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THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRATIC ATTITUDES AND CIVIC VIRTUES IN A DELIBERATIVE MINI-PUBLIC

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Introduction

In many countries, including Finland, municipalities have been on the front-line of adopting democratic innovations, such as participatory budgeting, citizens' initiatives, and various forms of e-democracy. In recent years, a few cities have also experimented with deliberative mini-publics (DMPs), in which a randomly selected group of citizens receives briefing materials, hears experts, discusses in moderated small groups, and crafts proposals for decision-makers. The recently organised DMPs in Finnish municipalities include the *Turku deliberates* citizens' panel, in which city residents had a chance to have their say on urban planning in the city centre. What made *Turku deliberates* an interesting case was that the participants were not only lay citizens but also included city council members. Following [Harris et al. \(2023\)](#), we call DMPs that include politicians (elected officials) along with lay citizens (non-elected residents) mixed-member deliberative forums.

Including politicians in a mini-public can increase the political impact of citizen engagement if the politicians become advocates of the citizens' proposals after the deliberative event ([Setälä, 2017](#)). Politicians may also share their knowledge during a discussion ([Harris et al., 2023](#)) and help discussion groups prepare realistic proposals with a better chance of impacting decision-making. Furthermore, the participation of politicians may increase their trust in deliberative processes ([Harris et al., 2023](#)). Citizens, for their part, may gain trust in political institutions, and their external political efficacy can be enforced when they interact directly with elected officials ([Harris et al., 2023](#); [Setälä, 2017](#)). Yet, there are no controlled experiments on the effects of involving politicians in mini-publics.

In this chapter, we study the development of democratic attitudes and civic virtues in a DMP. By democratic attitudes, we refer to support for different forms of democratic participation, such as taking part in a DMP, giving feedback to public service providers, or voting in a local referendum. By civic virtues, we refer to important skills for political participation, such as political knowledge, political efficacy, political trust, and preparedness for collective action (Grönlund et al., 2010). We contribute to the existing literature by introducing results from a controlled experiment in which citizens were randomly assigned into *Citizens only* or *Mixed* discussion groups, enabling to draw conclusions on the impacts of mixed-member deliberation. Our results show that among all participants, support for deliberative democracy, user democracy, and external political efficacy increased. Internal political efficacy increased when the item was formulated to concern local democracy. An important conclusion from including politicians in DMPs is that we did not see a more positive development of civic virtues in the groups with only citizen participants. Therefore, we can conclude that from a civic virtue perspective, the involvement of politicians in a mini-public has no negative impact.

In the next section, we discuss the potential opportunities and challenges of involving politicians in deliberations together with citizens. After that, we introduce the *Turku deliberates* mini-public, our research questions, and measures. The results section presents the main findings and answers the research questions. In the conclusions, we summarise the main findings and discuss the results in the light of previous research. In the final part, we discuss the implications of our research for practice and policy and offer some suggestions for the organisers of DMPs.

Literature on mixed-member mini-publics

In recent years, theorists have put forward novel institutional designs for coupling arenas of citizen deliberation with representative institutions (Hendriks, 2016). One such proposed method is to invite politicians into mini-public discussions. Scholars argue that the involvement of politicians can enhance their commitment to take up mini-public recommendations in legislative work (Setälä, 2017). Mixed-member deliberation can also mitigate the distance between professional politicians and lay citizens because it enables an exchange of views, learning from one another, and understanding each other's concerns. Especially in light of the contemporary distrust of politics and politicians, deliberation together with politicians could restore citizens' perceived legitimacy of democratic politics (Vandamme et al., 2018, p. 391).

An apparent drawback of including politicians in mini-public deliberations is that they can dominate discussions because, compared to citizens, they have superior experience and skills in political argumentation (Harris et al.,

2023) and knowledge of the topics. Domination can take place in the form of politicians talking more, but also, what politicians say may be regarded as more meaningful if they are perceived to be more experienced in political decision-making and have superior knowledge about the issue at hand (Strandberg et al., 2021).

Some scholars have warned about the possibility that the involvement of politicians in deliberative discussions may bring parliamentary logic into deliberative discussions (Farrell et al., 2018; Flinders et al., 2016). This could mean that instead of following the requirements of deliberation, politicians use similar rhetorical strategies and tactics that characterise parliamentary talk, which is influenced by a strong awareness of acting in front of several audiences. Therefore, politicians often engage in “confrontational dialogue,” which combines party competition and public exhibition (e.g., Ilie, 2003). Rather than engaging with other politicians in a truth-tracking process, politicians may use abusive language and insulting behaviour to question their opponents’ credibility and moral profile (Ilie, 2016, p. 138).

However, it would be misleading to depict the nature of parliamentary talk as exclusively adversarial (Bächtiger, 2014). In many countries, members of parliament also participate in the meetings of special committees that are not open for the public. Out of the public eye, members of parliament are free to express their preferences, search for common interests, and even change their minds after hearing good arguments (Chambers, 2004, p. 399). Under such conditions, “mutual consultation, systematic deliberation and joint discursive undertaking” can become the guiding logic of parliamentary talk (Ilie, 2003, p. 73). If mixed-member deliberation gave rise to this type of communication, discourse quality would not be weakened despite the presence of politicians.

When it comes to the politicians’ domination of discussions, which could influence the development of civic virtues, the evidence is mixed, with some studies observing domination by politicians and others not (Farrell et al., 2020; Grönlund et al., 2022; Harris et al., 2023; Strandberg & Berg, 2020; Strandberg et al., 2021). Our previous study indicates that the politicians who took part in the *Turku deliberates* mini-public were indeed able to adopt a deliberative stance (Grönlund et al., 2022), that is, to see one another “as equals engaged in the mutual exchange of reasons oriented as if to reaching a shared practical judgement” (Owen & Smith, 2015, p. 228). Our analysis of citizens’ survey responses indicated that the involvement of politicians did not affect the citizens’ subjective evaluations of discussion dynamics, inclusiveness of discussions, or their overall assessments of the mini-public. Furthermore, 77 per cent of the citizen participants in the Mixed groups agreed with the statement, “The presence of local councillors in the small group helped me understand the topic at hand,” showing that the politicians’ involvement may affect how citizens process and obtain new knowledge.

Participation in DMPs has been found to shape participants' attitudes towards political institutions and processes (Theuwis et al., 2024). Regarding the development of civic virtues, political knowledge generally increases in DMPs (Grönlund et al., 2010, 2020; Luskin et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the results on other civic virtues are somewhat mixed. For example, Grönlund et al. (2010) observed that participants' political trust increased, whereas political efficacy did not. Studies on the development of civic virtues in mixed-member deliberation are still rare, with few important exceptions. Strandberg et al. (2021) studied deliberations in mixed-member groups but without comparisons to Citizens only groups. They did not observe that political trust or political efficacy would increase due to deliberation. Flinders et al. (2016) had both mixed-member and Citizens only groups, albeit assignment to the groups was not random. They did not observe differences in the development of political efficacy between the two types of groups.

To summarise existing literature, evidence on the development of democratic attitudes and civic virtues in deliberation is mixed. Moreover, while politicians can sometimes dominate the discussions in mixed-member deliberative forums, the evidence does not give an overly pessimistic view of the likelihood of successful mixed-member deliberation.

Research questions

We study how participation in a DMP affects political efficacy, political trust, satisfaction with local democracy, and support for deliberative democracy, user democracy, and referendums. Internal political efficacy refers to an individual's competence to take part in politics, whereas external efficacy refers to the perception that the political system is responsive to citizens' demands and actions (Campbell et al., 1954; Converse, 1972; Craig et al., 1990). Political trust measures confidence in the capacity of different political institutions to fulfil their normative expectations (Grönlund et al., 2010). As such, it is closely related to external efficacy, albeit the two concepts can be separated (Craig et al., 1990).

Since theoretical literature and empirical evidence on mixed-member deliberation do not provide an unambiguous basis for hypothesising, we pose research questions rather than hypotheses. Firstly, we will explore how participants' civic virtues and democracy attitudes develop due to deliberation. To be more specific, we ask *whether the support of deliberative democracy and civic virtues increase due to deliberation (RQ1)*. Since we have already established that the participants' experiences of the mini-public were positive overall (Grönlund et al., 2022) and that they learned about the topic (Grönlund et al., 2020), there is a basis for assuming that support for deliberative democracy increases during deliberation. Trust in political institutions can also increase if the participants' confidence in the overall democratic system is strengthened due to participation. Parallel claims may apply to

political efficacy. Internal and external political efficacy may increase if the participants gain confidence in their ability to participate and impact politics.

Our second question concerns the differences between the two treatment conditions. With respect to these differences, we ask whether support for deliberative democracy and civic virtues increase more in Citizens only groups compared to Mixed groups (RQ2). When politicians are involved in a DMP, it is possible that they abandon their role as elected representatives and instead engage in deliberations as “one of the citizens.” In other words, politicians can disengage from the familiar norms and practices of parliamentary talk and restrain from using the event as a platform for party politics. If this is the case, the involvement of politicians in deliberation can make citizens think more highly of deliberative democracy. A positive development in political trust can occur if participants learn to know representatives and realise their genuine interest in citizens’ opinions. A similar effect on political efficacy may occur if politicians share their knowledge on issue-specific details and ongoing political processes, thus increasing citizens’ belief in their ability for political participation.

Finally, we ask to what extent we find similar effects of the presence of politicians on local-level democratic attitudes and civic virtues (RQ3). We include questions regarding local democracy since municipal decision-making institutions are the most well-known for citizens, and municipalities decide on services that shape citizens’ everyday lives. Local governments are an important context for democratic participation because they allow citizens to have a say in decisions that are more immediate and comprehensible to individuals than state-level policies (Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014). Despite their highly relevant role in shaping citizens’ lives in Finland, trust in local governments is significantly lower than trust in the national government (OECD, 2021). Therefore, the presence of local politicians may increase trust in local democracy in the eyes of citizens to a greater extent than trust towards democratic institutions in general. Also, politicians may share their knowledge on locally relevant issues, which may increase citizens’ belief in their ability to participate in decision-making concerning those issues.

Turku deliberates mini-public

We organised an online DMP together with the City of Turku on the topic of transportation policies in the city centre (Grönlund et al., 2020). The recruitment process started with an invitation mailed to a random sample of 12,000 citizens of Turku. The mini-public took place online, and participants received 50 euros as a reward for their participation. A number of 171 citizens confirmed their participation (55 per cent ($n = 94$) were male, and 45 per cent ($n = 76$) were female). The participants were not entirely representative because they were more educated than the general public (see Grönlund et al., 2020, Appendix B). Nevertheless, the group of participants was diverse, indicating that various views on transportation policies were heard in the discussions.

The mini-public was connected to the city council's work via its decision-making on a new master plan for the city centre. The participants were informed about the political impact of the mini-public. The mini-public was intended to be held face-to-face but was moved online due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The mode itself should not be a major concern since previous research shows similar changes in opinions and similarly positive participant evaluations in organised face-to-face and online deliberations (Gelauff et al., 2023; Grönlund et al., 2009; Strandberg et al., 2019). The first pre-deliberation survey (t1) consisted of questions related to opinions on transportation issues, trust, efficacy, and background variables. The second pre-deliberation survey (t2) included questions on general political knowledge, knowledge about transportation issues, and a questionnaire on a perspective-taking scale (Davis, 1980). Both surveys were conducted before the mini-public in 2020.

Before the small group discussions, briefing material about transport policy was mailed to those who have indicated their willingness to participate. The material consisted of statistics and three scenarios (Small change, Rapid change, and Big change) that varied in terms of how radically they altered the city's transport policies towards the goal of carbon-neutrality. Central topics were the restrictions on private cars in the city centre, the infrastructure for cycling and walking, and public transportation. The briefing materials also included written rules for deliberative discussion.

The online event took place in May 2020. In the event, the participants were randomly assigned into 21 small groups consisting of 5–11 citizens per group. Of the groups, 10 were *Citizens only* groups ($n = 87$), and 11 were *Mixed* groups ($n = 84$). Because of last-minute dropouts, we did not have complete control over the number of participants within the small groups. To form the *Mixed* groups, we followed roughly the procedures used by the Irish Constitutional Convention (Farrell et al., 2020): political parties were represented in proportion to their share of seats in the city council.¹ Each party decided which of its councillors participated, and in most cases, councillors volunteered to participate based on their interest in traffic and urban planning (Grönlund et al., 2022). Two councillors representing different parties were assigned to each *Mixed* group, except for one group that included only one politician. After the discussions, the citizen participants completed a post-deliberation survey (t3), which repeated most items in t1 and the knowledge questions in t2. See Grönlund et al. (2020, 2022) for a more detailed description of the *Turku deliberates* process.

Measures

Table 10.1 shows the items in the sum variables used to measure *Support for deliberative democracy*, *Political trust*, and *External and Internal political efficacy*.² The scale for political trust is 0–10, whereas all other items are measured with a four-point Likert scale. The table demonstrates that *Support for deliberative*

TABLE 10.1 The Sum Variables and Their Components

	<i>Support for deliberative democracy^a</i>	<i>Trust in political institutions^b</i>	<i>External political efficacy^a</i>	<i>Internal political efficacy^a</i>
Items	Representative democracy should be supported by political debates for ordinary citizens. Personally, I would like to take part in political debates for citizens.	Political parties Parliament Finnish government Politicians	By voting, ordinary people can influence political decision- making. MPs are rapidly distancing themselves from the problems of ordinary people (R). I have no say in what the government and parliament decide (R). Parties are only interested in people's votes, not their opinions (R).	Sometimes politics seems so complicated that I don't really understand what's going on. I am confident in my own ability to participate in politics.
Cronbach's alpha	t1=0.741; t3=0.595	t1=0.932; t3=0.913	t1=0.855; t3=0.825	t1=0.458; t3=0.442

^a Question: What do you think of the following statements? Four-point scale from Disagree completely to Agree completely.

^b Question: How much do you trust the following actors? Tell your opinion on a scale from zero to ten, where zero means "I do not trust at all" and ten "I trust completely".

democracy shows satisfactory internal consistency, measured with Cronbach's alpha, at t1, whereas internal consistency at t3 is clearly lower. *External political efficacy* and *Trust in political institutions* have satisfactory internal consistency both at t1 and t3. *Internal political efficacy* does not show satisfactory consistency at t1 or t3, and we therefore analyse items of internal efficacy separately.

For measures concerning local democracy, we created a sum variable called *Satisfaction with local representative democracy*, which taps into the respondents' attitudes towards fairness and responsiveness of current representative democracy in the City of Turku. Because of low internal consistency,

TABLE 10.2 The Variables Concerning Local Democracy and Their Components

	<i>Satisfaction with local representative democracy^a</i>	<i>Support for user democracy^a</i>	<i>Support for referendums^a</i>	<i>Trust in local political institutions^b</i>	<i>Local (internal) political efficacy^a</i>
Items	Decision-making in the City of Turku is fair and treats all residents equally.	Residents who use public services should have more say in the decision-making related to public services in the City of Turku.	A local referendum should be held when decisions are made on the most important political issues in the City of Turku.	City of Turku civil servants	I am familiar with urban planning and land use in the City of Turku.
	Citizens' opinions are taken into account in the City of Turku.			Turku City Council	
Cronbach's alpha	t1=0.833; t3=0.810			t1=0.951; t3=0.863	

^a Question: What do you think of the following statements? Four-point scale from Disagree completely to Agree completely.

^b Question: How much do you trust the following actors? Tell your opinion on a scale from zero to ten, where zero means "I do not trust at all" and ten "I trust completely".

we measured *Support for user democracy* and *Support for referendums* with separate items. *Trust in local political institutions* is measured on a scale from 0 to 10 and consists of trust towards the city council and local civil servants. Furthermore, we included a measure for *Internal political efficacy at the local level, i.e., the respondents' assessment of how well they know the topic of deliberations, which was specified as land use and urban planning in Turku*. Table 10.2 shows the measures and sum variables concerning local democracy.

Results

Table 10.3 shows the results on support for deliberative democracy, trust in political institutions, external political efficacy, and the two items measuring internal political efficacy. The table compares all participants, participants in

TABLE 10.3 The Effects of Deliberation on Democratic Attitudes and Civic Virtues (Means and Standard Deviations in All Groups)

		Before (t1)	After (t3)	Difference t3–t1 (p) ^a	N
<i>Support for deliberative democracy</i>	All	3.024 (0.627)	3.491 (0.507)	0.467 (<0.001)	165
	Citizens only	3.010 (0.643)	3.500 (0.494)	0.49 (<0.001)	85
	Mixed	3.043 (0.612)	3.481 (0.524)	0.438 (<0.001)	80
	Difference treatment conditions (p)	–0.033 (0.742)	0.019 (0.758)		
<i>Trust in political institutions</i>	All	6.355 (1.700)	6.429 (1.584)	0.074 (0.331)	165
	Citizens only	6.378 (1.663)	6.467 (1.580)	0.089 (0.380)	84
	Mixed	6.330 (1.747)	6.390 (1.596)	0.059 (0.611)	81
	Difference treatment conditions (p)	0.220 (0.933)	0.087 (0.724)		
<i>External political efficacy</i>	All	2.723 (0.273)	2.787 (0.252)	0.064 (0.003)	169
	Citizens only	2.746 (0.249)	2.755 (0.226)	0.009 (0.754)	85
	Mixed	2.699 (0.295)	2.819 (0.274)	0.12 (<0.001)	84
	Difference treatment conditions (p)	0.047 (0.263)	–0.064 (0.102)		
<i>Internal political efficacy (politics seems so complicated)</i>	All	2.790 (0.852)	2.685 (0.710)	–0.105 (0.052)	162
	Citizens only	2.659 (0.820)	2.646 (0.822)	–0.013 (0.854)	82
	Mixed	2.925 (0.868)	2.725 (0.779)	–0.2 (0.020)	80
	Difference treatment conditions (p)	–0.266 (0.038)	–0.079 (0.452)		
<i>Internal political efficacy (confidence in own ability)</i>	All	3.224 (0.711)	3.237 (0.658)	0.013 (0.806)	152
	Citizens only	3.143 (0.702)	3.156 (0.650)	0.013 (0.877)	77
	Mixed	3.307 (0.716)	3.320 (0.661)	0.013 (0.843)	75
	Difference treatment conditions (p)	–0.164 (0.120)	–0.164 (0.127)		

^a t-tests, two-sided *p*.

Citizens only and in Mixed groups before (t1) and after (t3) deliberation. Values in bold remain statistically significant after considering multiple comparisons. “Don’t know” answers are removed from analyses to capture genuine opinions without the influence of no opinion. Measures were coded so that an increase in the variable’s value indicates increased agreement with the statement, apart from reversed coded variables.

When answering our first research question, we look at the rows with all participants for each variable. Our analysis shows that support for deliberative democracy increased among all the participants. This finding is based on the statistically significant differences in mean values between the two-time points, shown in the column “Difference” in [Table 10.3](#). Regarding trust in political institutions, political trust is relatively high among all the participants, and there is a slight increase in political trust due to taking part in deliberation, but the difference is not statistically significant. External political efficacy, in turn, increased among all participants.

In terms of our second research question, we see that the presence of politicians did not influence the participants’ views on deliberative democracy in comparison to groups in which politicians were not present. In both groups, support for deliberative democracy increased, and the difference between the treatment conditions is not statistically significant at t3. With respect to the participants’ sense of external efficacy, i.e., responsiveness of the political system, we see a statistically significant increase during deliberation in *Mixed* groups but not in *Citizens only* groups. However, the difference between the two treatment groups is not statistically significant at t3. Regarding political trust and the two separate measures of internal political efficacy, none of the differences between the *Citizens only* groups and *Mixed* groups are statistically significant. In other words, the treatment did not produce differences in these civic virtues.

Finally, we turn to answer our third research question concerning local democracy. [Table 10.4](#) shows that participation in deliberation increased satisfaction with fairness and responsiveness of current representative decision-making among the participants of all groups. The citizens’ desire for more user democracy, i.e., wider engagement of residents in decision-making concerning public services, increased among all the participants. This change proved to be statistically significant when considering multiple comparisons. There was no significant statistical change in support for local referendums. Additionally, we did not find any effect on local political trust, which aligns with the findings concerning general political trust.

However, deliberation on traffic planning increased the participants’ sense of competence in urban planning and land-use matters. The increase is statistically significant among all participants. This finding indicates that participation in deliberation on traffic and urban planning positively affects citizens’ internal political efficacy on local politics but not general internal political

TABLE 10.4 The Effects of Deliberation on Local Democratic Attitudes and Civic Virtues (Means and Standard Deviations in All Groups)

		<i>Before (t1)</i>	<i>After (t3)</i>	<i>Difference t3–t1 (p)^a</i>	<i>N</i>
<i>Satisfaction with local representative democracy</i>	All	2.623 (0.704)	2.727 (0.634)	0.105 (0.025)	110
	Citizens only	2.651 (0.718)	2.642 (0.675)	0.009 (0.875)	53
	Mixed	2.597 (0.697)	2.807 (0.588)	0.211 (0.003)	57
	Difference treatment conditions (p)	–0.005 (0.966)	0.183 (0.086)		
<i>Support for user democracy</i>	All	3.059 (0.653)	3.224 (0.578)	0.164 (0.001)	152
	Citizens only	3.054 (0.700)	3.284 (0.537)	0.230 (0.003)	74
	Mixed	3.064 (0.610)	3.167 (0.612)	0.103 (0.117)	78
	Difference treatment conditions (p)	–0.024 (0.821)	0.070 (0.450)		
<i>Support for referendums</i>	All	2.556 (0.946)	2.648 (0.975)	0.093 (0.079)	162
	Citizens only	2.655 (0.938)	2.667 (0.923)	0.012 (0.859)	84
	Mixed	2.449 (0.949)	2.628 (1.033)	0.179 (0.030)	78
	Difference treatment conditions (p)	0.195 (0.185)	0.012 (0.937)		
<i>Trust in local political institutions</i>	All	6.355 (1.894)	6.536 (1.530)	0.181 (0.082)	166
	Citizens only	6.340 (2.015)	6.512 (1.648)	0.172 (0.241)	84
	Mixed	6.372 (1.774)	6.561 (1.409)	0.189 (0.203)	82
	Difference treatment conditions (p)	–0.028 (0.923)	–0.061 (0.796)		
<i>Local (internal) political efficacy</i>	All	2.346 (0.816)	2.590 (0.952)	0.244 (<0.001)	156
	Citizens only	2.312 (0.765)	2.520 (0.771)	0.208 (0.004)	77
	Mixed	2.380 (0.867)	2.659 (0.732)	0.278 (0.003)	79
	Difference treatment conditions (p)	0.062 (0.626)	0.140 (0.236)		

^a t-tests, two-sided *p*.

efficacy. Notably, the presence of politicians does not seem to have an effect on the internal political efficacy in either context. Furthermore, at t3, none of the differences between *Citizens only* and *Mixed* groups are statistically significant with regard to items of local democracy.

Conclusion

We observed that *Support for deliberative democracy*, operationalised as engaging citizens to discuss political issues, increased during deliberation among all the participants. External political efficacy, that is, belief in citizens' influence on political decisions, increased among all participants and in the *Mixed* groups. A similar development, however, was not observed in the *Citizens only* groups. Citizens' confidence in their own ability to participate in politics and political trust did not increase during deliberation. Regarding measures of local democracy, support for user democracy, and internal political efficacy increased among all the participants. Support for user democracy may reflect the participants' positive experience of the *Turku deliberates* mini-public and is in line with the increased support for deliberative democracy. Increased internal political efficacy shows that the participants' sense of being able to influence local politics increased due to participation. What is highly relevant from the point of this chapter is that none of the differences between *Citizens only* and *Mixed* groups were statistically significant at t3. In other words, the presence of politicians in deliberations did not influence the development of democracy attitudes or civic virtues differently in comparison to deliberations among citizens.

Our results clearly show that the presence of politicians in deliberations does not negatively influence the development of civic virtues among participating citizens. This finding is in line with our earlier observation, which shows that the presence of politicians did not influence opinion transformations or learning (Grönlund et al., 2020) and that it did not influence the participants' experiences of the mini-public (Grönlund et al., 2022). Our observation aligns with a previous study, conducted without a random allocation into *Citizens only* and *Mixed* groups, that did not observe significant differences in internal or external efficacy between *Citizens only* or *Mixed* groups (Flinders et al., 2016).

However, it is noteworthy that the participating politicians were local-level actors who are less professional or prominent in the news media than national-level politicians. It may be that local councillors were not considered that different from the participating citizens, which may explain why discussions went as smoothly as observed. Additionally, since *Turku deliberates* was organised online, we cannot make a direct comparison with an identical mini-public organised offline. However, previous research has shown that face-to-face and online deliberations produce similar outcomes (Gelauff et al., 2023; Grönlund et al., 2009; Strandberg et al., 2019). More research is needed to establish whether similar observations would be made with state-level politicians or an offline platform.

Implications for practice and policy

As the wave of deliberative democracy continues to sweep over the Western World (OECD, 2020), it is important to investigate the impact of DMPs on civic virtues and public attitudes towards democracy. There may be implications for broader democratic reforms in the future if DMPs shape participants' political efficacy and attitudes towards democratic governance. Our research contributes to the discussion by analysing how the composition of the mini-public, namely the inclusion of politicians in deliberations, affects democracy perceptions and attitudes. The inclusion of politicians may help revitalise the support for representative democracy among participants of the mini-public, but it may also dampen the critical potential of mini-publics by decreasing the critical scrutiny of authorities (Böker, 2017).

To avoid the strategic use of DMPs, we have some suggestions for the organisers of the DMPs. Firstly, lay citizens should have an opportunity to participate in the agenda-setting of the DMPs. For example, they could be initiated through citizens' initiatives, where citizens can propose a topic for a DMP, and those initiatives that receive enough support should be implemented. Secondly, DMPs could also be transformed into permanent institutions that can assemble periodically to issue statements on public policies or other topical issues. The members of the mini-public could be selected from a larger pool of candidates or appointed for a longer term, perhaps for the whole electoral term. Thirdly, an impartial body could be appointed to design the details of the deliberative process and select the experts to maintain its integrity. Fourthly, if politicians are invited to a DMP, they should be prevented from transforming it into another platform for party politics. Therefore, the organisers of the DMP should pay attention to preparing the politicians so that they approach the discussions with a deliberative stance. Also, the moderators of the mini-publics should pay attention to the equality of the process so that all participants can engage in deliberation on an equal footing and follow the rules of the deliberative process. Finally, to give participating politicians more freedom to be influenced by opinions and justifications that arise in the mini-public deliberations, DMP should be organised before the party publicly reveals its stance on the topic of the mini-public. Taking these issues into consideration and following good practices in terms of organising DMPs provide the basis for a successful coupling of mini-publics to policy-making.

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Disclosure statement

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

Notes

- 1 National Coalition Party (6 councillors in the mini-public), Green League (5), Social Democratic Party (4), Left Alliance (3), Finns Party (2), and Swedish People's Party (1).
- 2 We identified three democracy attitude factors with Principal Component Analysis (Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation) and two factors of political efficacy. However, we dropped two democracy attitude factors from further analysis because of low internal consistency (low Cronbach's alpha values). We also dropped one item (support for referendums) from the *Support for deliberative democracy* sum variable since it made the internal consistency of the sum variable lower. Finally, the two items of internal political efficacy were analysed separately because of low internal consistency.

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