2009). They complement representative democracy by channeling citizens' knowledge and opinions to the decision-makers by various means. This dissertation will offer some insights into these innovations by analyzing their causes and consequences in the real world of Finnish local politics through three independent articles. In addition, the purpose of this introductory chapter is to conceptualize democratic innovations, and discuss normative justifications for introducing them as part of democratic governance.

Despite its different definitions, participation is a core concept in most democratic theories (Held, 2006). In a functionalist approach recently advocated by Warren (2017a), bringing the voice of the people to the table is seen as a starting point for democracy, after which other functions such as will formation and collective decision-making can be performed. Therefore, even if there may be participation that is undemocratic, there is no democracy without at least a minimal level of citizen participation. 'Rule by the people' fundamentally is about a particular type of government in which the people – however defined – participate in ruling themselves (Dahl, 1991). We, political scientists, do not, however, yet agree on the exact role that democratic innovations and direct citizen participation ought to play in democratic politics. Prominent critical voices from within the field raise some major questions, such as whether citizens really want to influence decisions (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002), whether active participation is incompatible with respectful public deliberation (Mutz, 2006), and whether we can actually expect participatory mechanisms to affect policy decisions (Papadopoulos & Warin, 2007). Furthermore, debates over the normative values of participation are lively in the field of political theory. Holding representatives accountable is one widely-accepted view (Saffon & Urbinati, 2013), while others emphasize the intrinsic value of participation and decision-making by the people (Pateman, 2012). After the deliberative turn, participation has been associated with the tasks of listening, arguing and collective will-formation (Dryzek, 2010). In this introductory chapter, I articulate three different but not mutually exclusive

justifications for direct citizen participation in contemporary democratic theory. Although the articles included in this dissertation are empirical, with this theoretical discussion I wish to both organize the vast existing empirical literature into meaningful themes, as well as point out some open questions worth investigating in future research.

There are, however, also more pragmatic needs for deepening our knowledge on democratic innovations. Political analysis must take mechanisms of direct citizen participation into account because they are no longer located at the margins of democratic governance. Established democracies have witnessed an expansion of participatory democracy and public engagement in the last few decades (Font, della Porta & Sintomer, 2014; Fung & Wright, 2001; Geissel & Newton, 2012; Pateman, 2012; Sirianni & Friedland, 2001; Wampler & Avritzer, 2004). The role of a democratic citizen nowadays entails much more than just voting for candidates in elections every four years. For example, citizens can participate in city planning through workshops, discuss and formulate suggestions for politicians in deliberative citizen juries, vote for policy options and make decisions in referendums, bring new issues to the political agenda with citizens' initiatives, evaluate policy implementation by reporting their observations in surveys, and act as whistle-blowers by revealing corrupt politicians. The mushrooming of these new forms of participation shape and shake the traditional processes of representative decision-making. Governments all over the world now receive input from a variety of participatory processes, which differ greatly in their appearances and inner logics. There certainly is a very positive public discourse around participation that is produced and maintained by public officials, academics, civil society and even companies. As Fischer (2000, 1) says, "Mostly everyone is for it, at least in principle, but many are quite skeptical of it when it comes to specific issues or practices".

Because experimenting with participatory mechanisms is likely to keep on growing, it is useful to pause for a moment, take a bird's-eye view, and clarify what these currently-used mechanisms do and how can we expect them to improve our democracy. In the articles included in this dissertation, I provide three perspectives to the broader question of the role of democratic innovations in democratic systems. First, I explore the demand side, i.e. citizens' attitudes towards democratic innovations (Article 1), then the supply side, i.e. system-level conditions in which they are likely to occur (Article 2). Third, I investigate the possible consequences of democratic innovations for the legitimacy of democratic systems (Article 3). Although each article is an independent publication with unique data, together they aim at contributing to the bigger question of the role of direct citizen participation in democratic systems.

Participation is a topic that also cuts across several academic disciplines. An empirically and comparatively-oriented research tradition in political science has recently formed around the study of democratic innovations. In this sub-field, to which my dissertation mainly contributes, the focus is on "institutions that have been specifically designed to increase and deepen citizen participation in the political decision-making process" (Smith, 2009, 1). The field is thus located in the middle ground between institutional and behavioral political analysis. Recent studies have conceptualized some fundamental design principles for participatory processes (Elstub & Escobar, 2018a; Fung, 2015), on which the categorization of participatory mechanisms in this introductory chapter builds upon. One prominent research strand has focused on investigating how deliberation in small groups affects participants' opinions, attitudes and public opinion (Boulianne, 2018b; Grönlund, Herne & Setälä, 2017; Lindell et al., 2017; Suiter, Farrell & O'Malley, 2016). Other scholars have been interested in the demand for participation possibilities, studying process preferences and public opinion towards democratic innovations (Bengtsson & Christensen, 2016; Bowler, Donovan & Karp, 2002; Dalton, Burklin & Drummond, 2001; Donovan & Karp, 2006; Fernández-Martínez & Font Fábregas, 2018; Font, Wojcieszak, & Navarro, 2015), a strand to which I also contribute in Article 1.

In Article 2, on the other hand, I continue the work of other institutional analysts explaining the occurrence of participatory instruments (Font, Smith, Galais & Alarcon, 2017; Galais, Font, Alarcón & Sesma, 2012), drawing particularly on previous research about direct democracy (S. Bowler & Donovan, 2000; Damore, Bowler & Nicholson, 2012; Eder, Vatter & Freitag, 2009; Vatter, 2000). Finally, empirical scholars have also developed medium- and large-n strategies for studying the effects of participatory

processes on participants and voters in general (Font et al., 2017; Geissel & Hess, 2017; Pogrebinschi & Ryan, 2018; Sjoberg, Mellon, & Peixoto, 2017), and in Article 3 of this dissertation I show how hierarchical data and multilevel regression modelling can be used for these purposes.

The broader ideas that ordinary women and men ought to be active participants in the political system, however, originally stem from theories of democracy. Justifications and ideal institutions for civic participation have been developed by social contract philosophers (Rousseau, 1762), and later on, their work has been carried on by normative democratic theorists, rethinking the democratic ideal and developing new institutions (Saward, 2001). Although key arguments of this literature are reviewed more thoroughly in Section 3 of this introductory chapter, to put it very briefly, today this field is dominated by deliberative democracy (Curato et al., 2017; Mansbridge et al., 2010; Dryzek, 2010). While deliberative mini-publics have received the attention of many empirical democracy scholars (Grönlund, Bächtiger & Setälä, 2014), deliberative theory has recently taken a systemic turn that has shifted the focus on the deliberative capacities of political systems as a whole (c.f. Owen and Smith, 2015). Under this discussion on deliberative systems, recent studies have asked, for example, how institutions of citizen deliberation could be connected to representative institutions (Setälä, 2017), what are the key functions of democratic systems (Warren, 2017), and how deliberative democracy can work on a large scale (Parkinson et al., 2012). Theoretical debates are, however, closely connected to institutional and behavioral approaches discussed above, and many theoretically oriented scholars have laid out normative criteria for evaluating different democratic innovations and institutions in practice (Fung, 2003; 2006; Geissel & Newton, 2012; Smith, 2009; Warren, 2008). This dissertation shares the systemic perspective in that it is interested in democratic innovations as part of democratic government, not as isolated experiments.

Apart from these debates focusing on democratic processes and decision-making, democratic innovations have received a lot of attention in policy studies during the last years. The rising role of technocratic knowledge in complex societies has evoked lively discussion on citizen participation in the policy process, and the ways in which citizens' local knowledge could be harnessed for better decisions (Fischer, 2000). Participatory practices, such as collaborative governance, have been suggested as a solution to the challenges of modern policy-making. Examples of this can be seen in new spaces for politics, uncertainty in decision-making, increasing cultural diversity and interdependence (Booher, 2004). In terms of specific policy areas, the potential and limits of democratic deliberation have been investigated thoroughly in the area of environmental governance (Rask & Worthington, 2015). Furthermore, participatory practices have recently been of interest for health-policy researchers, who have conceptualized the different publics that these practices engage (Degeling, Carter & Rychetnik, 2015), and laid out criteria for the design and evaluation of public involvement (Abelson et al., 2003). As we see, terminology also becomes more varied, as civic engagement, public engagement, public involvement, citizen participation, public deliberation and participatory practices are sometimes used interchangeably.

In political psychology, participation in decision-making has been studied as one of the core components of legitimacy beliefs (Tyler, 2006). In the studies in this research area, possibilities for making one's voice heard in decision-making processes have been found to enhance a sense of procedural fairness, which may assist in maintaining psychological legitimacy in situations when outcomes of these processes are not favourable to the individual (Levi, Sacks & Tyler, 2009; Lind & Tyler, 1988). I discuss the foundations of procedural fairness more in Article 3.

Public engagement has also been studied intensively in the areas of public administration and local government, ever since Sherry Arnstein constructed the famous "ladder of citizen participation" in 1969. In recent years, there has been growing interest in the potential of public deliberation for public administration (Nabatchi, 2010a), and systematic analyses of participatory instruments at the local level (e.g. Aars, 2007). These studies have looked, for example, at the causes of particular participatory instruments (Adams, 2012), and their effects on the orientations of councillors (Denters et al., 2013). The causes and consequences of local participatory instruments have also been investigated in comparative

## DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS IN FINNISH LOCAL POLITICS

research projects (Font et al., 2014). This literature has been an important point of comparison for this dissertation, as well, because I also zoom into local democracy.

Finally, technologists have praised the potential of information and communication technologies to improve democratic governance and citizen participation. In this field, key research questions have related, for example, to the differences and communalities of online and face-to-face participation (Hoffman, 2012), to the role of the internet in transforming collective action and democracy (Fung et al. 2013; Shirky, 2008), and to crowdsourcing legislation (Aitamurto & Landemore, 2016). Some scholars explore the possibilities of replacing representatives with direct participation (Blum & Zuber, 2016). More critical authors have investigated the challenges of new media for public deliberation (Sunstein, 2017).

In real life, not all of us participate in politics via these new channels. They might, however, have broader consequences, even on those of us who are happy to go with the flow of representative democracy. In autumn 2010, on my way to a lecture in Turku, I walked past a graffiti shouting *Valtuusto tuhosi demokratian* ('The city council destroyed democracy'). Such visible statements make one wonder what might have upset people enough to make them write them publicly. In Turku, the narrative behind the graffiti had started already years ago, in the public debate about the market place in the middle of the city center. The issue had now become politicized, and local political groups were divided in their visions for the future of the market place: a parking-lot scheme to ease access to businesses was confronted with a vision of a green and pedestrian city center. During the latest turn of events, citizens in Turku had submitted a referendum motion – a non-binding citizens' initiative requesting the council to organize a referendum – which the council had rejected. Rumors of corruption among the local politicians and frustration at their refusal to engage the citizens in the decision-making process were up in the air. The broader questions over this narrative, and many similar ones from the Arctic Circle to California, and from slums in Porto Alegre to neighborhoods in Melbourne, concern how we can organize democratic decision-making so that it includes the diversity of hopes and demands that different kinds of people have, and could we develop democracy in such a way that political decisions would be considered more legitimate in the eyes of the citizens – both winners and losers. These questions are the ones that motivated me to start pursuing a PhD five years ago, and the ones that I try to provide at least partial answers for in this dissertation.

In the next section, I define what democratic innovations are, and how participation is understood in this dissertation. As part of Section 2, I discuss the commonalities and differences of the types of democratic innovations, as well as how they come about in the first place. After that, Section 3 discusses a number of influential justifications for direct citizen participation in contemporary democratic theories. In Section 4, I describe the case that my empirical studies focus on – Finnish democracy at the local level – and present my methodological choices as well as their limitations. Section 5 summarizes the main results from independent articles, and finally, Section 6 discusses their implications for research and practice.

Re-prints of the three independent articles are provided after the introductory chapter. Article 1 asks whether introducing new forms of participation could potentially engage those citizens who distrust representative politics. This question is investigated by analyzing survey data collected in Southwest Finland, and I find that democratic innovations attract those who are already positively disposed towards democratic institutions. Article 2 deals with the occurrence of consultative referendums and referendum motions in Finnish local politics. This topic is investigated by analyzing observational data on the frequency of these 'soft' direct democratic instruments, and controlling for several other variables concerning municipalities' demography, economy and geography. The results show that government-initiated referendums are more common in smaller municipalities whose neighbors have used similar mechanisms, while bottom-up initiatives occur in contexts of low political support. In Article 3, I study the effects of participatory governance on the attitudes of the wider public. This article asks whether the availability of participation possibilities can foster perceived legitimacy, operationalized as procedural fairness and outcome satisfaction. Here, I combine survey data from municipality residents with

municipal-level indicators, and show that the availability of participation possibilities has no effect on satisfaction with policy outcomes, but possibilities for discursive participation possibilities can increase people's sense of procedural fairness.



## 2. Points of departure

Participation has several meanings in the vocabulary of academics, media and lay people. The definition used in this dissertation differs significantly from how many observers would conceptualize participation. Therefore, I will first define the kind of participation that is covered by democratic innovations, and discuss their interfaces with other common ways to conceptualize participation. After that, I present a framework for understanding the institutional design choices of democratic innovations and illustrate it by classifying democratic innovations in Finnish local politics. Finally, I discuss contextual and strategic factors explaining their appearance.

### 2.1 Key concept: democratic innovations

At a fairly abstract level, political participation can be defined as *individual actions that aim to influence government, either by affecting the selection of decision-makers, or by affecting the formulation, making or implementation of collective decisions* (Verba and Nie, 1987, 2; Parry et al., 1992, 16). The part of this definition that many are perhaps most familiar with is the first one: the selection of decision-makers. Political participation has been strongly associated with voting in democratic elections, as well as campaign and party-related activities, since the early years of election studies (Campbell, Converse, Miller & Stokes, 1960). National elections engage millions of citizens in one of the fundamental processes of representative democracy (Narud & Esaiasson, 2013). This dissertation, however, focuses on the latter part of the definition provided above, i.e. direct citizen participation in democratic decision-making via referendums, citizens' initiatives, deliberative mini-publics, participatory budgeting and other participatory mechanisms.

Democratic innovations, as understood in this dissertation, are *"institutions that have been specifically designed to increase and deepen citizen participation in the political decision-making process"* (Smith, 2009, 1). They are thus an example of non-electoral participation, or as Michels (2011) puts it, "policy-related citizen involvement outside the electoral process". Therefore, this dissertation looks beyond participation in election campaigns, and voting for candidates, but also beyond institutional reforms that regulate the behavior of politicians (Newton, 2012). Participation via democratic innovations focuses on issues rather than candidates or ideologies. While voting for candidates is only indirectly related to policy goals, in democratic innovations, citizens try to influence specific, tangible problems (Fung & Wright, 2001). The issues may be narrow, such as public safety in a neighborhood, local health services, or a school network, or they may be broad, such as climate change, income taxation or voting rights. Issue-based participation does not need to be an alternative to party-based participation, and in practice individual citizens often perform both activities. Since the 1970s, however, scholars have typically distinguished conventional (i.e. electoral) forms of participation from unconventional forms (Barnes & Kaase, 1979).

Having said that, it is important to note that the existence of representative institutions is still taken for granted in this dissertation, and democratic innovations are understood as complementing representative democracy. The ideas of participatory and deliberative democracy do have radical and critical roots (Bohman, 1998; Dryzek, 2002; Fung & Cohen, 2004), and for example Pateman (2012) has recently argued that ordinary citizens ought to be empowered to make direct decisions. Other current democratic theorists, however, subscribe to the necessity of delegation of authority by representative institutions due to the scarcity of time and problems of scale. For example, Landmore (2013, 10), to whom I return in Section 3.2, points out that "increased popular input does not require bypassing representation altogether". Most democratic innovations are thus not anti-representative, compared to

some ideas put forward by proponents of populism (Schmitt, 1988) and liquid democracy (Blum & Zuber, 2016).

Democratic innovations, as understood in this dissertation, also have a formal linkage to decision-making. This linkage might be firm, like in the case of constitutionally mandatory referendums, or it may be very loose, such as public authorization and recognition of a citizens' jury organized by an association. Democratic innovations are, nevertheless, publicly recognized and structured mechanisms that may also have access to public resources or decision-making power (Smith, 2009), and they are thus often initiated or facilitated by government (Michels, 2011). As opposed to protest activity or political violence, forms of participation that operate through the "formal route" (Fung & Wright, 2001) are thus only semi-radical in the sense that they do not aim at abolishing or bypassing traditional representative decision-making institutions, but they try to transform decision-making processes. While some have criticized the 'managed' nature of top-down participatory processes (Blaug, 2010, 109), others emphasize that the advantage of the formal route is that when citizens can take "some exercise of power for granted, they need not spend the bulk of their energy fighting for power (or against it)" (Fung & Wright, 2001). Similarly, Warren (Warren, 2008) notes that formal venues of direct participation<sup>1</sup> are, on average, more successful in influencing policy precisely because they were designed for governmental purposes. Even formal participatory mechanisms, however, differ in terms of who initiates the process and sets the agenda. The question of initiator has consequences for the potential causes and consequences of democratic innovations (Morel, 2001), which I also examine in Article 2 of this dissertation.

Democratic innovations should thus also be distinguished from non-institutionalized participation. As Warren (2009) notes, the non-institutionalized domain of democracy provides a protected space for public debate and social movements. As examples of non-institutionalized participation, Klingemann and Fuchs (1998, 19) mention social movements that promote specific issues or causes at higher levels of government, and citizen initiative groups that mobilize collective action *ad hoc* in smaller communities. Democratic innovations, however, contribute directly to the formation of government agendas and decisions, which is why Warren (2009), for example, classifies them as part of the institutionalized domain of politics. The definition of democratic innovations thus rules out social movements and other spontaneous, self-organizing collective action. This is not to say, however, that spontaneous civic activism is not important for democratic innovations. Social movements have been at the forefront of developing the ideas and practices of participatory democracy, and more recently experimented with deliberative participatory mechanisms within their organizations (della Porta, 2013). They have several advantages over formal participatory mechanisms, such as the ability to bring attention to prevailing injustices and emerging policy issues (Warren, 2008, 66), but they are simply not at the core of this dissertation.

## 2.2 Framework for studying democratic innovations

The definition of democratic innovations sketched above covers a wide range of participatory mechanisms: referendums, citizens' initiatives, deliberative mini-publics, participatory budgeting, citizen committees, feedback mechanisms and surveys and so on. Even though we now know what is included and what is excluded from the concept of democratic innovations in this dissertation, many questions are still left open. What is the difference between a referendum and a deliberative mini-public? Can they be used interchangeably? What types of democratic innovations should be used for different policy issues, or at different stages of the policy process? Normative theories of democracy have not provided complete answers to these questions, because they have focused on promoting one or two specific innovations that best realize the core principles of the theory (Smith, 2009, 11). Focusing on one evaluative principle only, however, has meant that the variety of existing participatory possibilities has been ordered from worse to

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<sup>1</sup> Or 'citizen representative bodies', as Warren (2008) calls them.

better in terms of this single principle. These approaches have overlooked the question of how various participatory instruments could perhaps contribute to a variety of democratic goals.

The comparative study of democratic innovations has emerged in the 2000's, taking a different approach to instruments of direct citizen participation. This research takes actually existing participatory mechanisms as a starting point and asks to what extent they can contribute to different problems in democratic governance, and realize the values of different democratic theories (c.f. Fung, 2006; Smith, 2009, 6; Warren, 2017a). The field of democratic innovations has become particularly popular among scholars also because it brings together previously separate and even conflicting research traditions, such as participatory vs. deliberative democracy, and empirical vs. normative political science (Elstub & Escobar, 2018b). The focus of the analyses in this tradition has shifted from a single normative criterion to the institutional design principles of direct citizen participation. This approach is justified, for example, by Fung (2004; 2006), who argues that because "deliberation and participation are constituted by particular institutions, the form and implementation of those institutions determines the quality and integrity of the resulting participation and deliberation" (Fung, 2004, 232). We should thus take seriously the conventional wisdom that the devil is in the details and acknowledge that the potential of citizen participation for democracy cannot be systematically studied unless we analyze the concrete political and administrative rules and practices concerning participatory processes.<sup>2</sup> I have tried to follow this principle throughout the independent articles, and each of them takes seriously the institutional design features of participatory mechanisms, although categorizations are adapted to the research questions and data at hand. The analysis of institutional design features culminates in Article 3, in which the fullest range of different types of participatory mechanisms is studied.

Conscious planning and systematic analysis of the key institutional design features of direct citizen participation is crucial for understanding the possible and likely consequences of participation. Fundamental principles that are fixed at the beginning of the participatory process determine to a substantial extent, for example, the quantity and representativeness of participation, the kind of information that will come out of the participatory process, and how it can be linked to institutions of representative decision-making. At a minimum, there are three fundamental and widely acknowledged design principles that differentiate democratic innovations from each other, based on the original classification by Fung (2006). These principles include the way participants are selected, the mode of participation, and the extent of authority delegated to the participatory body, and they are included in the most recent attempts to classify democratic innovations (Elstub & Escobar, 2018a; Geissel & Joas, 2013; Geissel & Newton, 2012). Smith (2009) also covers them in his framework for analyzing the democratic goods of participatory mechanisms.

The principles of participant selection define who participates in the process. Alternatives range from open, self-selected participation typical for public hearings and feedback mechanisms, to consciously selecting participants on different grounds. In their analysis of the recruitment strategies in deliberative civic engagement, Ryfe and Stalsburg (2012) distinguish three basic methods for selecting participants, i.e. not using self-selection. These categories are useful for understanding the choices made in other participatory instruments, too. First, purposive selection includes design choices where certain types of individuals are specifically invited to participate. Citizen committees such as school boards, for example, rely on parents and teachers who have private or family-related interests in how the services function. Using these strategies will result in a group of participants that represents stakeholders, i.e. citizens who have a special interest in the issue at hand. Targeted recruitment is another form of purposive selection, where special attention is paid to engaging people from minorities whose voice is not usually heard in decision-making. Targeted recruitment aims at representation of minorities in the participatory process. Considering the well-known biases of participation (Lijphart, 1997; Warren, 2008), even over-recruitment of individuals from marginalized groups can be justified in order to create a roughly

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<sup>2</sup> Note that this is a different approach from classifying participatory instruments based on their *ex post* consequences that can be observed only after participation has happened (Geissel, 2012).

representative body (Ryan & Smith, 2014). In targeted recruitment, the idea is thus to ensure actual inclusion of all social groups and discourses in the participatory process, which Young (2002) calls external inclusion. Targeted recruitment can also be used to create an exclusive participatory body for minority groups only. These sites for “special representation” can be, for example, disabled people’s councils or advisory councils for the youth or immigrants, and their idea is to help minorities articulate group perspectives that the decision-making processes might otherwise lack (Young, 1997).

Second, participants can be selected through random sampling. The bottom line in random sampling is that each outcome is equiprobable (Stone, 2011), meaning that each individual in the sampled population has an equal probability to become invited to participate. Random sampling has been used particularly in deliberative mini-publics, and it is often accompanied with initial stratification to screen out organized interests, like in the case of the British Columbia Citizens’ Assembly (Warren, 2008). Thus, using random sampling as a recruitment strategy will result in a group of participants who, at least roughly, represent the whole population in terms of sociodemographic characteristics and opinions. In general, both targeted and random sampling share the goal of maximizing inclusion, which is based on fundamental democratic principles of equality (Beitz, 1990) and all affected interests (Fung, 2013; Warren, 2017b). But as Bächtiger, Grönlund and Setälä (2014) point out, the choice between the two strategies depends on the number of participants, since pure random sampling enhances inclusion only in large sample sizes.

Third, lay citizens can also be elected by other citizens, like in the case of many participatory budgeting processes. Fourth, open self-selection can maximize the number of participants, although it is often used as a default strategy without further justification considerations. It could also be justified on the grounds of political equality, i.e. providing citizens equal opportunities to influence collective decisions. However, it will result in a group of participants that is most likely biased towards citizens with higher social status, i.e. higher education and income, more time, and ethnic majority identity (Warren, 2008).

The second fundamental design principle of democratic innovations is related to the mode of participation, i.e. how exactly will citizens participate, what will they do and how will they communicate. In political theory, a standard dichotomy of citizen participation mechanisms is related to the way they treat individual preferences. Aggregative mechanisms count existing individual preferences together and produce a majority opinion, while in deliberative mechanisms most of the time and resources are spent on the process of opinion-formation (Warren, 2008). Aggregative-deliberative distinction also overlaps with another dimension that has been used to classify democratic innovations, namely that of individual vs. collective participation (Michels, 2011). In mechanisms such as surveys and referendums, citizens are asked to express their ‘raw’ opinion in isolation, meaning that they have not shared it with other participants, whereas in collective forms of participation, participants publicly reflect their views against others, or at least publicly stand for a particular policy alternative.<sup>3</sup>

Fung (2006) organizes democratic innovations according to the level of investment, knowledge and commitment required from participants. Among the least intense forms, participants are merely required to absorb information and listen as spectators, as is often the case in traditional public hearings and information events in urban planning, for example. Participation becomes slightly more demanding if participants are asked to express their preferences through a survey or a vote, for example. At the other end of the spectrum, participation in small-group discussions may require a considerable amount of time and cognitive work from the citizens. More intensive and deliberative forms of participation include a learning phase, where participants are given technical background material on the topic or opportunities to ask questions from experts before making informed arguments and choices (c.f. Nabatchi & Amsler,

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<sup>3</sup> The line between individual and collective participation is, however, blurred, because individual opinions can rarely be assumed to develop in a vacuum, without taking any influence from others’ opinions. It may, however, serve as a useful yardstick for conveners of participation who must decide, whether participants are explicitly exposed to the views of other citizens or not. In this regard, Michels’ (2011) classification of deliberative polls as individual forms of participation is somewhat confusing.

2014; Warren, 2008, 64). Processing this information requires cognitive efforts as such. In addition, reflecting new information in relation to own opinions and to those of others' is a challenging task. Fung's (2006) classification also overlaps with the previous modes of participation, since aggregative isolated forms of participation, such as voting, can be considered less demanding than deliberative forms of participation, such as attending a 3-day citizens' jury.

The mode of participation shapes – together with the recruitment principles – the message that comes out of the participatory process. Aggregation mechanisms produce a clear majority opinion on a concrete question or a set of concrete questions, like in the case of referendums, surveys, and priority listings from participatory budgeting votes. The outputs from discursive processes can, however, take several forms. Typically, public hearings, discussion events and participatory planning events result in a memo written by the conveners of the event, summarizing citizens' concerns. A deliberative poll combines small-group discussions with an aggregative opinion survey in the end, producing similar opinion distributions as traditional aggregative mechanisms (Fishkin, 2014). Deliberative citizen juries (Smith & Wales, 2000), citizen assemblies (Suiter *ym.*, 2016) and citizens' initiative review panels (Gastil, Knobloch, Reedy, Henkels & Cramer, 2018), on the other hand, often produce a more verbally rich statement that lists several key points, recommendations, or concerns discussed in small groups after learning factual information on the issue. Participants of deliberative processes are also more autonomous in terms of writing the statement, as facilitators merely assist in the technical editing of the document.

Third, democratic innovations differ in terms of their authority and power. As a general rule, democratic innovations can roughly be divided into binding and non-binding mechanisms, following the distinction used in typologies of direct democratic instruments (Suksi, 1993). This dichotomy does, however, define power in a very narrow sense, considering only instances where the citizens and their participatory output bypass the representative decision-making body altogether. In real life, only binding referendums and full-scale citizens' initiatives (Schiller & Setälä, 2012) would classify as empowered mechanisms in this typology. As I discuss in Article 2, most democratic innovations are in fact 'soft' in the sense that they provide policy advice for decision-makers instead of taking final decision-making power off their hands. A more nuanced understanding of authority thus helps us to identify the different indirect ways that democratic innovations can influence policies. In her provocative approach to participation in urban planning, Arnstein (1969) defines manipulation and therapy as the lowest levels of influence, referring to practices that are not linked to decision-making in any ways. Fung (2006) describes communicative influence as the lowest level of authority, meaning that the outputs from participatory processes feed into the media and public opinion, and through these channels possibly shape policies.

More recently, scholars have pointed out that the conveners of participatory processes can explicitly design how they are coupled with forums of elite decision-making (Hendriks, 2016). Democratic innovations may, for example, have been given a mandate to advise and consult policy-makers, which is often the case in surveys, opinion polls and public hearings. This advisory role entails that a linkage has been established beforehand to a particular representative body or administrative agency who will receive the participatory output and act upon it. In co-governance arrangements, citizens and officials plan policies together in a partnership. Another example of designed coupling are institutionalized participatory mechanisms, whose uptake is regulated in legislation, even if they are not binding as such. Note that institutionalization here is understood narrowly, and it refers to the existence of administrative and legal regulations concerning direct citizen participation. For example, laws may regulate how and under what time limit the representative bodies must respond to inputs from soft direct democratic instruments, such as consultative referendums and referendum motions (see Article 2 of this dissertation). Other participatory mechanisms, such as deliberative mini-publics, on the other hand, often lack a pre-defined, official procedure on how their results will be handled by representative institutions, although theorists have called for these kinds of pre-commitments in the form of "public impact statements" for discursive procedures as well (Bohman, 1996). To sum up, there are a variety of ways in which democratic innovations can be linked to traditional institutions that exercise political power between the extremes of engaging citizens as a sort of therapy and delegating direct decision-making power.

## DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS IN FINNISH LOCAL POLITICS

At the conceptual level, the question of online participation can be considered as an additional dimension cutting across the three fundamental design principles discussed above. As Elstub and Escobar (forthcoming) note, online participation mechanisms can apply very different methods of participant selection and mode of participation, although they have been criticized for lacking authority over political decisions (Smith, 2009, 161). In fact, many participatory mechanisms can be found in two variants, one of which is traditional and the other digital (Christensen, 2012). This is the case with local surveys and petitions, for example. Categorizing democratic innovations based into online or offline mechanisms is, however, complex. First, there are some participatory mechanisms that can run parallel in an online environment and in the physical world. One promising example at the national level is the Finnish agenda initiative that can be supported both on paper and online (Christensen et al., 2017). Furthermore, many democratic innovations contain phases that take place on the internet, but these phases are in themselves insufficient for constituting a full-bodied participatory mechanism. For example, in many participatory budgeting processes, face-to-face discussion events are followed by a voting phase that may take place on the internet. Therefore, it is not necessary to include an online-offline dimension in the conceptual framework for studying democratic innovations. Another question concerns whether online participation differs from offline participation at the individual level, which is discussed in detail in many empirical studies (Christensen, 2012; Oser, Hooghe & Marien, 2013), including Article 1 of this dissertation.

<b>Table 2.1 Classification of participatory mechanisms in Finnish local politics</b>									
<b>Authority</b>									
		<i>Advise and consult</i>	<i>Co-governance</i>	<i>Institutionalized uptake</i>	<i>Direct authority</i>				
<b>Mode of participation</b>									
		<i>aggregate</i>	<i>discuss</i>	<i>(aggr.)</i>	<i>discuss</i>	<i>aggregate</i>	<i>discuss</i>	<i>(aggr.)</i>	<i>discuss</i>
<b>Participant recruitment</b>	<i>Open self-selection</i>	Survey Individual feedback mechanism Map-based participation tool Commenting local council agenda online	Public hearing Discussion event Online discussion forum Map-based participation tool			Government-initiated referendum Referendum motion Municipal initiative			Participatory budgeting
	<i>Purposive selection</i>	Procedures for hearing civil society Survey	Participatory planning event Town hall meeting Local area council		Co-government in public housing Local area council Participatory planning event		Citizen committee		Participatory budgeting
	<i>Random selection</i>	Survey	Citizens' jury Citizens' assembly						

To illustrate the key institutional design features, Table 2.1 shows how the participatory mechanisms studied in this dissertation can be classified on the basis of these three dimensions. The number of

mechanisms in each cell is not what we should be interested in, however, as it only indicates the variety of designs within groups of similar participatory mechanisms. While the framework presented above can be used to compare democratic innovations in various contexts, the actual classification of participatory mechanisms within the framework is highly context- and time-dependent. The Finnish context and participatory traditions are discussed in detail in Section 4.1, but a few remarks must be made here in order to illustrate the difficulty of generalized classifications of democratic innovations. First of all, some democratic innovations appear in many different jurisdictions but in different corners of the framework. Direct democratic instruments in Finland, for example, fall into the category of advisory and consultative participation, while in contexts such as Switzerland and the US they would have direct authority. The specialties of these ‘soft’ forms of direct democracy are discussed in Article 2 of this dissertation. The level of authority of participatory budgeting processes also varies across European countries (Sintomer, Herzberg & Röcke, 2008), even though the few cases where it has been applied in Finland have had direct authority. Second, some internationally recognized democratic innovations would not fit in this framework without adding a column for authority, namely that of communicative influence (Fung, 2006). Mechanisms such as the British Columbia Citizens’ Assembly and the Citizens’ Initiative Review in the US aim at influencing public opinion, but these types of democratic innovations have not yet been used in the Finnish context.

Even the classification of Finnish participatory mechanisms into these rough categories is suggestive, because the specific design of a participatory mechanism may vary from one participatory process to another or from one municipality to another. Therefore, in Table 2.1, some participatory mechanisms appear in several cells, when the grey font indicates that the classification is less common. For example, surveys or individual feedback mechanisms are often open to all municipality residents, but they may also be targeted to the users of a special public service, such as child care. Map-based participation tools and surveys may also be aimed at residents in a particular neighborhood. In other cases, when a representative public opinion is the goal, a survey may be sent to all households, or a random sample of households in a given jurisdiction.

The distinction between discursive and aggregative forms of participation is usually more clear-cut. Although we do not know how much citizens reflect and discuss their opinions with others prior to voting and filling in a survey, from an institutional design perspective it is a conscious choice whether to allow and facilitate the exchange of arguments between participants or not. Therefore, public hearings, online discussion forums, citizen committees, citizen juries and participatory budgeting all belong to the same group of discursive participatory mechanisms, even if the quality of deliberation varies a great deal between them. As an exception, map-based tools for participation often used in urban planning may be purely aggregative in nature, or they might also include elements that allow discussion related to the topic of the query.

To sum up, conceptual frameworks such as the one presented above cannot accommodate all democratic innovations in the world, but they are, however, useful for comparing real-life democratic innovations in a particular space and time with each other. Table 2.1 shows, for example, that referendums and surveys in Finnish local politics are similar from the perspective of the citizen, because both invite citizens to express their view on the issue privately. Participation in public hearings and participatory planning events, on the other hand, are by default discursive, meaning that the participants will be given the possibility to share their opinions publicly and to listen to others’ arguments. As another example, citizen committees and participatory budgeting can both be used to improve youth participation, but the important distinction between these mechanisms is that the results of participatory budgeting votes are usually binding, whereas the recommendations of a youth council only serve as advice to the local council. Furthermore, the typology also shows that the public opinion produced by a referendum fundamentally differs from that produced by a citizens’ jury, in that the former is essentially the opinion of a self-selected majority, while the latter is the opinion of a representative sample of the population. As I have discussed above, conceptual frameworks can also serve comparisons of participatory cultures in

different jurisdictions, highlighting the different design principles behind participatory mechanisms with seemingly similar names.

In reality, the choices between different institutional design principles are often constrained by a set of more general features that locate citizen participation within the wider political decision-making process. In the realm of policy-making, important features concern the topic, location, and timing of participation (Beetham, 2012; Elstub & Escobar, 2018a; Fung, 2003; Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014). The first two, topic and location, are often more or less fixed from early on in participatory processes. In many cases, the need to design instruments for citizen participation often emerges from the salience of a particular policy question for which public officials wish to receive citizens' input. The topic also usually defines the level of government at which citizen participation is required. In some cases, however, a public agency at the local, national or transnational level of government may first decide to engage its citizens and then start to seek a suitable topic. In some cases, the organization of a participatory process is driven by the interest in a particular institutional design, such as deliberative mini-publics. These method-driven processes are often initiated by academics or civil society actors, and they must make explicit choices between different alternatives concerning the topic, level and timing of participation.

As Fung (2003) notes, the topic of participation determines, first of all, what the citizens' contribution will be in terms of knowledge. Citizens are quite naturally equipped to evaluate the functioning of public services, and to reason about moral and ethical issues, for example. More technical issues, such as energy production or electoral system reforms, require that organizers invest more in the learning phase preceding actual participation. There is some discussion also on the suitable participatory modes for different topics. Deliberative mechanisms have been argued to work best on matters that deal with objective facts and do not create deep conflicts (Mendelberg, 2002), but others see them to fit particularly well with questions that are highly controversial and reflect conflicting public values (Solomon & Abelson, 2012). Mechanisms that give equal weight to individual voices through facilitated discussion are claimed to work well with questions facing radical uncertainty (Landemore, 2014). The debate over ideal topics for different forms of participation, therefore, remains unsettled.

Another important contextual design choice that has implications for other design choices is the question of when participation should occur. Following the classical stages-heuristic, decision-making process can be divided into agenda-setting, policy formulation, implementation and evaluation (Sabatier, 2007). Fung (2004) argues that many accounts of participation and deliberation – including electoral participation – are “front-loaded” in the sense that they focus on the moments of agenda-setting and decision-making. The broad variety of democratic innovations includes, however, also instruments that “provide substantial opportunities for continuing popular participation in the post-decision stages” (Fung, 2004, 232). In this back-loaded purpose, citizens monitor and provide feedback on the implementation of collective decisions, like in the cases of school governance and community policing. Along similar lines, Setälä (2017) puts forward concrete ways in which deliberative mini-publics can be used as part of agenda-setting as well as for an *ex post* review of legislation. General consensus, at least in the field of democratic theory, seems to be that participation and deliberation can play a different role at different stages of the policy process (Goodin, 2008). Although the aggregation of opinions is usually required at the moment of decision, and the virtues of deliberation are best realized at the policy formulation stage, different modes of participation can be used in setting the agenda and evaluating policy. Finally, several authors have also stressed the importance of recurrence, i.e. how often participation occurs (Beetham, 2012; Fung, 2003; Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014).

### 2.3 Causes of democratic innovations

As the introduction demonstrated, a growing number of governments organize participatory processes to engage their citizens. But what drives democracies to design, adopt and use these institutions for participatory governance? Understanding the context and real-world rationalities for increasing public

participation is important in order to track and anticipate the development of this third wave of democratization. If we think of the waves of democratization, we can understand why it is not self-evident that democratic states would adopt and institutionalize new channels for participation. John Dewey has argued that any organized community is by nature hostile and suspicious to new non-technical ideas that change the habits of people (Dewey, 1927, 59). In this view, new democratic institutions are always born in the minds of individuals, and they may become publicly managed only when they have become habitual (Dewey, 1927, 60). Democratic innovations do, however, appear to travel between polities (Smith, 2009, 180). In many cases, they also travel quite far from their origins, as shown by the journey of participatory budgeting from Brazil to Europe (Sintomer et al., 2008), or the spread of deliberative mini-publics from the US to China and Sub-Saharan Africa (Fishkin, He, Luskin, & Siu, 2010; Fishkin et al., 2017).

In the previous sub-section, I constructed the case for systematically studying and comparing instruments that have been designed to increase direct citizen participation in decision-making. Institutional change occurs, however, also due to accident and evolution (Goodin, 1998). Therefore, factors that are external and relatively independent from the process of designing citizen participation are also important, as they may facilitate or hinder the adoption of democratic innovations. First of all, the regime may have properties and characteristics that are favorable (or hostile) to the transfer and adoption of participatory innovations. As one of the fundamental preconditions, a legal framework of the jurisdiction must, in general, allow the engagement of citizens in policy processes.<sup>4</sup> Legal regulations encouraging or making mandatory the consultation of citizens create an even more favorable environment to adopt democratic innovations (Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014), but others have warned that regulating participatory governance may result in ‘coercive isomorphism’, where participatory instruments are implemented only in order to fill the legal requirements (Royo, Yetano, & Acerete 2011).

In Article 2, I create a classification of other types of system-level factors that may hinder or facilitate the use of ‘soft’ direct democratic mechanisms, and I distinguish four general factors: socio-structural factors, party system, political support and learning. Although this framework was created to explain the occurrence of referendum motions and consultative referendums in particular, it can serve as a useful starting point for analyzing potential factors behind other types of democratic innovations, because many of them are also non-binding in nature.<sup>5</sup>

First, in terms of socio-structural factors, size matters. Empirical evidence suggests that public engagement is more common at lower levels of government (Smith, 2009). In federal systems such as Germany or the United States, the possibilities for direct participation are provided only at the state level and below. At the local level, smaller is not, however, automatically more participatory. The overall number of participatory processes has been higher in bigger cities in the Southern European context (Font, Sesma, & Fontcuberta 2014), and referendums are more common in larger jurisdictions in Switzerland (Vatter, 2000). Bottom-up instruments such as citizen initiatives have also been shown to occur more often in larger political units (Gordon, 2009). But the effect of size is contingent on other factors, such as the issue at hand, as my own study on referendums related to municipal mergers in Article 2 shows. The local level is not, however, the only area of participatory reforms; although it is the most active. Deliberative mini-publics have been recently implemented at the national level for example in Ireland

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<sup>4</sup> Some real-life examples of deliberative mini-publics in China (Fishkin, He, Luskin, & Siu, 2010) illustrate that even a democratic regime is not a necessary condition for the adoption of smaller-scale democratic innovations, from a purely procedural perspective. If participation is expected to have consequences on the broader democratic system, as I discuss in Section 3, it requires that participatory processes are located within.

<sup>5</sup> Other accounts of system-level factors influencing the use of public participation mechanisms have had similar categories. In terms of what I call party system factors, Nabatchi and Amsler (2014) include a category ‘political system’ and Font et al. (Font et al., 2014b) define similar characteristics as ‘power and competition around it’. Both articles also include size and diversity of the population as well as political support toward government as key factors, although under different subtitles.

(Suiter et al., 2016), and the European Union has experience of transnational deliberative polls (Kies & Nanz, 2013) as well as a citizens' initiative institution (Kentmen-Cin, 2013).

The composition of the community, in terms of demographic groups, minorities, and interest groups, is another socio-structural factor that may intertwine with the use of democratic innovations. The existence of a vibrant interest group population and the associational activity of traditionally under-represented groups of citizens, for example, have been found to explain the use of citizens' initiatives in the US (Boehmke, 2005; Damore ym., 2012). Demographic characteristics are, however, presumably more important for explaining the use of bottom-up mechanisms, such as initiatives, than government-organized participatory activities, as suggested also by evidence from Southern Europe (Font, Sesma, et al., 2014). In any case, cultural and linguistic homogeneity need not to be regarded as a precondition for adopting government-managed democratic innovations. As Smith (2009, 185) and others (Luskin, O'Flynn, Fishkin & Russell, 2014; Weatherford & McDonnell, 2007) argue, especially deliberative participatory mechanisms can be useful in divisive contexts where an inclusive and cohesive political community does not yet exist and they can assist in creating one. Government-initiated referendums on ethnic conflicts, however, face the risk of initiating violence, unless both parties agree on the conduct of the referendum and the international community also recognizes the result (Qvortrup, 2014).

Second, properties of the party system have been found to play an important role for the use of democratic innovations. Both how power is distributed, and which ideological groups exercise it, may be important preconditions for different types of participatory mechanisms. In Article 2 of this dissertation, I show that while the fragmentation of local party systems does not explain the use of government-initiated referendums at the local level in Finland, the ideological orientations of local governments may matter to some extent. Leftist governments seem to be more favorable to direct citizen engagement via referendums, and similar results have been found in studies explaining representatives' attitudes toward citizen participation in general (Núñez, Close & Bedock, 2016), total number of participatory processes at the local level in Southern Europe (Font, Sesma et al., 2014), and the experiences of participatory budgeting in Southern America and in Europe (Sintomer et al., 2008).

Third, political support and learning can be understood as the general political culture of the jurisdiction. First, citizens' attitudes toward democratic government may explain why some jurisdictions experience more bottom-up participatory activity than others. In my own research conducted for Article 2, I find that bottom-up participatory processes such as citizens' initiatives occur more in contexts where levels of political support are low, at least if measured by electoral turnout. Others have pointed out that the successful implementation of government-initiated deliberative activities requires some basic level of political support, trust and deliberative capacity among the wider public (Curato & Böker, 2016; Weatherford & McDonnell, 2007). The findings in Article 1 of this dissertation also support the hypothesis that trust and diffuse support should in fact be considered as preconditions for the successful implementation of top-down democratic innovations, and not necessarily as the consequence of them (Christensen et al., 2016). Recent empirical evidence points to the same direction, suggesting that government-initiated deliberative mechanisms attract citizens with already high levels of trust (Boulianne, 2018a).

The traditions of citizen involvement are also an important part of the political culture and help explain why some governments are more likely to develop and adopt new forms of participation (Weatherford & McDonnell, 2007). In Article 2, I show that participatory traditions also matter for bottom-up instruments such as referendum motions, which together with other evidence (Sintomer et al., 2008) suggests that previous experiences as well as a history of direct citizen participation matters for the adoption of democratic innovations. The prevalence of participatory norms in society has also been argued as being an important factor for the successful adoption of deliberative democratic innovations (Curato & Böker, 2016). Third, governments also learn and adopt policies – including participation policies – from neighboring jurisdictions and because of coercion by central governments (Shipan & Volden, 2008). This seems to be the case, for example, for Finnish local referendums, as I show in Article 2. Furthermore, international pressure and new informal governance networks may also put pressure on

jurisdictions to engage citizens in new ways. This has happened already with the European Citizens' Initiative that has inspired some member states to adopt similar legislations at the national level, and through national networks of cities interested in democratic development<sup>6</sup>.

Finally, managing citizen participation in policy processes also requires different kinds of resources. As Fischer (2000, 260) summarizes, "citizen participation is not something that just happens"; it needs to be organized and facilitated. Therefore, the existence of a 'participation infrastructure' is likely to affect the adoption of democratic innovations (Font et al., 2014). At the local level, for example, typical parts of this infrastructure include public officials appointed to coordinate citizen participation; civic engagement training for public officials; a strategy or other document outlining the goals of and tools for citizen participation; a special committee planning participatory policies. These types of resources are available mainly in bigger cities, which explains why the most labor- and resource-intensive democratic innovations, such as deliberative mini-publics or participatory budgeting, are often not in the repertoire of small municipalities. From a broader perspective, all resources that facilitate collective action, such as accessible and open physical spaces, can be considered assets that encourage the adoption of democratic innovations (Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014). Direct, structured citizen participation also requires money. The cost of a referendum, for example, is equivalent to organizing elections, and the most ambitious deliberative mini-publics such as the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly or the Irish Citizens' Assembly have also had large budgets, at least compared to public hearings or other shorter, less facilitated events. Participatory budgeting and other forms of empowered local participation also require some level of fiscal autonomy of local governments (Sintomer et al., 2008).

The systemic factors I have discussed above can create a fruitful ground for introducing and institutionalizing democratic innovations in decision-making processes. The actual decisions on whether or not to engage citizens, and how it should be done, occur, however, at the level of policy processes. These decisions are made by the public officials and elected politicians serving at that specific time and in that particular political context. From their perspective, widening possibilities for citizen participation is not entirely unproblematic. Direct citizen participation does not necessarily fit very well with principles of representative democracy, such as increased government effectiveness, simplification of information flows, or democratic accountability (Blaug, 2010; Setälä, 2006). Therefore, political scientists have explored the motives that drive authorities to invite citizens to provide their input in decision-making processes. A major part of this literature elaborates on the strategic motives explaining the use of government-initiated referendums (Björklund, 1982; Morel, 2001; Qvortrup, 2006; Rahat, 2009); albeit similar rationales can be found behind other types of participatory processes. In many cases, the decision to engage citizens is not driven by one motive alone, since several strategic and normative logics are in play simultaneously (Laisney, 2012).

For example, policy-makers often engage the public in order to create issue-based legitimacy (Warren, 2009). Government-initiated referendums are quite typical examples of direct participation used for these legitimating purposes (Morel, 2001; Rahat, 2009), when the decision has already been made elsewhere. Similarly, participatory instruments at the local level are often used in order to build public acceptance for unpopular policy decisions (Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014). Referendums and other participatory processes can also be used as an electoral strategy, if the issue is known to appeal widely to the electorate.

As I argue in Article 2 of this dissertation, the extent of delegated authority and power to the participatory process does, however, dictate the motives the authorities might have for organizing citizen participation. Non-binding participatory instruments such as deliberative mini-publics cannot, for example, be used for the purpose of externalizing a politically controversial decision to the public in order to avoid splits within a party or government, the way legally or politically binding referendums are often used (Rahat, 2009). 'Soft' participatory governance, such as deliberative mini-publics, are more likely to

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<sup>6</sup> E.g. 'Kuntademokratiaverkosto' (Network of Finnish municipalities interested in innovating democracy) in Finland, or Innovations for Democratic Governance program in the US.

## DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS IN FINNISH LOCAL POLITICS

be used for market testing and anticipating public acceptance of policies, or even to avoid opposition and protest in the later stages of the policy process (c.f. Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Warren, 2009). Binding referendums, on the other hand, are risky attempts to attract voters for coming elections, if the public opinion is unpredictable.

Furthermore, political parties and groups of citizens belonging to the opposition or minority are driven by other goals than those of government parties, such as contradicting the government (Rahat, 2009). In many cases, an important motive is simply to obtain more information for planning and policy makers (Warren, 2009b). Sometimes, engaging the public serves the broader goals of the politicians, such as promoting citizenship or strengthening government legitimacy in the eyes of the citizens in general (Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014). Whatever the real motive is, it is noteworthy that governments may – and often do – publicly provide a different justification for citizen engagement, as Royo et al. (2011) point out. Some strategic motives may portray the government in a rather poor light, such as organizing public participation only because the law requires authorities to do so, or securing wide voter support in the coming elections, which is why public justifications given by authorities often focus on the democratic justifications of citizen participation.

As this brief discussion on the motives for authorities to initiate democratic innovations shows, they are organized for several different purposes. Many of these rationales are purely instrumental, meaning that participatory processes are organized to achieve tangible outcomes, such as new knowledge, decision acceptance or increased electoral support. In other cases, conveners of participatory processes may justify public engagement with its intrinsic value. Nevertheless, rationales for organizing direct citizen participation are always normative in the sense that they build upon some normative assumptions on why participation is valuable. Although these assumptions may stem from theories of economics, social theory or public administration (Dean, 2017b), the most influential and active philosophical debates on participation take place in the field of democratic theory. In the next section, I will turn to these debates and discuss some normative justifications for direct citizen participation in contemporary democratic theories.

### 3. Direct citizen participation in democratic theory and research

In the previous section, I defined the scope and content of democratic innovations that are fundamentally about citizens' direct participation in democratic decision-making. The underlying normative arguments and philosophical foundations for widening citizens' participation possibilities with democratic innovations have not, however, been explored. Some scholars argue that democratic elections are enough to realize the principle of self-government (Schumpeter, 1942). Recently, the role of technocratic expertise in democratic decision-making has also been theorized (Caramani, 2017). What purpose, then, does direct citizen participation serve in democracy? In this section, I discuss some rationales and justifications for direct citizen participation in democratic governance. Through this discussion, I will argue that participation has instrumental value for democratic governance, and thus justifications referring to favorable effects on participating individuals are not sufficient. More specifically, I justify why participation has value for the quality of decisions as well as the public as a whole.

The reader might be surprised to find such a theoretical discussion in the introductory chapter of an empirical dissertation. Scratching the surface of some recent theoretical debates is, however, important for understanding how real-life democratic innovations can contribute to democracy and how these contributions can be evaluated. Furthermore, the aim of this discussion is also to help the reader understand and classify the exponentially growing literature on the consequences of democratic innovations, and anchor the individual articles of this dissertation into broader theoretical debates. First, I will discuss the views of participatory democrats and the self-transformation thesis developed by them. Thereafter, I introduce more recent literature on democratic theory that emphasizes the epistemic and systemic roles of participation. Throughout this discussion, I reflect these normative claims against recent findings from empirical research.

#### 3.1 Making better citizens: The self-transformation thesis of participation

*“Participation completes individuals, in part by enabling them to discover and develop their public dimensions, in part by providing the kinds of interactions that develop capacities for autonomous judgment”.* (Warren, 1992)

The expansion of citizens' participation possibilities beyond periodical elections became a major topic in democratic theory in the 1960s and 1970s. Participatory democrats writing in this era followed the footsteps of philosophers such as Rousseau (1762), Tocqueville (1835) and J.S. Mill (1861), arguing that participation in political decision-making fosters favorable personal and social qualities in citizens (Dahl, 1989, 92)<sup>7</sup>. The self-transformation thesis assumes that through participation in collective decision-making, people belonging to the *demos* will become “more public spirited, more tolerant, more knowledgeable, more attentive to the interests of others, and more probing to their own interests” (Warren, 1992). For Carole Pateman (1970, 42), the function of participation was primarily an educative one: to gain confidence in one's ability to “control one's life and environment” and to gain practice in democratic skills and procedures (ibid., 45). Through participation, especially in non-governmental arenas such as workplaces, industry, schools and local communities, citizens would acquire political

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<sup>7</sup> For a thorough exploration into the historical origins of the self-transformation thesis, see Mansbridge 1999, and for an overview of the empirical research stemming from it, see Pincock 2013.

## DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS IN FINNISH LOCAL POLITICS

efficacy, which is a requirement for democratic self-governance in the more formal arenas, and other subsidiary effects such as acceptance of decisions, a sense of cooperation and individual autonomy (Pateman, 1970, 63-64).

Political knowledge has also been seen as an important self-transformative consequence of participation. In the idea of 'strong democracy', active citizens govern themselves directly "frequently enough and in particular when basic policies are being decided" (Barber, 2003, 151), and this participation generates political knowledge, rather than knowledge being a prerequisite for participation (*ibid.*, 234). The *self-enforcing* effect of participation is thus present in both Pateman's and Barber's accounts of participatory democracy. As Barber writes (2003, 265), "The taste for participation is whetted by participation", meaning that the key to make people participate in politics is simply to give them more responsibility over collective decisions. Development and adoption of participatory mechanisms in several areas of social life and frequently enough is in this account valuable, because only then will as many people as possible become active and skilled democratic citizens.

More recently, deliberative theory has argued that especially one type of participation – namely mutual reasoning and discussion – has the potential to change individuals' opinions. Deliberation helps citizens to discover what is good for others and the whole community, and thus arrive at decisions that realize the common good (Dewey, 1927). Because even before the actual participatory process, the individual is forced to reflect her own interests against other values on the issue at hand. When confronted with other individuals and their different opinions, one becomes aware of the existing conflicts in politics and is able to situate herself in these conflicts and in relation to other individuals (Warren, 1996). Thus, reflection and comparison of one's own interests and those of others develops individual autonomy – the ability of critical judgment – making it possible to change one's mind. Through this process, individuals can set aside their particular interests and recognize their common interests and solutions that benefit the whole community (Dewey, 1927, 150). These transformations can also be called increased tolerance or empathy (Mendelberg, 2002). Deliberative theory, however, differs fundamentally from theories of participatory democracy in that it requires public reasoning from decision-making processes, while participatory democracy stresses that citizens ought to influence decisions (Elstun, 2018).

The self-transformation justification of participation has also been criticized by democratic theorists. While some see democratic legitimacy purely as procedural (Beitz, 1990; Saffon & Urbinati, 2013), others stress the fundamentally instrumental nature of democratic politics and deliberative democracy (e.g. Elster, 1986, 121; Thompson, 2008, 502). According to the latter, the ultimate goals of democracy include good decisions, freedom and self-development, among others, and therefore the self-transformative goods of participation discussed above are best understood as mere means to achieve these goals (Neblo, 2015, 6). Elster (1986) calls the self-transformative effects of participation 'by-products' and argues that if democratic systems design institutions with the aim of producing these by-products only, the favorable changes in individuals will not even materialize. For Thompson as well (2008, 502), the aim of political deliberation is to reach decisions, and "other purposes – such as learning about issues, gaining a sense of efficacy, or developing a better understanding of opposing views – should be regarded as instrumental to this aim".

Another weakness of the self-transformation thesis is its implicit assumption of widespread and equally accessible participation possibilities in democratic systems. The self-enforcing logic implies that citizens *should* participate in deliberation and collective decision-making in different areas of life, in order to become more *capable* of deliberating and governing themselves on more complex and significant issues (c.f. Pateman, 1970; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996). This duty to participate is, however, paradoxical in modern democratic states where the number of decisions and the size of the demos are large. According to Dahl (1989, 217), even with the current means of technology and communication, an average citizen in a modern democracy "cannot participate in political life as fully as the average number of a very much smaller demos" in the historical city-states.

Furthermore, if self-development was the only value of participation in democracy, it also becomes problematic from the perspective of individual autonomy. If autonomy is understood as critical judgment

towards one's own interests and commitments as well as those of others' (Warren, 1996, 257), should not individuals also have the possibility to critically evaluate available opportunities of participation? This sort of reflexive exercise might result either in personal engagement or a decision not to participate, based for example on trust judgments towards democratic institutions (MacKenzie & Warren, 2012). As Warren (1996) notes, participation in politics is often difficult and thus unattractive to citizens. As I show in Article 1 of this dissertation, not all citizens are necessarily willing to use wider participation possibilities.

As the discussion above has shown, participation has been claimed to have several favorable effects on those individuals who participate. Some of them are abstract, moral qualities, such as liberty (Dewey, 1927, 51), moral autonomy (Warren, 1996, 256) and self-development (Young, 2002). Other types of transformative claims in participatory and deliberative democratic theories are, however, more empirical.<sup>8</sup> First, development of autonomous judgment refers to the reflection of and changes in an individual's own interests, preferences and opinions related to issues of collective decision-making. Second, the discovery of their "public dimensions", as Warren (1992, 12) describes it, pertains to solidarity toward other members of the community, trust in decision-makers, and fairness of decision-making procedures and their outcomes. Third, participation has been associated with the development of democratic skills, such as knowledge of facts and democratic procedures, confidence in one's possibilities to influence politics, and future participation.<sup>9</sup> Next, I review existing empirical research on democratic innovations through these three conceptual categories of self-transformative effects.

Much of the empirical evidence studying the self-transformative effects of participation comes from the field of deliberative democracy, where empirical studies have focused primarily on the changes in participants' opinions. Although this 'opinion-track' (Pincock, 2013, 144) has studied only one aspect of the self-transformative effects of participation, it has widened our understanding of the potential and limitations of deliberative participation in democratic governance. The growing body of evidence from experimental and real-life settings suggests that being exposed to different viewpoints and 'hearing the other side' (Mutz, 2006) makes people change their minds (Andersen & Hansen, 2007; Farrar et al., 2010; Grönlund, Herne, & Setälä 2015; Suiter et al., 2016). These studies point to the direction that individual preferences are not fixed, and they can change over the course of participation in discussing and making collective decisions, thus supporting the self-transformation thesis. A randomized control trial also found that deliberative processes change individuals' attitudes toward scientific knowledge (Carman et al., 2015), supporting previously discussed claims about increased critical judgment through deliberation. The dynamics behind these changes are complex, however, varying across different individuals and groups (Himmelroos & Christensen, 2013; Lindell et al., 2017; Suiter et al., 2016). Furthermore, extracting the effect of deliberative talk from the effects of other societal events has been challenging (Andersen & Hansen, 2007). Recent studies suggest that change of preferences might be too crude a measure for the self-transformative effects, because deliberation in facilitated mini-publics has also been found to transform deeper cognitive processes, helping individuals to better connect their preferences to their values (Gastil et al., 2018; Niemeyer, 2011).

In terms of the second category of transformative effects, i.e. attitudes toward people, politicians and politics, much of the evidence again comes from the field of deliberative democracy, but there are some findings concerning other types of participatory processes, too. Exposure to different views in formal deliberative venues or informal discursive settings seems to increase political tolerance (Andersen & Hansen, 2007; Mutz, 2002), generalized trust, empathy toward outgroups and prosocial behavior (Grönlund *ym.*, 2017; Grönlund, Setälä & Herne, 2010). Participatory processes may, however, attract more trusting citizens in the first place, as Article 1 of this dissertation as well as other recent studies (Boulianne, 2018a) suggest.

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<sup>8</sup> See (Thompson, 2008) for further discussion on empirical and non-empirical claims in deliberative democratic theory.

<sup>9</sup> For an alternative suggestion on how to categorize self-transformation claims in normative democratic theories, see Pincock 2011.

In terms of perceived legitimacy, participation in decision-making seems to increase participants' satisfaction with the decision-making process and outcome at hand, regardless of the type of participation (Michels, 2011). In particular, small group deliberation in jury settings seems to increase the sense of procedural fairness and acceptance of policy outcomes (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler, 2006), and direct voting in referendum-type processes has been found to have similar positive effects on decision legitimacy in field experiments (Esaiasson et al., 2012; Olken, 2010; Persson et al., 2012). Our own research on a crowdsourcing process found that participation increased satisfaction with Finnish democracy and confidence in one's own abilities to influence, but decreased overall political trust which was moderated by individuals' procedural and outcome evaluations (Christensen et al., 2015). Many studies on participatory budgeting in the Americas and elsewhere mention that participation in these processes has increased participants' political efficacy, community-orientation and trust in local politicians (Baiochi & Ganuza, 2014; Cabannes, 2015; Gilman, 2012; Swaner, 2017). The problem with the studies on participatory budgeting, however, is that participants have not usually been studied systematically with pre and post surveys or interviews. Probably for this reason, a systematic review of empirical studies on German participatory budgeting processes fails to find any significant self-transformative effects on participants (Schneider & Busse, 2018).

The third category of skills and competence – i.e. knowledge, efficacy and future participation – has gained attention from empirical scholars working with all types of participatory processes. Based on previous studies, all types of participatory instruments increase participants' knowledge over the issues and processes at hand (Michels, 2011). Knowledge effects have been documented extensively in studies on deliberative mini-publics (Andersen & Hansen, 2007; Carpini et al., 2004; Farrar et al., 2010; Fishkin et al., 2010; Karpowitz et al., 2009), although learning in these processes may also be a consequence of information given to the participants at the beginning of the event (Grönlund et al., 2015). Also, participants in participatory budgeting and collaborative governance processes at the local level report about learning new information (Michels & De Graaf, 2010; Schneider & Busse, 2018).

Empirical evidence concerning efficacy – the core value of participation for participatory democrats – is, however, mixed. Participation in deliberative settings has in some cases increased internal and external efficacy (Karpowitz et al., 2009; Nabatchi, 2010b), but others argue that the effect is contingent on how deliberative processes have been organized (Geissel & Hess, 2017). On the other hand, deliberation has also been shown to increase awareness of the complexity of politics and decrease political efficacy (Walsh, 2003, in Carpini et al., 2004; Gastil et al., 2017) (Andersen & Hansen, 2007; Font & Blanco, 2007). It is thus perhaps not surprising that the evidence on the effect of participation and deliberation on further civic engagement also remains mixed (Carpini et al., 2004; Ryfe, 2005). Jacobs et al. (2009) find that discursive participation of ordinary citizens in the US makes them more likely to engage in electoral politics and civic activities, and increases their store of political capital. Jury deliberations also seem to increase public engagement (Gastil et al., 2010), and discussions with representatives spill over to deliberation in the informal public sphere (Lazer et al., 2015), and similar findings have been reported in terms of participatory school governance in Latin America (Altschuler & Corrales, 2012). Several studies have not, however, found any effects of deliberation on the likelihood of participating in other, more institutionalized arenas (Andersen & Hansen, 2007; Grönlund et al., 2010; Knobloch & Gastil, 2015), and it seems that these effects are likely to occur only for those individuals who do not hold a strong political ideology in the first place (Wojcieszak et al., 2010). Mutz finds that discussion and deliberation actually reduces participation, because people prefer to avoid conflicts (Mutz, 2006). Finally, participation may still increase support for the wider use of democratic innovations in decision-making. For example, participation in deliberative events on immigration and the euro did increase participants' support for using deliberative practices in society (Andersen & Hansen, 2007; Christensen et al., 2017).

What we can learn from this brief review of recent empirical research is that direct participation transforms individuals, but the transformations depend on the type of participation, the type of individual and the wider context. While all types of participation seem to increase participants' knowledge and

satisfaction with political procedures and decisions, opinion change, tolerance and empathy are specific virtues of deliberative processes. The picture of political efficacy and the self-reinforcing nature of participation is clearly, however, more complex than theories of participatory and deliberative democracy have assumed. Here the degree of influence of participation, as well as the procedural fairness of the participatory exercise and how its output is handled are likely to play some of the key roles. Through the discussion above, I wish to have shown that the self-transformation thesis is not a sufficient justification for participation in contemporary democratic systems. The positive impacts of aggregative or deliberative processes on those who participate should be regarded only as second-best outcomes, as suggested recently by some deliberative democrats (c.f. Bächtiger & Wegman, 2013, 129).

### 3.2 Knowledge and cognitive diversity: Epistemic role of participation

*“One natural hypothesis about why we actually want people’s views taken account of by the process is that we expect people’s views to be intelligent – maybe not to any high standard, but better than a coin flip.” (Estlund, 2009, 6)*

Another influential – yet contested – perspective to the value of direct participation focuses on the outcomes of democratic processes. Ideas of epistemic democracy can be traced back to Aristotle, who noted that different individuals possess different knowledge, and when people put their knowledge together, they know more than the experts (Brown, 2013, 50). Epistemic theories see democratic processes as “knowledge-producing processes” (Peter, 2007) and understand democratic institutions as knowledge-aggregating procedures that have the potential to produce better outcomes (Landemore, 2017). The whole political system can thus be seen as “a system channeling the intelligence of the many and turning it into smart outputs” (Landemore, 2013, 21). Along similar lines, Blaug (2010) defends democratic procedures as those best suited to gaining and processing knowledge in current “contingent, complex and perspectival environments”. Other epistemic democrats such as Estlund (2009, 8) emphasize the “truth-tracking” properties of democratic procedures, arguing that “democratically produced laws are legitimate and authoritative because they are produced by a procedure with a tendency to produce correct decisions”. While I acknowledge that none of the empirical articles included in this dissertation explicitly study the epistemic quality of participatory outputs or decisions, it is still important to explicate which advantages epistemic justifications of participatory mechanisms have over educative justifications that I criticized in the previous section.

What makes citizen participation special in its potential to produce knowledge is the way it accommodates the pluralism, disagreement and diversity inherent in politics. Pluralism – the fact that people hold different beliefs and values (Cinalli & O’Flynn, 2014) – has been widely discussed in theories of deliberative democracy (Gutmann & Thompson, 2009; Young, 2002). Democratic societies host a multiplicity of points of view, which Landemore (2013, 5) calls “cognitive diversity”. Behind cognitive diversity lies individuals’ different cognitive models to interpret and predict information and produce arguments (Hong & Page, 2013). The epistemic benefit of this diversity is that each citizen brings her own knowledge and experiences into the democratic process and thus enriches the pool of arguments for decision-making (Sunstein, 2006). In short, “bringing more people into the process brings more and more kinds of information to the table” (Neblo, 2015, 6).

A shared premise in epistemic theories is thus a basic respect toward citizens’ insights and knowledge. The concepts of ‘information’ and ‘knowledge’ in epistemic theories of democracy, however, can cover very different types of cognitive outputs. They may refer to personal experiences through different social backgrounds, or different psychological models for processing information and producing arguments. Knowledge can also consist of individuals’ bases of factual information, and the reasons they hold for and against particular proposals (Neblo, 2015, 6), as well as contextual information on local conditions (Fischer, 2000, 243).

The epistemic justification of democracy is also related to the notion of expertise – another significant and influential source of knowledge claims in democratic decision-making. On the one hand, expertise seems to be the main problem with the epistemic conception, epistemic theories implicitly grant wide powers to experts and elites in democratic decision-making (Chambers, 2017). “The biggest objection to bringing in the epistemic dimension is that it might tend to justify rule by the knowers—what we might call *epistocracy*” (Estlund, 2009, 7.) If the goal is to ensure that decisions are based on the most comprehensive knowledge available, one could always argue that the most skilled experts or politicians in fact have this knowledge, and therefore the input of citizens would not be required. Fischer (Fischer, 2000), however, points out that “participatory inquiry”, i.e. deliberation, can produce inputs into policy-making that provide contextual information about local characteristics and circumstances. Since such information is hard if not impossible to obtain otherwise, policy experts *need* citizens to contribute in the process, although the image is often portrayed the other way around, so that citizens need experts in order to form their opinions (ibid.). Citizen participation and expertise therefore seems to have fairly similar goals in democratic governance: “to improve the epistemic quality of public decision-making” (Brown, 2014). The analogy to expert knowledge and to claims made by interest organizations and lobbies is particularly valid in terms of ‘soft’ participatory mechanisms that I discuss in Article 2 of this dissertation, because both non-binding participatory mechanisms, scientific expert advice and interest advocacy leave the final collective will-formation to the minds of politicians. Citizens could thus be understood as a new group of experts in democratic systems.

If participation is, then, understood knowledge-producing activity, democratic innovations can be justified on the basis that they produce valuable issue-specific information that can be used in decision-making. For as Urbinati and Warren (2008, 402) note, participation in elections is information-poor activity. While elections do provide a check against gross abuses of power, they do not produce detailed information about which issues citizens find important and how these issues are ranked in terms of importance (ibid.). Democratic innovations, on the other hand, share in general the feature of harnessing the wisdom of the multitude and cognitive diversity (Landemore, 2013, 5).

The epistemic quality of these participatory outputs, however, varies depending on the details of the institutional design discussed in Section 2.2, in particular the participant selection and the mode of participation. The result of a referendum, for example, is rarely preceded by inclusive public deliberation that would allow learning and correct factual errors around the issue. Rather, the information environment is often polarized, questioning the epistemic potential of the referendum mechanism. If the referendum effectively engages a large and representative mass of citizens, it could be assumed to realize cognitive diversity quite well, and thus lead to at least a somewhat better outcome than flipping a coin. In practice, however, participation in a popular vote may be biased toward individuals with more political resources. Deliberative polls, on the other hand, could potentially produce a more enlightened aggregated public opinion, because of the representative sample and the process of learning and deliberation. However, participatory outputs that articulate consequences of decisions and provide reasons for different policy alternatives could be seen more valuable from the epistemic perspective. These types of outputs are produced, for example, by deliberative citizen juries and the Citizens’ Initiative Review model that combine a deliberative mode of participation with a modest cognitive diversity. The epistemic value of participatory mapping tools like FixMyStreet.com, on the other hand, seems to be as simple as providing information that would otherwise not exist, such as the exact location of dangerous potholes. Thus, participatory mechanisms can produce different types of information to decision-making – public opinion, impact assessments, reasons, or local knowledge – and the epistemic quality of each of these is affected by the details of participant selection and mode of participation.

Epistemic justifications of participation also assume that decisions are, at least to some extent, responsive to citizens’ demands expressed via participatory mechanisms. Despite the differences in institutional design, all types of participatory mechanisms must be connected to representative decision-making in order to produce better decisions. Following Estlund (2009, 161), decisions can be understood broadly as any laws and policies whose legitimacy is derived from the underlying democratic procedures.

Decisions include, for example, regulatory decisions by agencies, decisions of appointed public officials and decisions made by referendums. The potential epistemic benefits of participation are thus not limited to the quality of participatory outputs, since they are also related to the ‘external face’ of participatory processes (Setälä & Smith, 2018) through influence on collective decisions.

Ideally, good epistemic outputs from participatory mechanisms would influence collective decisions and improve their epistemic quality. In reality, however, internal and external epistemic quality may be de-linked from each other. For example, binding referendums have the potential to make good quality decisions, but their internal epistemic quality is often low, as discussed above. The most promising mechanisms in terms of internal epistemic quality, on the other hand, seem to be found among ‘soft’ democratic innovations, such as deliberative mini-publics and crowdsourcing processes. Research shows, however, that decision-makers engage in cherry-picking proposals from non-binding participatory processes, and choose to follow proposals that come from participatory budgeting processes, correspond to the preferences and practices of authorities and administration, and do not require a large budget (Font et al., 2017). This would suggest that participatory outputs with the highest epistemic quality are not among the most influential.

On a more positive side, however, Font et al. (2017) find that proposals coming from processes in which the administration has invested more resources – such as facilitation and information – have a higher impact potential than ‘lighter’ processes, suggesting that high internal epistemic quality can, in some cases, also result in epistemically-better collective decisions. Soft participatory mechanisms could also increase the epistemic quality of collective decisions indirectly, if their outputs are given due consideration by the decision-makers. Public justification by authorities for not implementing participatory proposals or implementing them partially could serve as an indicator for this kind of due consideration (Font et al., 2016).

Empirical evidence on the epistemic benefits of participation remains scarce, possibly because there are no shared standards on what a good decision or a good participatory output looks like and how to measure it (Landemore, 2017). The underlying assumption in epistemic theories is that decisions can be judged against external, procedure-independent criteria (Peter, 2007), such as Estlund’s ‘primary bads’ that include war, famine and other disasters (Estlund, 2009, 163). Therefore, minimum criteria for internal and external epistemic quality could be that participatory mechanisms do not produce proposals or policies that would promote these kinds of primary bads. One way to study this is to look at the directions of opinion changes in deliberative settings. It seems that at least in less salient issues, mini-publics can produce a collective opinion that approaches single-peakedness (Farrar et al., 2010), making it easier to be implemented by politicians. Liberal-cosmopolitan tendencies have been found in some studies. For example, deliberative experiments have turned participants more pro-immigration, despite the fact that some people deliberated in like-minded groups (Grönlund et al., 2015), and more supportive of tax increases (Suiter et al., 2016). Sometimes the collective opinion has moved to the direction of a pre-existing majority (Carpini et al., 2004), and disagreement in deliberative settings has, on the other hand, been found to increase polarization (Wojcieszak, 2011). The evidence that discussion in general encourages individuals to use new, less commonly shared information in group decision-making (Carpini et al., 2004), suggests an increased epistemic quality of deliberative outputs. The impact of deliberative mini-publics on policies, and thus their internal epistemic quality has, however, so far remained rather limited (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006).

Referendums, on the other hand, when used as an integral part of decision-making, influence a wide range of policies, such as taxes and spending, punishments and minority rights (Lupia & Matsusaka, 2004). Ideological directions of direct democratic policies vary, but perhaps against general assumptions, conservative tendencies regarding fiscal and social policy have been found in the US and Switzerland (Lupia & Matsusaka, 2004; Matsusaka, 2013). Citizens’ initiatives allow attempts to collect signatures for various types of issues, but in many countries some issues are considered unconstitutional and thus not within the reach of popular initiatives (Setälä & Schiller, 2012). The practice of agenda initiatives in

Finland, for example, has shown that initiatives represent very different points on the ideological scale (Christensen et al., 2017).

Participatory budgeting has led municipalities to allocate more money on sanitation and health services in Brazil, reducing infant mortality (Gonçalves, 2014), and influenced the production of basic services where it has been applied (Cabannes, 2015). In Germany, however, policy impacts of participatory budgeting have remained indirect or non-existent, due to the consultative nature of participation as well as numerous other factors (Schneider & Busse, 2018). Voluntary bottom-up participatory forums have increased the number of and satisfaction with public services in the agricultural sector, while top-down processes of participatory budgeting have only succeeded in increasing the number of services (Jaramillo & Wright, 2015). Based on case studies on different participatory and deliberative instruments in Europe, others conclude that their influence in decisions has remained rather low (Papadopoulos & Warin, 2007). After comparing four different types of democratic innovations, Michels (2011) also shows that referendums have the most impact on policies, while deliberative processes are least influential in terms of policy-making.

As noted above, almost none of these studies, however, tackles the questions of internal or external epistemic quality directly. This brief review of empirical literature tells us, first, that deliberation changes the way how citizens process information and make arguments, pointing towards improved internal epistemic quality of deliberative outputs. Second, participatory processes seem to produce very different proposals with no systematic ideological tendencies, depending on institutional design features, topics and context. Third, referendums and initiatives have been most influential in shaping actual policies, but the epistemic quality of these decisions is ambiguous, because the internal epistemic quality of these participatory mechanisms can be questioned.

To sum up, theories of epistemic democracy offer a contemporary, instrumental rationale for designing and organizing direct citizen participation in democratic systems. Direct citizen participation can serve as a source of good quality inputs into the political system, and a serious alternative to other inputs from experts and interest advocacies. Thus, participation can help public officials and elected politicians to make better decisions by articulating and channeling citizens' cognitive diversity – knowledge, interests and values – into decision-making.

### 3.3 Public will-formation and legitimacy among the maxi-publics: Systemic role of participation

*“Because political judgments involve so many factual contingencies and competing normative requirements, and because politics involves the alignments of will, both in concert and in opposition, among large numbers of citizens, it is virtually impossible to conceive of a political system that does not divide the labours of judgment and then recombine them in various ways.” (Mansbridge et al., 2012, 5)*

In contemporary democratic theory, another instrumental justification for democratic participation has gained attention lately. While the self-transformation thesis sees participation as important for participating individuals, and epistemic justification stresses its role for information and decisions, others argue that citizen participation is also valuable for the public as a whole (MacKenzie & Warren, 2012; Warren & Gastil, 2015). From this perspective, participation has the function of helping the ‘maxi-public’ (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2015), i.e. people in the wider public sphere, to make judgments about policy issues and processes. The idea of citizen participation as beneficial to the wider public is not new in democratic theory. Pateman (1970) highlighted the potential of participation to aid with the acceptance of collective decisions, and later on (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006) have emphasized how deliberative mini-publics could inform public debates and strengthen the legitimacy of the policy processes which they are

a part of. Also Warren (2008, 64) has conceptualized ‘public accountability’ as one important criterion to evaluate participatory mechanisms.

Shifting the focus from isolated democratic innovations to the linkage between participatory mechanisms and the wider public also resonates with recent discussions within the systemic approach to democratic theory (Boswell et al., 2016; Mansbridge et al., 2012). These accounts emphasize the connections between different nodes in democratic systems, such as democratic innovations, parliaments, the media and the wider public. From the systemic perspective, it is thus important to study the coupling and flow of information between sites of deliberation and decision-making (Hendriks, 2016).

As noted in Section 3.1, contemporary democratic theory has come to acknowledge the fact that full inclusion of all citizens is impossible. Scholars have directed our attention instead to the rules pertaining to the legitimate exclusion of citizens from participatory arenas (Parkinson, 2003), and the roles of these arenas for the wider public (Urbinati & Warren, 2008). Urbinati and Warren (2008), for example, point out that in most new participatory instruments – mini-publics, public hearings, citizen juries, advisory councils, public submissions and citizen surveys – only a small percentage of citizens are actively involved. These “nonelected, formally designed venues into which citizens are selected or self-selected for representative purposes” constitute ‘citizen representatives’ (Urbinati & Warren, 2008, 403), who can claim to represent the citizens who did not participate in that particular participatory process. This creates a relationship between the participatory process and the wider public, which introduces other problematic normative expectations such as accountability, trust and legitimacy.

The normative ideal of a participatory citizen has thus shifted from an active agent in all social and political arenas to a reflective and reasoning agent who makes judgments about when to participate and when to trust decision-making in other agents’ hands (MacKenzie & Warren, 2012). Because of the cognitive division of labor in modern democracies, citizens no longer need to know everything about all policy issues, but they are, instead, required to make judgements on how well agents represent them in decision-making processes. Together with the rise of new arenas for direct participation, judgments must also be made in relation to citizen representatives. This task involves reflecting the procedural aspects and outputs from citizen participation. If a participatory process has been designed and implemented so that it incentivizes and certifies competence and interest convergence, it can serve as a trusted information proxy for the non-participating citizens, like the Citizens’ Initiative Review seems to have done (Warren & Gastil, 2015). In addition to participant selection and mode of participation, also the mandate and authority of the participatory body can be assumed to affect public accountability of participatory processes. In light of the British Columbia Citizens’ Assembly, Warren (2008, 64-5) argues that if participants are framed to think about the common good, and their task is to produce arguments, not binding decisions, conditions are good for high public accountability.

Outside these process-specific evaluations, providing opportunities for citizen participation may also shape public perceptions of the government more generally. Participatory mechanisms and their combinations constitute part of the democratic system and political context in a similar way as electoral institutions do, and these are known to affect public attitudes towards democratic governments (Anderson & Guillory, 1997). It has become standard to distinguish legitimacy of procedures from legitimacy of collective decisions (Schmidt, 2013). Participatory mechanisms may have independent effects on both types of legitimacy, and as I discuss in Article 3, participant selection and mode of participation could be assumed to be more important for procedural fairness, while policy impact can be argued to matter more for output legitimacy.

While the epistemic benefits discussed in the previous section require some formal linkages between participatory mechanisms and decision-making bodies, in the case of public will-formation and legitimacy, the analytical focus is shifted to transmission mechanisms (Boswell et al., 2016) between participatory processes and the wider public sphere. Impacts on the wider public require, indeed, that their conclusions are heard by the public (Beetham, 2012, 65; Boulianne, 2018a). Smith refers to this as external transparency or publicity, meaning “the transmission of information about the institution and its conclusions decisions to the wider public” (Smith, 2009, 25). Publicity is thus crucial for the maxi-public

to judge participatory institutions and their outputs as legitimate and trustworthy, and actors such as bureaucrats, media and activists can be particularly helpful in enabling this type of transmission (Mendonça, 2016).

Democratic innovations can thus shape the knowledge, opinions or attitudes of the people in the wider public. Although these sound similar to the self-transformative effects discussed in Section 3.1, they are dependent on the external face of the participatory process as much as on its internal features. Therefore, the effects of democratic innovations on maxi-publics fundamentally differ from their transformative effects on participants. Michels (2011) points out that even though there are plenty of empirical studies on the positive effects of participation on those who participate, we do not know whether citizen participation also fosters political support, deliberation, or skills among the wider public. Therefore, “doubts about the benefits of participation to democracy as a whole will persist” (ibid.).

There is some preliminary evidence of the consequences of participation on the maxi-public, but these questions have been mostly studied in the context of institutionalized direct democratic instruments. The existence of statewide initiatives has been found to positively shape evaluations of government responsiveness (Bowler & Donovan, 2002) and increase interest group membership (Boehmke & Bowen, 2010) in the US. While results concerning political efficacy among the wider public are conflicting (Shaun Bowler & Donovan, 2002; Dyck & Lascher Jr., 2009), ballot initiatives have been found to increase turnout in elections (Tolbert et al., 2009; Tolbert et al., 2003; Tolbert & Smith, 2005). Opportunities for direct democracy also seem to decrease the probability of attending demonstrations (Fatke & Freitag, 2013). Initiative and referendum campaigns have also increased the level of political knowledge among the electorate (Mendelsohn & Cutler, 2000; Tolbert et al., 2003), and direct democracy has been associated with happiness at the whole population level in Swiss studies (Frey & Stutzer, 2000; Stutzer & Frey, 2006). Others, however, conclude that the positive effect of a single, one-off referendum on political support is actually due to the increased satisfaction of the ‘winners’ in the issue (Marien & Kern, 2017).

The effects of deliberative participation on maxi-publics have received attention only recently. Learning about the statement of a deliberative mini-public has been found to bring the opinions of the general public closer to the opinion of the participatory body (Ingham & Levin, 2018). Studies on the Citizens’ Initiative Review process in Oregon show that reading the citizens’ statement produced by a deliberative jury reduced the overall support for a ballot measure demanding harder punishments for certain crimes (Gastil et al., 2018). Well-institutionalized deliberative participation also seems to have more subtle effects on the cognitive processing of the wider public: The CIR, for example, influenced voters’ value trade-offs and initiative-related empirical beliefs (ibid.). Other studies looking at local level deliberative mini-publics, on the other hand, find that they can foster domain-specific political trust and a collective sense of efficacy, but not necessarily affect policy preferences (Boulianne, 2018a, 2018b). The British Columbia Citizens’ Assembly has also taught us that different features of the participatory mechanism matter to different people: some are more convinced by the representativeness while others look more at the expertise of the ‘citizen representatives’ (Cutler et al., 2008).

Finally, in terms of other participatory instruments, empirical evidence remains limited. The number of participation possibilities at the local level does not seem to foster perceived legitimacy of local governments (Reitan et al., 2015). Article 3 of this dissertation therefore makes an important contribution to our knowledge on the effects of different types of participatory mechanisms on attitudes of the maxi-public. I show that the availability of discursive forms of participation – such as participatory planning events, citizen juries, public hearings and public discussion events – has positive effects on public perceptions of procedural fairness, but not on satisfaction with policy outcomes.

So far, the evidence concerning the effects of democratic innovations on maxi-publics is rather promising, but mainly restricted to highly influential and institutionalized forms of participation, such as binding referendums, initiatives and high-profile deliberative juries. Future research could explore how less formal processes of participation are perceived by the public, and what, if any, effects they have on the wider public sphere. It is also important to conceptually differentiate between effects on perceived

legitimacy at different levels and areas: participatory processes may contribute to decision acceptance or legitimacy of decisions within a particular policy area, but they may also have broader impacts on how the public perceives the functioning of democratic governance as a whole, as I show in Article 3 of this dissertation.



## 4. Empirical design

In this section, I discuss the methodological challenges of studying democratic innovations and reflect upon the choices made in this dissertation. The articles included in this dissertation empirically study the causes and consequences of direct citizen participation in local democracy. The research thus answers to the broader questions regarding why some jurisdictions adopt democratic innovations while others do not, and how they can contribute to democratic governance. Throughout the articles, a guiding methodological principle is to stay sensitive to the institutional design features of participatory mechanisms. From a methodological perspective, dissertation draws upon comparative and behavioral participation research. Before I discuss the advantages and challenges of each of these traditions, I briefly describe the geographical context in which research has been conducted – Finland.

### 4.1 Case selection

The data used in the three empirical studies of this dissertation come from Finnish municipalities. Before going into the empirical and methodological details of each article, I will briefly justify why Finnish local government is a suitable context to study democratic innovations. First, many theories of democracy have seen special value in citizens' participation in local public life. Participatory democrats such as Barber (1984, 234) and Pateman (1970, 34) emphasize that local democracy has an important educative function, because citizens learn to participate and exercise power by practicing it at the lowest levels of government. More recently, scholars have stressed the accessibility of local government. These accounts argue that it makes sense to organize participation possibilities at the local level because it deals with issues that have a direct impact on citizens (Pratchett, 2004). From this pragmatic perspective, the accessibility of local institutions entails that citizens also prefer participating at the local level rather than at higher levels of government (*ibid.*). Others have pointed out that municipalities often serve as a testing ground for participatory mechanisms before scaling the up to higher levels of government (Newton, 2012); and local politicians have higher pressures to be responsive to citizens who are closer to them (Parkinson, 2006). Furthermore, democratic innovations have been adopted especially at the local level (Dalton, 2004; Denters & Klok, 2013), which makes it an empirically interesting and fruitful area to study.

From a methodological point of view, zooming into sub-national political units within one country also has certain advantages. Due to a common legislative framework, and shared social and cultural traditions, municipalities within a country such as Finland are more similar than countries in a cross-national comparative research design (Peters, 2013). This eliminates some sources of extraneous variance that may lead to false conclusions about the causal effects of independent variables. In other words, when there are fewer variables that differentiate political units from each other, inferences about the relationships between these differentiating variables and the dependent variable are more reliable.

By choosing to focus on Finland, I might be accused of case selection by familiarity, which is fairly common in comparative research (Peters, 2013). Researchers have a natural tendency to analyze countries they know best, either through living in the country, or having some other personal ties to it. While I cannot fully reject this critique in terms of my own research, there are, however, at least two reasons why Finnish local politics is a suitable context to study democratic innovations. First, at the time of conducting research for this dissertation, municipalities were responsible for providing most of the public services in Finland – at least the ones that are most visible in people's everyday lives (Blöchliger & Vammalle, 2012; Larsen, 2002; Sjöblom, 2010). Municipalities have thus been almost like 'mini-states' in the sense that

## DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS IN FINNISH LOCAL POLITICS

they have had wide decision-making powers and fiscal autonomy.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, local politics in Finland can be said to make a real difference in citizens' lives.

Second, as discussed above, Finnish municipalities are relatively free to decide how and on what topics they engage citizens. This autonomy introduces variation both in terms of the number and type of participation possibilities across municipalities. As I show in Article 3, Finnish municipalities, in practice, differ a great deal in terms of what participatory mechanisms they have adopted. Finland is thus an ideal case to compare the causes and consequences of different types of democratic innovations. I take advantage of this variation by comparing online vs. offline mechanisms in Article 1, government-initiated referendums and referendum motions in Article 2, and citizen committees, consultative, discursive, direct democratic, and online participation in Article 3.

Local democracy in Finland is based on the principles of representative government, with a system of proportional representation and professional mayors (Lidström, 2001; Sjöblom, 2010). Local government has gone through massive reforms during the last few decades, reducing the number of municipalities from 518 to 311 between 1970 and 2018<sup>11</sup>. Some signs of participatory democracy, however, emerged at the local level in the 1970's. The right of initiative was adopted in the Local Government Act in 1976. This meant that an individual municipality resident over 18 years got the right to submit an initiative to the municipality, which the local council had to handle within a predetermined time frame. During the 1980's, municipalities started to be encouraged to use citizen committees as a way to increase the participation of disabled persons.<sup>12</sup> In 1990, a number of direct democratic instruments were also adopted at the local level. These included the municipal consultative referendum and referendum motion (Sutela, 2001). Municipal referendums can be applied to various policy issues as long as they concern the municipality. The statute concerning a referendum motion, on the other hand, defined that a request for a municipal referendum can be made by five percent of the inhabitants eligible to vote, and the council must decide without delay whether the requested referendum will be organized or not.

Most recently, some steps toward a more participatory culture have been taken at the sub-national level of government. Deliberative citizen juries and other forms of collaborative governance have received growing attention during the 2000s (Niinikoski & Setälä, 2014). Also, the statutes concerning direct citizen participation at the local level were reformed in 2015 to include a wider range of possible (not mandatory) mechanisms to engage citizens in municipal decision-making. Chapter 5 of the new law states that participation can be organized especially by 1) arranging discussion events and setting up local resident panels, 2) conducting surveys, 3) electing service users to local decision-making bodies, 4) arranging participatory budgeting, 5) co-planning services, and 6) supporting grass-roots civic action.<sup>13</sup> In addition, as part of the reform, citizen committees for elderly people and youth were made mandatory at the local level – the same had happened for the disabled persons' council earlier –, and the requirements for referendum motions were loosened, making it possible now for four percent of municipal residents over 15 years to request a municipal referendum.

When writing this introductory chapter, Finland is also in the middle of an administrative reform that would introduce a regional level of government in the Finnish political system in 2020. If the government succeeds in getting the support from the parliament to the massive package of various regional reform laws, new regions would have similar legislative regulations for direct citizen participation as municipalities currently have. The fate of the reform and content of laws will not, however, be resolved until after this dissertation is finalized.

At the national level, direct citizen participation has not played a significant role until very recently. The 1990s witnessed the second of two referendums held in Finland during independence, when the

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<sup>10</sup> This might change in the 2020s if the government reform introducing a new level of regional government will pass the parliament.

<sup>11</sup> Statistics Finland, population statistics.

<sup>12</sup> HE 268/2014.

<sup>13</sup> Finnish Local Government Act 410/2015: My own translation modified from unofficial translation by the Ministry of Finance <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaanomokset/2015/en20150410.pdf>

question of joining the European Union was put to a popular vote in 1994, the same year as in Sweden and Norway (Bjørklund, 1996). In the early 2000s, direct democracy was again discussed as part of the constitutional reform, inspired also by the development of the European Citizens' Initiative. This discussion resulted in the adoption of a citizens' initiative instrument in 2012. The Finnish Citizens' Initiative is an agenda initiative, meaning that 50 000 Finnish citizens eligible to vote can make legislative proposals to the parliament (Christensen et al., 2017). The parliament must discuss and make a decision on each initiative reaching the signature quorum, and so far, one initiative – on gender-equal marriage legislation – has become law (*ibid.*).

To sum up, the importance of direct citizen participation and various participatory mechanisms are relatively widely acknowledged in Finland, at least when it comes to legal regulations. In practice, participation is also often organized because of requirements in special legislation concerning the environment and land use, which obligate municipalities and regional authorities to consult those who are affected by policy plans. None of the reforms mentioned above have, however, introduced more authority and decision-making power to citizens. A representative ethos therefore seems to be strong in the Finnish political system.

If we turn to look at the citizens and their attitudes toward democratic government in Finland, the picture looks slightly different. Local politicians are perceived in a rather negative light, since only one fourth of the adult residents in municipalities trust the politicians in their own municipality (The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, 2015). In local elections, turnout has rarely been above 60 percent during the 2000s (The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, 2018). At the national level, Finns still have a relatively high trust in their representative institutions (Bäck & Christensen, 2016; Bäck, Kestilä-Kekkonen, & Söderlund, 2016), but the trend of declining election turnouts applies to Finland as well (International IDEA, 2018; Wass & Grönlund, 2016).

At the same time, Finnish citizens would also like to see more opportunities for direct participation at both local and national levels of government. At the local level, only 16 percent of residents think that citizens' opinions are listened to in their municipality (The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, 2015). Not surprisingly, support for local direct democracy has grown steadily since 2008, and 55 percent of adult residents in municipalities supported the wider use of referendums in 2015 (Pekola-Sjöblom, 2016). Many citizens also use the opportunities of direct participation in municipalities, as 43 percent of adults have responded to surveys and opinion polls, and 23 percent have attended public hearings and discussion events (*ibid.*). At the national level, the majority of the voting population have also supported a more frequent use of referendums in the 2000s (Bengtsson & Christensen, 2016; Christensen et al., 2017). Based on the FNES data from 2015 – collected only three years after the adoption of the agenda initiative – 83 percent of the adult population think that the agenda initiative has had a positive impact on Finnish democracy; about one third of the voting-age population have supported at least one agenda initiative (Christensen et al., 2017). There is, in other words, popular demand for opportunities to influence decision-making directly, although Finnish citizens are not extremely dissatisfied with the functioning of representative democracy, at least at the national level.

## 4.2 Methodology

The empirical research conducted for this dissertation follows two major methodological approaches in political science: comparative politics and political behavior. Comparative politics can be understood as the study of actually existing countries, states, and local political units (Peters, 2013). Therefore, it is often distinguished from experimental research, where the researcher manipulates an independent variable in order to study its effect on some outcome of interest, keeping other factors constant. In the real world, however, questions, such as the effect of the party system on social inequality, cannot be studied by experiments designed by researchers. Most would agree that it is unethical of a researcher to manipulate constitutions or laws that affect the lives of millions of people, in order to discover causal

relationships. Sometimes experiments occur naturally (Gerber & Green, 2008), but usually political scientists must study institutions designed by real political actors. Article 2 of this dissertation represents the comparative research tradition by focusing on Finnish municipalities as political units.

The attitudes and behavior of ordinary citizens, on the other hand, have interested political scientists from the 1920s onwards (Dahl, 1961). The behavioral approach was developed partly as a critique toward traditional, descriptive and institutions-focused research in political science. The desire to improve the generalizability of results has, in practice, led to the use of large-N survey datasets in contrast to single case studies or comparisons of a few cases. The study of political participation is one of the major sub-fields in behavioral political science. Although much of the scholarship has analyzed voting behavior, a large body of research has also focused on mapping the levels of participation and, furthermore, distinguishing different forms of political participation from each other (Dalton & Klingemann, 2007). This research tradition has improved the conceptual analysis of participatory instruments with distinctions such as conventional–unconventional participation (Barnes & Kaase, 1979), and introduced popular models to explain why citizens do or do not participate (Brady et al., 1995). Article 1 of this dissertation thus continues the work of behavioral participation research by studying what ordinary people think about different types of participation possibilities at the local level, and how their sociodemographic backgrounds and political attitudes explain these opinions. Article 3, on the other hand, focuses on ordinary citizens' evaluations of local government legitimacy, and studies how both individual traits and features of the political unit – such as different participation possibilities – affect these evaluations, combining thus the behavioral approach and comparative research.

Finally, this dissertation also represents the quantitative research tradition in political science. The division of labor between quantitative and qualitative methods, and their compatibility with each other, has been the topic of fierce methodological debates during the last few decades (Brady & Collier, 2010; King et al., 1994; Ragin, 2008). I have chosen quantitative methods mainly for the same reasons as some other democratic innovation scholars. A large body of empirical research on democratic innovations has focused on case studies, looking either at single participatory processes or comparing a few participatory mechanisms (Font et al., 2012), making it hard to generalize any findings even to other cases in the same country. Participation research has taken some major methodological steps in the directions of more qualitative comparative analysis (Pogrebinschi & Ryan, 2018), Q-methodology (Dean, 2017a) and lab-in-the-field experiments (Grönlund et al., 2017), but large-N studies that would have a higher external validity remain scarce (Font et al., 2016). I have sought to contribute to this methodological gap by collecting datasets that in one way or another consist of more than just one participatory mechanism and a large enough number of units of analysis that allows a systematic, statistical study of participatory mechanisms.

### 4.2.1 Data and methods

All the articles in the dissertation rely on multiple sources of data. The main data source in Article 1, “Democratic innovations to the rescue? Political trust and attitudes toward democratic innovations in Southwest Finland” is a survey of 2000 adults in the Turku region in Southwest Finland. The telephone survey was commissioned by the City of Turku and administered by a professional survey company in autumn 2012. Respondents were sampled randomly from each of the 14 municipalities in the region, and the size of these sub-samples ranged from 150 in smaller municipalities to 500 in the City of Turku. The samples were stratified by central sociodemographic criteria. Data on municipality size were obtained from Statistics Finland. From the small number of municipalities, and their contextual and geographical similarities follows that we cannot make widely generalizable conclusions based on the results. The design is, however, easily replicable in different contexts and areas.

Collecting this type of data faces similar challenges as with the study of citizens' preferences toward political processes (Bengtsson, 2012). The more ambivalent and unknown the participation procedures

in the question wordings are, the less reliable responses we get. In our study, some of the listed democratic innovations were fairly well known, but others, such as town hall meetings, were probably brought to the attention of the respondent for the first time during the survey interview. When prior images of the participatory procedure do not exist, respondents may be influenced more by the framing and wording of the questionnaire and interviewer (Bengtsson, 2012). Furthermore, the data measure citizens' intentions to participate via democratic innovations, and not whether they actually do so. It is likely that intentions do not match perfectly with actual behavior, especially when some of these participatory mechanisms have not yet been in place in the sample municipalities. However, the anticipatory nature of the study – attitudes towards a potential political unit – did not allow us to measure actual participation.

To identify relationships between political trust and citizens' support for democratic innovations in Article 1, two statistical techniques were used. First, principal component analysis was used to examine the dimensionality of citizens' attitudes toward different types of democratic innovations. Principal component analysis summarizes variation in a set of variables into fewer dimensions that can be used as independent or dependent variables in statistical analyses (Denis, 2015). It turned out that two dimensions – online and offline participation – can represent the variation in all other attitudes except support for advisory referendums. Second, we used multilevel regression modeling to study the effect of political trust on attitudes toward online and offline participatory mechanisms, while controlling for other individual- and municipality level factors. Multilevel modeling is a context-sensitive statistical technique for studying individuals nested in groups such as schools or hospitals (Luke, 2004). Advantages of using multilevel modeling in participation research are, however, discussed more in conjunction to Article 3, because the multilevel structure of the data was not of our main interest in Article 1.

In Article 2, “‘Soft’ forms of direct democracy: Explaining the occurrence of referendum motions and advisory referendums in Finnish local government”, I analyzed a dataset of 248 municipality-years. The main sources of data were official government statistics and observational data collected by a semi-structured survey and media review in 2013. Government statistics provided the occurrence of consultative referendums in 1991-2012, but data on referendum motions had to be collected by myself. A survey to municipalities received very few responses, which is why I conducted a systematic media review in regional newspaper archives and in the regional news archives of the Finnish public broadcasting company YLE. The data for socio-structural factors (population, degree of urbanization) were obtained from Statistics Finland population statistics. The election data for party system factors (fragmentation, one party hegemony, the share of seats of 4 political parties) and political support (turnout) come from Statistics Finland election statistics. The data for learning factors (experience of referendums and referendum motions, neighbor experiences of referendums and referendum motions) were coded manually from the previously mentioned sources. The history of municipal mergers was obtained from the statistics of the Association of Local and Regional Authorities.

In Article 2, the units of analysis are Finnish municipalities. The principles by which cases are selected is one of the crucial steps in designing comparative research. In most different system designs, the researcher tries to determine how robust is the relationship between variables of interest across a variety of different cases (Peters, 2013). Therefore, cases are often selected at random from the whole population, such as independent countries in the world, or municipalities in one country. Most similar system designs, on the other hand, control for the extraneous sources of variance by carefully selecting cases that resemble each other as much as possible (Peters, 2013, 40). As discussed above, choosing to focus on municipalities within a single country could thus be regarded as a most similar systems approach, because Finnish municipalities share the same rights and responsibilities imposed by Finnish law, and a common history. The research aim was, however, to identify causal relationships that could reasonably be assumed to apply in all Finnish municipalities, which justifies the most different systems approach and random sampling of Finnish municipalities.

The nature of the research question – what explains the occurrence of government-initiated referendums and referendum motions – set, however, a major obstacle for following the random sampling strategy. Because direct democracy is still a rare phenomenon in Finnish national and local politics, taking

a random sample of all municipalities that existed during the time period of interest (22 years) would provide a sample in which only few or none of the municipalities had experienced referendums or referendum motions. The challenge of explaining rare events such as referendums, wars, or revolutions has been discussed also elsewhere in comparative research. Quantitative scholars have been particularly cautious about selecting on the dependent variable (King *ym.*, 1994), but at the same time it is often inevitable if one wants to study political units in the real world. As Peters (Peters, 2013) notes, “If a researcher is interested in a particular phenomenon, he or she must find cases in which the phenomenon occurs”.

Therefore, case selection in Article 2 followed a case-control design, which in general refers to randomly selecting cases within the categories of the dependent variable (King & Zeng, 2001). In more practical terms, in case-control studies the researcher first selects all or random sample of cases among those cases where the rare event has occurred, and then selects a random sample of control cases among the cases where the event did not occur. In Article 2, I selected all municipalities that had experienced a referendum motion or referendum during the time period of interest, producing the ‘cases’ of interest in the analyses. Second, I selected random samples of 26 municipalities within each electoral term, among the municipalities that had not experienced a referendum motion or a referendum during that term, producing the ‘controls’.<sup>14</sup> The final sample consisted of altogether 248 municipalities, of which 55 had experienced referendum motions, 59 had held referendums (of which 51 were government-initiated), and 142 were controls. Article 2 can thus be regarded as a medium-N study, which has both advantages and challenges in empirical research. Compared to single-case studies and experimental studies, a larger sample increases external validity, meaning that the results can be generalized to the real world (Gerring, 2008; Peters, 2013). It can be questioned, however, whether a medium-sized sample can be used to actually identify causal mechanisms, or whether it should be used to explore and develop different hypotheses (Gerring, 2008). In order to maintain a decent level of statistical power in the analyses, the number of explanatory factors in Article 2 was kept small.

Three statistical methods were used to analyze case-control data in Article 2. The relationships between identified factors and the occurrence of referendum motions and referendums were first explored with bivariate analyses and tests of significance (independent samples T-test and Chi square -test). Consequently, logistic regression analysis was used to study how much each independent variable affects in the occurrence of soft direct democracy when controlling for other variables. As a statistical technique, logistic regression is particularly suitable for analyzing case-control data (Lacy, 1997).

In Article 3, “Participatory innovations and maxi-publics: The influence of participation possibilities on perceived legitimacy at the local level in Finland”, I used survey data collected by the Association of Local and Regional Authorities in Finland. The data were collected by mail questionnaires in autumn 2011, and stratified random samples (n=150-1900) of over 18-year-old residents in a representative sample of 40 Finnish municipalities were surveyed. The response rate was 40 percent. Because there are no centralized data collections concerning local participatory democracy in Finland, I collected the municipal-level data about the availability of democratic innovations in municipalities. This was done through an electronic questionnaire sent to chief administrative officials in the same 40 municipalities where individual-level surveys were conducted. These kinds of surveys can be expected to suffer from the same kinds of social desirability biases as in other participation research (Font *et al.*, 2016; Galais *et al.*, 2012). In the same way as citizens exaggerate their voting activity, municipalities may exaggerate the participatory mechanisms they make available, or overestimate the impact they have on policies. Social desirability has also likely affected attrition in the sense that municipalities that have not been active in promoting direct participation, might have dropped out already after the first invitation.

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<sup>14</sup> A panel study of all municipalities on each year in the time period of interest would have given more robust results, but it was not feasible due to the numerous municipal mergers that have occurred in the 1990s and 2000s in Finland. I sampled controls randomly among the population of municipalities at the beginning of each electoral term to ensure that merged municipalities were also represented in the sample.

After two rounds of reminders, a total of 32 municipalities responded to this questionnaire, of which 30 provided useful responses. Therefore, the sample of this study consists of 9,022 individuals living in 30 municipalities that roughly represent the whole population of 336 municipalities in terms of size, location and demographics. Ideally, of course, all 40 municipalities from which there was individual-level survey data, would have been included in the analyses, but in terms of the number of municipality-level units, 30 was still adequate for conducting statistical analysis. Other data concerning municipalities, such as economic characteristics and the occurrence of local referendums, were obtained from official statistics provided by Statistics Finland and the Ministry of Justice.

The hierarchical data structure in Article 3, in which individuals are nested in political units and are more similar with the individuals in their unit than those in other units, presents many opportunities for quantitative research in both methodological traditions (Snijders & Bosker, 2012). In statistical analyses, I use multilevel modeling techniques that have become a standard approach to these types of datasets (Hox, 2002, 5), with the advantage of taking into account the influence of variables at any levels of the data hierarchy (Aguinis et al., 2013). Multilevel modeling offers a solution to the problem of cross-level inference common in comparative and behavioral research. Researchers in the comparative tradition have been warned not to fall into ecological fallacy and assume properties of political units to apply to individuals within them, and for behavioralists the opposite danger has been to assume individual characteristics to define whole countries and other collectivities (Luke, 2004; Peters, 2013).



## 5. Main results by articles

### 5.1 Political trust and support for democratic innovations (Article 1)

Article 1 of this dissertation studies citizens' attitudes toward democratic innovations in Southwestern Finland, and asks specifically, whether democratic innovations could potentially mobilize people with low levels of political trust. The study is conducted in a context where the region discusses the possibility of a municipal merger between a large city and 13 smaller municipalities. The research was inspired by the broader question on the ways to restore legitimacy after a large-scale administrative reform. Citizens in the Turku region were asked about their attitudes toward using 10 types of democratic innovations in a future merger municipality. These innovations were: Focus groups, citizens' initiatives, town hall meetings, referendum motions, local area councils, surveys on municipality homepage, feedback form on municipality homepage, commenting local council agenda via Internet, surveys via phone or email, and advisory referendums.

The results indicate that the introduction of democratic innovations is more likely to mobilize people who already trust the government and politicians, at least when these participation possibilities are still hypothetical (i.e. not actually occurring). Higher political trust explains support for both offline and online democratic innovations. It is, however, possible that democratic innovations alleviate other inequalities in political participation. The results of the article show that face-to-face innovations (such as focus groups, citizens' initiatives, town hall meetings, referendum motions, and local area councils) should be used, if the aim is to reach the voice of the lower educated citizens, as well as those who do not strongly identify with a political party. Face-to-face innovations are also more attractive to those who do not identify themselves strongly with a political party, whereas online innovations seem to attract more people with a partisan identity. In the specific question of municipal mergers, face-to-face mechanisms may also be more successful in attracting those who see the potential merger in negative light. On the other hand, online mechanisms such as internet surveys and online feedback forms attract younger generations, while age is not significant in explaining attitudes toward face-to-face participation.

### 5.2 Occurrence of 'soft' forms of direct democracy (Article 2)

Article 2 of this dissertation studies the factors explaining the use of soft forms of direct democracy, i.e. referendum motions and non-binding government-initiated referendums at the local level in Finland. The article is specifically interested in system-level features in explaining the occurrence of these democratic innovations, because earlier research has mainly focused on strategic motives. In soft forms of direct democracy, citizens are not political veto-players as they are in full-scale initiatives and binding referendums. Instead, they provide policy proposals and advice for representative decisions-makers. The article distinguishes four types of system-level factors that can be assumed to affect the likelihood of local referendum motions and government-initiated referendums: socio-structural factors, party system features, level of political support and learning from other jurisdictions. The results show that low political support (measured as electoral turnout) explains the occurrence of bottom-up referendum motions in Finnish municipalities. There is positive but weakly significant evidence on the learning effect as well, because neighbor municipalities' experiences of referendum motions seem to increase the use of these instruments.

In terms of government-initiated referendums – that most often deal with municipal mergers – they are more likely to occur in smaller municipalities whose neighbors have consulted their inhabitants in a

similar way.<sup>15</sup> A larger proportion of Social Democrats in local councils also explains the decisions to organize a consultative referendum, but this effect is much smaller than the effect of learning. In general, the results of Article 2 show that system-level factors are an important addition to strategic motives when explaining the occurrence of soft direct democracy, and that the use of citizen-initiated referendum motions is driven by different factors than government-initiated referendums.

### 5.3 Democratic innovations and maxi-publics (Article 3)

In Article 3 of this dissertation, I study the effects of participation possibilities on wider publics, and public perceptions of legitimacy in particular. I survey a representative sample of Finnish municipalities on the types of participation possibilities they have made available for municipal residents. By combining these data with individual-level survey data, I analyze how the number and type of participation possibilities affects evaluations of procedural fairness and outcome satisfaction – two key components of perceived legitimacy. The results indicate, first of all, that the number of participatory instruments does not have any impact on how the public perceives the legitimacy of local government. Second, the type of participatory instruments does, however, seem to matter for these evaluations. In the article I show that making more discursive participation possibilities (such as discussion events, participatory planning events, public hearings, citizen juries and user panels) available to citizens has a positive effect on procedural fairness. Purely consultative forms of participation that aggregate the opinions of isolated individuals (surveys, opinion polls, individual feedback channels, interest organization consultations), however, have an opposite effect, as the results show that the number of these instruments decreases procedural fairness among the wider public.

Third, the article discusses and studies the role that citizens' awareness of participation possibilities plays in legitimacy evaluations. The results show that awareness of local politics moderates the effect of participation possibilities on procedural fairness, suggesting that highly aware citizens are more sensitive to participation possibilities and their institutional design features in their process evaluations. Fourth, in the Finnish context where citizen participation has traditionally been consultative in nature, participation possibilities do not seem to have any effect on outcome satisfaction, when it is measured as satisfaction with public services.

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<sup>15</sup> Errata: On page 66 of the article, there is one error in the sentence describing the results of table 6: Determinants of the use of government-initiated referendums in 'merger municipalities', binary logistic regression (N = 125). Contrary to the assumptions presented on pages 57 and 59, degree of urbanization seems to increase the use of government-initiated referendums, not decrease it, as written in paragraph 3 on page 66. This error concerns, however, only one word (decrease -> increase), as the description of the results is correct in the rest of the paragraph.

## 6. Conclusions

This dissertation has studied the varieties, causes and consequences of democratic innovations in Finnish local politics. Through three published articles, I have investigated the linkage between trust and public support for democratic innovations, factors explaining the occurrence of two types of innovations at the local level, and the influence of democratic innovations on perceived legitimacy among the wider public. In this introductory chapter, I have first defined key concepts such as direct citizen participation, presented a framework for analysing the institutional design features of democratic innovations, and discussed their origins and causes in real political processes. After that I discussed how direct citizen participation has been justified in recent democratic theories, and argued that participation should primarily have an instrumental value in democratic politics, in addition to its educative effects on individuals. Then, after describing the case of Finnish local democracy and methodological choices in empirical research, I presented the main results of the three articles. This final section is now devoted to discussion on the implications of the dissertation for both theory and practice of direct citizen participation, as well as possible directions for future research.

### 6.1 Reflections for the theory and practice of democratic innovations

This dissertation and the whole study of democratic innovations is part of a broader movement of “participatory democratization” (Dryzek & Dunleavy, 2009) that has spread over government and academia during the last few decades. In the reforms and research that spur from this movement, normative ideals are mixed with the messy realities of representative politics and empirical data. I have therefore found it important – through sections 2 and 3 of this introductory chapter – to shed light on these different underpinnings of participatory reforms. On the one hand, on-going policy processes often give birth to the need to design instruments for direct citizen participation, and the choices of how the public is consulted are constrained by numerous socio-cultural, economic, and political factors. On the other hand, deepening democracy with mechanisms that allow citizens’ influence in decision-making is always a normative endeavor, aimed at realizing some fundamental democratic principles, such as self-development, inclusion, common good or legitimacy. Therefore, participation practitioners should be aware of normative justifications such as the ones discussed in Section 3, and understand how different normative goals are linked to institutional design choices made at the early stages of the participatory process. This applies to researchers as well – including myself. We rarely make it explicit that studying democratic innovations is also a normative statement in itself, suggesting that citizen participation is something worth investigating and pursuing in contemporary societies.

This dissertation hopefully also serves as a reminder or eye-opener to participation practitioners on the importance of institutional design. I have continued the work of many democratic theorists (Fung, 2003; MacKenzie & Warren, 2012; Setälä, 2011; Smith, 2009) who have recently reminded us on the importance of the *form* of participatory mechanisms. The details in the design of participatory mechanisms largely determine the quality of participation and deliberation, and what kinds of outcomes and impacts we can expect from participatory processes. Therefore, in designing participatory processes, conscious decisions must be made in terms of at least three key questions: Who gets to participate, how will they interact and express their views, and how their inputs are connected to decision-making processes. Article 1 of this dissertation shows, for example, that the decision about whether to engage people in face-to-face processes or via online mechanisms has implications for who is interested in participating, and whose voice will be channelled through different participatory mechanisms. Despite differences in citizens’ process preferences, pragmatic features such as time and effort also play a crucial role in the micro-level decisions on whether to engage or not. Details in design, such as who can initiate

participatory processes, are also linked to the questions of favourable preconditions for democratic innovations. Participatory mechanisms in local political units do not emerge and develop in a vacuum, driven only by decision-makers' and civil society actors' strategic motives. In Article 2 I find that bottom-up direct democracy is fuelled by low political support, while government-initiated popular votes are influenced by demographic indicators and policy diffusion. Furthermore, the type of participation also affects how wider public perceives democratic governance. As I show in Article 3, soft participatory mechanisms do not increase satisfaction with decisions, but discursive mechanisms (participatory planning events, public hearings, citizen juries etc.) may increase the sense of procedural fairness, i.e. that the government is listening to citizens.

In the theoretical section 3.1 I discussed the self-transformation thesis of participation that sees the value of citizen participation especially in its educative effects (Pateman, 1970; Warren, 1992). In addition to the problems of scale in modern democracies, and the paradox of individual autonomy, I discussed recent empirical findings that question whether we can justify the implementation of democratic innovations only with favourable effects on participating individuals. While direct participation seems to transform individuals, these transformations depend on the type of participation, the type of individual and the wider context. Article 1 in this dissertation challenges particularly the self-enforcing logic of participatory democratic theory, i.e. the idea that participation encourages more participation. Results of Article 1 suggest that there might be a baseline level of political trust that the government and public authorities need to enjoy, in order to implement participatory reforms effectively. The risk is that if we build new participatory mechanisms, the most sceptical citizens will not come. They will not, consequently, enjoy the benefits of self-development, learning and developing positive attitudes towards the government. Therefore, in some cases, it may be worth collaborating with an independent organization that can run participatory processes credibly and in an unbiased way. In addition, attention should be paid to the framing of participatory processes, being open about the government motivations and purposes, and citizens' current attitudes to relevant government authorities. Potential scepticism could also be taken into account at the stage of participant recruitment, by mapping the baseline trust of participants, and reaching out to groups that are known to have lowest levels of trust in the jurisdiction at hand. Others have also recently concluded that the positive effects of deliberative processes on the participants may be due to the fact that they attract more trusting citizens in the first place (Boulianne, 2018a). The relationship between participation and trust thus remains complex. Instead of expecting masses of democratic citizens always to use participation possibilities with great enthusiasm, we might need to acknowledge that citizens spare their participatory efforts to issues that are of most relevance and importance, and in other matters, they should be able to trust representatives or other citizens as proxies (Warren, 2009a).

In Section 3.2 I argued for an epistemic justification of democratic innovations that sees their value in the information they produce (Estlund, 2009; Landemore, 2017; Peter, 2008). The aim was not to sketch a full-fledged theory of the epistemic benefits of democratic innovations, but to illustrate some examples on how the epistemic value of participatory outputs could be understood in democratic theory and research. In short, participatory outputs can produce different types of information to decision-making – public opinion, impact assessments, reasons, or local knowledge – and the epistemic quality of each of these is affected by the details of participant selection and mode of participation. The potential epistemic benefits of democratic innovations are not limited to the quality of participatory outputs, because they are also related to the 'external face' of participatory processes (Setälä & Smith, 2018). Ideally, good epistemic outputs from participatory processes would improve the epistemic quality of collective decisions and. Internal and external epistemic quality do not, however, always go hand in hand, as I illustrate in Section 3.2. The epistemic justification of democratic innovations also acknowledges that citizens can be compared to other types of experts in democratic systems.

The analogy to scientific expert knowledge and claims made by interest organizations and lobbies is particularly valid in terms of 'soft' participatory mechanisms that I discuss in Article 2 of this dissertation, because both non-binding participatory mechanisms, scientific expert advice and interest advocacy leave

the final collective will-formation to the minds of politicians. For participation practitioners this suggests that participatory processes should be understood as processes that always produce some kind of knowledge for decision-making. Pragmatic questions when organizing participation thus become, for example, what kind of knowledge is needed in the decision at hand, how participatory mechanisms should be designed in order to obtain this knowledge, and how the outputs of citizen participation will be integrated into planning and decisions.

Finally, in Section 3.3 I discussed the recent systemic turn in democratic theory (Boswell et al., 2016; Kuyper, 2016; Mansbridge et al., 2012), and painted a picture of democratic innovations as nodes in a broader system of democratic governance. In the systemic approach, participatory mechanisms are interesting because of their connections with representative institutions and the public sphere, not as isolated experiments on individuals. I argued specifically that democratic innovations are valuable for the *maxi-public*, i.e. citizens who do not participate in them. By observing and evaluating participatory processes that take place in their jurisdiction, citizens can make judgments on the legitimacy of democratic procedures and decisions, and get unbiased information on complex policy issues from their peers. The normative ideal of a participatory citizen has thus shifted from an active agent in all social and political arenas to a reflective and reasoning agent who makes judgments about when to participate and when to trust decision-making in other agents' hands (MacKenzie & Warren, 2012). Because of the cognitive division of labor in modern democracies, citizens no longer need to know everything about all policy issues, but they are, instead, required to make judgements on how well agents represent them in decision-making processes. Competence and representativeness of these citizen representative bodies seem to be important for trust judgements, and as Article 3 of this dissertation also shows, participation possibilities may have positive consequences on the perceived legitimacy among the wider public, but only if participatory mechanisms contain discursive elements. For practitioners, this suggests that organizing deliberative juries, planning events and discussion forums is worth the extra effort that they require – compared to surveys and feedback forms, for example. Furthermore, attention should be paid to the publicity and communication of participatory processes, so that the wider public has necessary information on who has participated, what did they come up with, and how were their proposals handled.

## 6.2 Avenues for future research

For Mansbridge (1999) and Dahl (1989, 92), the measurement of the effects of participation seemed impossible, but fortunately research on these questions has taken giant steps forward during the last few decades. Much of evidence of self-transformative effects comes from deliberative experiments. These effects could be studied in other types of participatory processes, as well, as simply as designing and distributing pre- and post-surveys to the participants. While demographic criteria are often recorded in participatory budgeting processes, for example, there is no data available on participants' attitudes before and after participation. For example, we know that knowledge increases in all types of participatory mechanisms, but is it due to the type of participation, or only the result of the information given in the beginning of the process? These kinds of questions could be studied with more comparative survey data from participants in democratic innovations.

Second, the “opinion track” has found that deliberation changes opinions and increases tolerance and empathy, but this conclusion is reached partly because we do not currently know how, for example, voting in referendums or prioritizing local projects in participatory budgeting exercises changes individuals' cognitive processes. Future research could therefore look, for example, at the individual-level effects of referendum voting in systems where the instruments are used frequently, as well as in systems where they have been introduced just recently.

Articles 1 and 3 of this dissertation also raise some questions on framing and studying public attitudes towards democratic innovations, that has been acknowledged as a challenging task by other scholars as well (Bengtsson, 2012; Font et al., 2012). We found that distrusting citizens were not willing to use their

resources to participate in hypothetical democratic innovations, most of which had not yet been used in their jurisdictions. What if they had been described the institutional design principles more thoroughly? Would they then have been willing to warrant trust in them? It seems that participation also has a self-enforcing effect on support for wider participation possibilities. When people come across a new participatory mechanism for the first time as participants and like the experience, they are likely to support that they are organized again in the future. This does not, however, necessarily entail that they feel more empowered to influence collective decisions, or even that they themselves would participate in other activities. For judgements of efficacy and future engagement, the way participatory outputs are handled and responded is likely to play a crucial role. Therefore, empirical researchers could develop new tools for studying coupling (Hendriks, 2016) of participatory mechanisms also from the perspective of the participants.

There is also a gap in empirical literature investigating the epistemic quality of participatory outputs and political decisions, as Landemore (2017) has noted. The challenge for future research is clearly to operationalize epistemic quality of participatory outputs and collective decisions in a way that acknowledges various types of epistemic qualities (new information, unbiased arguments, avoiding primary bads etc.). These questions are not empirically impossible to be studied. One could, for example, evaluate the epistemic potential of a particular democratic innovation by looking at measures taken to improve the competence of individual participants, to facilitate deliberation, and ensure the diversity of participants, for example (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2016).

One could also look more closely into the outputs that participatory processes produce. Without taking a position on how good or true they are, they can still be reflected against different substantive criteria, such as ideological tendencies or costs, coverage of diverse, factual accuracy, as researchers of direct democracy and some democratic innovation scholars have already done (Font et al., 2017; Gerber & Phillips, 2005; Lupia & Matsusaka, 2004). A few interesting pioneer studies provide examples on how this field of study might move forward. The Citizens' Initiative Review process started in Oregon combines a deliberative, representative citizens' jury to the state-wide initiative process (Gastil et al., 2018). Over several days, the jury learns about the ballot measure at hand, hears experts and advocates from both campaigns, and discusses about the consequences of yes and no alternatives. The citizens' statement produced at the end of deliberations serves as a source of information for the larger audience of eligible voters. Studies on the quality of these statements have found, first, that these outputs contain few factual inaccuracies and vague claims, as jurors had left out pieces of information that they had found misleading (Gastil et al., 2014). Second, jurors expressed wide satisfaction with the final statements across opinion enclaves, suggesting that the arguments for and against the measure were based on shared premises (ibid.). Finally, a comparison to a source of traditional expert information in ballot initiatives – the official voters' pamphlet crafted by the secretary of state's office – reveals that the citizens' jury statements contained more elaboration of pros, cons and trade-offs of the measure, and articulation of key values related to the measure, whereas official voters' pamphlets focused more on factual background information and a description of alternative solutions (Gastil et al., 2014).

Although these results apply only to a specific type of deliberative citizen jury, the methodology is potentially promising for studying the epistemic quality of other types of participatory outputs. Analysis of the factual correctness, types of information and arguments provided in the final products of participation, and their comparisons to information provided by experts and advocacies, could tell us whether participation actually improves the epistemic quality of inputs into the decision-making process, and indirectly, the collective decisions as the outcomes of the system. There is a lot of variation across the units of analysis – participatory outputs – in these studies, ranging from aggregated expressions of public opinion (referendums and surveys) to longer statements containing factual information and arguments (deliberative mini-publics) and prioritized lists of public projects (participatory budgeting), which makes comparative analysis challenging. It should not discourage researchers, however, to at least identify the types of information that different participatory instruments produce and to discuss their

epistemic limitations as well as potential ways to improve their epistemic quality in the decision-making process.

In terms of the epistemic quality of collective decisions, soft participatory may seem difficult because their effects on decisions are ambiguous. However, these mechanisms can increase the epistemic quality of collective decisions indirectly, if their outputs are given due consideration by the decision-makers, and some arguments or facts are adopted from citizens' proposals even if the proposal as a whole is rejected. Therefore, public justifications by authorities for not implementing participatory proposals or implementing them partially could be studied more thoroughly, as they serve as an indicator for this kind of due consideration (Font et al., 2016).

So far, the evidence concerning the effects of democratic innovations on maxi-publics is mainly restricted to highly influential and institutionalized forms of participation, such as binding referendums, initiatives and high-profile deliberative juries. Future research could explore how less formal processes of participation are perceived by the public, and what, if any, effects they have on the wider public sphere. It is also important to conceptually differentiate between effects on perceived legitimacy at different levels and areas: participatory processes may contribute to decision acceptance or legitimacy of decisions within a particular policy area, but they may also have broader impacts on how the public perceives the functioning of democratic governance as a whole, as I show in Article 3 of this dissertation.

Finally, the institutional design features of democratic innovations seem to matter to different extents depending on whether we are interested in behavioural or institutional questions. It would therefore be interesting both theoretically and empirically to analyse, how institutional design features are linked to different consequences that are used to justify direct citizen participation. For some self-transformative effects on participants, mode of participation can be assumed to matter a great deal, such as deliberation being the pre-requisite for opinion change. On the other hand, it is worth asking that is institutional design in fact meaningless for knowledge gain, if participation teaches citizens about policy issues regardless of the mechanism. It is also an interesting empirical question, whether adequate cognitive diversity is a sufficient condition for the epistemic quality of participatory outputs and decisions – suggesting that participant recruitment is the key feature – or do we also need a deliberative mode of participation as argued by deliberative theorists. Furthermore, external features such as authority and publicity are likely to play a more important role in the instrumental effects on maxi-publics, but there might be individual differences in how people evaluate participatory mechanisms as part of decision-making. Some may be more convinced by the policy impact of a citizen jury, while others may care more about how the jury represents the population, and how did they come up with their proposals. The study of process preferences could therefore be redirected towards these kinds of research questions, instead of looking at attitudes towards hypothetical decision-making arrangements.

### 6.3 Conclusion

Democratic innovations have become a visible and permanent part of representative democracy in many countries. Although they rarely take decision-making power out of representatives' hands, they are visible in the sense that governments and public officials receive increasing amounts of input – information, values, and opinions – from groups of citizens through different channels. There is no reason to expect that the experimentation with and adoption of these democratic innovations would fade away in the near future. In the case of Finland, central government is about to introduce legislation that brings direct democracy and citizen committees to the regional level, and evaluations of the national-level agenda initiative institution adopted just in 2012 have been fairly positive. The growth of participatory governance has, however, left real-world jurisdictions perplexed over the qualities, causes and consequences of participation. What can we achieve with increased participation, how exactly does it improve democracy? What kind of participation should we organize?

## DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS IN FINNISH LOCAL POLITICS

Amidst the enthusiasm about increasing participation, I have found it important to pause for a moment and study the varieties, causes and consequences of democratic innovations. In order to design better decision-making processes and participatory mechanisms, one must understand the principles of institutional design and their normative justifications. In addition to self-transformative effects, we should acknowledge the role of direct citizen participation in producing collective knowledge and helping the wider public to form opinions on policies and to judge the trustworthiness of their governments. Thus, while different rationalities co-exist for engaging the public, I wish to have reminded the reader on the essentially instrumental function of participation. It is time for practitioners to start paying more attention to the information that comes out from participatory processes, and not just measure the satisfaction of participants. These outcomes can provide valuable knowledge for the decision-making process – a process that ultimately is a collective effort to seek best solutions to common problems. It is also time to pay more attention to the publicity of participatory processes and make citizens in the maxi-public aware of how a smaller group of citizens was consulted, who they were, and what exactly did they say. Only in this way can participatory mechanisms enhance and deepen democracy.

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## DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS IN FINNISH LOCAL POLITICS

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*Annales Universitatis Turkuensis*



**UNIVERSITY  
OF TURKU**

ISBN 978-951-29-7436-8 (PRINT)

ISBN 978-951-29-7437-5 (PDF)

ISSN 0082-6987 (Print) ISSN 2343-3191 (Online)