

After the Merger: Do Citizens Want Democratic Innovations?

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Abstract

Democratic innovations are often considered to be a solution to the widespread disengagement of citizens from politics at both national and local levels of government. However, it is still not clear what forms of engagement citizens prefer and whether the innovations can help sustain popular involvement in times of political turmoil. In this study we examine whether residents consider democratic innovations to be an important way to sustain citizen engagement after a municipal merger and whether introducing new ways of involvement can help mobilise otherwise disengaged groups of citizens. The data derive from a survey with 2,000 respondents in 14 municipalities in the Turku region of Southwest Finland that discussed plans for a municipal merger to create a larger municipality. In the survey, we ask the respondents about their attitudes towards the use of various democratic innovations in the case of a municipal merger. The results suggest that citizens consider democratic innovations to be important in creating a functioning democracy after a municipal merger. However, it is unlikely that democratic innovations will mobilise people not already involved in politics, regardless of the characteristics of the previous municipality.

Introduction

Democratic innovations have been proposed as a remedy for reviving outdated representative democracies (Michels, 2011; Geissel & Newton, 2012). Involving citizens to a greater extent in political processes should help dissolve negative sentiments towards political authorities. These potential benefits become particularly valuable when municipal mergers are on the agenda since they challenge local democracy by distancing political decision-making from citizens and creating a perceived lack of popular influence on local issues.

However, this expectation is based on a number of untested assumptions. It is unclear whether citizens consider increased political participation the best way to ensure fair political decision-making and therefore also whether they are willing to become involved (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002; Bengtsson, 2012). Furthermore, we do not know what forms of involvement citizens prefer since there is a range of democratic innovations that differ from each other in terms of basic design principles (e.g. Smith, 2009; Geissel & Newton, 2012), and it is uncertain what types of democratic innovations citizens are interested in using. Additionally, it is assumed that democratic innovations can mobilise citizens who are not otherwise engaged in politics and thereby even out existing differences

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in participation (Smith, 2009: 163). However, it might be the case that it is mainly those already involved in political participation who take advantage of the new possibilities (c.f. Young, 2000).

It is therefore far from clear whether democratic innovations can help sustain a new political unit formed through a municipal merger. Moreover, interest in using democratic innovations is likely to vary depending on the characteristics of the constituent municipalities. In this article, we therefore examine the demand for democratic innovations in the context of a potential municipal merger. The study is based on a survey of 2,000 respondents in 14 municipalities in South Western Finland, one large and 13 much smaller municipalities, where plans for a municipal merger are under debate.

The article is structured as follows. In the theoretical section we discuss why democratic innovations are considered important in sustaining citizen involvement. We then present our research questions, data and variables, followed by a presentation of the empirical analyses. We conclude by discussing the main implications of the results for the prospects of deepening democracy by means of democratic innovations following a municipal merger and more generally. The results suggest that although there is demand for popular involvement through democratic innovations, there are important limitations to what they can help achieve.

Democracy and democratic innovations after a municipal merger

According to the advocates of participatory and deliberative democracy, enabling more participation helps build legitimate democratic governance (Barber, 1984; Smith, 2009; Michels, 2011; Geissel & Newton, 2012). The possibility of legitimising particular policies may seem especially attractive to representative elites, who may therefore also support their introduction (Goodin, 2008: 31). The use of democratic innovations has therefore flourished (cf. Smith, 2009). For example, direct democratic instruments such as referendums and citizens' initiatives are popular at both national and local levels of government in several countries (Donovan & Karp, 2006; Setälä & Schiller, 2012) and deliberative minipublics have been used in Germany (Geissel, 2009), the Netherlands (Michels & De Graaf, 2010; Geurtz & Wijdeven, 2010) and Spain (Font & Blanco, 2007).

Geissel (2009: 53) defines democratic innovations as 'new practices consciously and purposefully introduced in order to improve the quality of democracy, independent of whether the innovation in question has already been tried out in another system'. The term 'innovation' is therefore interpreted broadly to include all institutions that are reshaped and applied to challenges of democratic decision-making in the world today (Saward, 2000: 5). In this sense, referendums can be considered a democratic innovation when introduced to modify traditional representative decision-making even if they are by no means novel institutions as such.

This study contributes to the literature on democratic innovations by examining citizens' attitudes towards these instruments at the local level in a specific situation when faced with a municipal merger. This topic is highly salient in several European countries (Lassen & Serritzlew, 2011; Hansen, 2013), and it is controversial since residents are often reluctant to accept the new political entity as their home municipality. Democratic innovations may be particularly valuable when the status quo is under challenge, since they can help sustain popular involvement in the amalgamated municipality and thereby sustain political legitimacy (Sandberg, 2012). For this reason, it is of particular value to study whether democratic innovations can help alleviate the problems incurred when merging municipalities. The situation of a municipal merger may thus also serve as an example of any kind of difficult period, plagued by scarcity, which political units may face. It has been argued that legitimacy of authorities helps political systems not only survive through but also govern effectively during these crises (Tyler, 2006: 377). It is therefore important to study what kind of processes the public wants in these conflictive situations.

Despite the popularity of democratic innovations among many scholars, it is unclear whether they can indeed help create a functioning political unit. Critics maintain that citizens do not crave more involvement in political decision-making, which is considered a tedious matter best left to politicians and experts, but prefer a representative system that ensures that political elites are accountable (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002; Bengtsson, 2012; Bengtsson & Mattila, 2009). If most residents are uninterested in more involvement, introducing participatory innovations can hardly be expected to help create a viable political unit following a municipal merger since the ideals of democratic decision-making have consequences for the political behaviour of citizens (Bengtsson & Christensen, 2014). A central question is therefore whether citizens actually want more possibilities to be politically involved through democratic innovations when faced with the prospect of a municipal merger.

In this regard, it should be observed that citizens may prefer different kinds of participatory processes. There are significant differences between democratic innovations and their institutional designs (Smith, 2009), which range from small-scale citizen involvement mechanisms to transnational direct democracy (Newton, 2012: 5). Newton (2012: 8-9) identifies five types of democratic innovations:

1. *Voting and elections*: various electoral reforms aiming to boost electoral turnout.¹
2. *Direct democracy*: institutional innovations such as referendums and citizens' initiatives.
3. *Information, consultation and deliberation*: procedures where advice is given to decision-makers based on discussions among citizens, such as town hall meetings and deliberative forums.

4. *Co-governance*: combines elements of direct democracy and consultation, and includes direct citizen involvement in decision-making, for example through participatory budgeting and local area councils.
5. *E-democracy*: applying information and communication technology (ICTs) to increase and deepen citizen participation in political decision-making, for example through online opinion polls or discussion forums.

This classification captures important underlying theoretical and practical differences. First, democratic innovations differ in the extent to which they empower citizens (Warren, 2008: 69; Arnstein, 1969). For example, town hall meetings and feedback forms are less likely to result in significant changes in policies, whereas direct democratic instruments like referendums – even when *de jure* consultative – are harder to ignore in political decision-making. Second, democratic innovations differ in how citizens' opinions are constructed. Aggregative institutions such as referendums perceive the summed up majority of individual opinions as the 'voice of the citizens' while deliberative institutions such as mini-publics and neighbourhood councils aim to form the popular will through reflection and discussion (Warren, 2008: 69). Third, innovations vary in terms of time, energy and other resources required from participants. Online innovations are relatively easy to engage in since they are readily accessible and do not necessarily require direct interaction with others, whereas deliberative innovations are resource demanding since they require face-to-face commitment at specific times. It is important to consider these differences when examining attitudes towards democratic innovations, and therefore we also examine what sort of democratic innovations citizens prefer.

Another relevant question is what groups of citizens want to make use of democratic innovations? As Smith (2009: 163) notes, the legitimacy of democratic innovations is questionable if they reproduce existing inequalities in political participation. Groups with certain socio-demographic and attitudinal assets are overrepresented in traditional political participation (Verba *et al.*, 1995). A number of scholars expect democratic innovations to even out these inequalities by mobilising inactive groups of citizens (Newton, 2012: 11-12; Talpin, 2012: 191-93), while others argue that those possessing civic resources and capabilities are still likely to be overrepresented (cf. Smith, 2009: 14-15). Furthermore, different kinds of democratic innovations may attract different kinds of participants. For example, relatively effortless online activities are more likely to attract less resourceful citizens compared to demanding face-to-face discussions (cf. Newton, 2012).

For this reason, it is important to examine the factors that explain attitudes towards different kinds of democratic innovations in order to see which groups of citizens are more positive towards new forms of political participation. Three categories are of particular importance. The first concerns *socio-demographic*

characteristics known to promote participation (Verba *et al.*, 1995). Factors such as education, employment, gender and age have been found to influence the propensity for political participation either directly or as proxies for underlying civic resources (Norris, 2002: 90-91). If democratic innovations were to change the existing inequalities in this regard, they should attract the interest of those with fewer resources, such as the less educated, young citizens, and the unemployed.

The second category of individual level characteristics concerns *political and social involvement*, i.e. whether democratic innovations attract people who are not otherwise psychologically and/or manifestly engaged in political matters. A number of studies have found that people who find themselves at the periphery of politics and are largely disenchanting are less likely to engage in traditional political participation (Norris, 2002; Geissel, 2009: 210). If democratic innovations should change existing inequalities in this sense, they should attract the interest of those who are not otherwise politically involved.

The third category concerns *partisan values*, and whether democratic innovations can attract the attention of people who are unattached to certain political positions. Previous studies suggest that attitudes towards participation are frequently tied to certain partisan values. For example, left-leaning citizens are more likely to demand involvement in political decision-making (Bengtsson & Mattila, 2009). Additionally, the 'new politics' may be particularly relevant since both Green parties and so-called populist parties have supported direct democracy (Dalton *et al.*, 2001: 143; Beyme, 2011: 69). Therefore democratic innovations should attract the interest of those with lower levels of partisan values to change existing inequalities.

Finally, the context in which democratic innovations are imbedded is also relevant. Following a municipal merger, it is particularly pertinent to consider certain characteristics of the constituent municipalities. As Mouritzen (1999) concludes, local democracy will suffer in larger units. When a large municipality is merged with several smaller municipalities, those living in the peripheral municipalities are more affected than those living in the large municipality, which invariably becomes the political centre of the new political unit. Democratic innovations may help resolve these problems by giving residents in the peripheral areas more say, which suggests that citizens living in peripheral areas should have a greater interest in democratic innovations than citizens living in the centre. Population size of the present municipality is likely to be of particular importance, since interaction between citizens and representatives tend to be more vibrant in smaller polities, where citizens have higher internal political efficacy (Saglie & Vabo, 2009; Lassen & Serritzlew, 2011). Citizens often feel more politically competent in small jurisdictions where political discussions mainly focus on the local community (Dahl & Tufte, 1973; Denters *et al.*, 2014). Contrary to this, in a comparison of small and large municipalities prior to a municipal merger in Denmark, Larsen (2002) finds that although participation is higher in smaller municipalities, there is no difference when it comes to interest in and knowledge of local politics, nor does municipality size affect citizens' perception

of local politicians and trust in local political decisions. Nevertheless, most evidence suggests that citizens' attitudes toward democratic innovations differ depending on the population size of the current municipality.

Municipal economy is also likely to be relevant since economic difficulties may discourage people from being politically active (e.g. Rosenstone, 1982; Radcliff, 1992). Although most literature concerns voter turnout, this proposition may be extended to participation in democratic innovations, meaning that currently living in a municipality with a poorly functioning economy has a negative effect on the attitude towards democratic innovations in a merged political unit.

Finally, participatory traditions may affect citizens' attitudes towards democratic innovations. In political entities with stronger traditions of participation, democratic innovations might be attractive since it has been argued that there is a 'spill-over' effect from electoral to civic participation (Putnam, 1993).

These theoretical considerations provide a number of empirical research questions to examine.

Research design: data and variables

In the empirical part, we examine the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1: Do citizens regard the introduction of democratic innovations as important for democracy following a municipal merger?

RQ2: Are groups of citizens otherwise less engaged in politics interested in using democratic innovations following a municipal merger?

RQ3: Do contextual variables in the form of current municipal characteristics affect attitudes towards the use of democratic innovations following a municipal merger?

The data derive from a survey conducted in the Turku region in South Western Finland. In the following, we introduce the region and the data collected in more detail before presenting the central variables.

Data

The structure of Finnish local government was changed in two separate waves; the first in the 1960s and 1970s and the second between 2005 and 2011, which resulted in 320 municipalities at the beginning of 2013. Nevertheless, municipal mergers continue to be on the agenda in several Finnish regions. Our focus is on the Turku region in South Western Finland, where *Turku* is the central city with 180,000 residents surrounded by 13 smaller municipalities with populations ranging from 2,000 to 31,000 (the municipalities are listed in Appendix II together with information on key variables). The benefits of merging these municipalities have been explored repeatedly, and the issue was put on the agenda again in 2012, when a working group suggested that these 14 municipalities should be merged to a single municipal entity.

The Turku region therefore provides the opportunity to examine attitudes towards democratic innovations in an amalgamated municipality, and how attitudes are affected by individual and contextual factors. The ideal research design would make use of a ‘before and after’ design to trace causal effects over time (as was possible in Denmark following the administrative reforms 2005-2007; see Lassen & Serritzlew, 2011; Hansen, 2013), yet this is impossible since we are dealing with a potential merger. Instead, we explore whether citizens expect democratic innovations to improve democracy in a potential amalgamated municipality. Although we examine expectations and intentions rather than experience, we explore these expectations when a merger is looming in the near future rather than being a distant hypothetical scenario. Our data thereby make it possible to discern how important the respondents feel democratic innovations are in the face of a municipal merger. Furthermore, we include a richer battery of democratic innovations than what is frequently the case. In this sense, our findings may have important implications for the prospects of using different kinds of democratic innovations to sustain citizen involvement in amalgamated municipalities.

The attitudes towards democratic innovations following a municipal merger were examined in a telephone survey during autumn 2012. The data collection was carried out by *Suomen Kyselytutkimus OY*, which conducted interviews with 2000 respondents in the 14 current municipalities where plans for a municipal merger were debated. We used survey sampling with regard to the socio-demographic characteristics age and gender to ensure that the data reflected the target population.²

Variables

To examine RQ1 concerning attitudes towards the use of democratic innovations following a merger, we examine responses to a question listing statements to which the respondents could agree or disagree (*What do you think about the following statements concerning the need for popular participation and influence?*), where the answers were indicated on a five-point Likert scale (completely disagree-agree completely). Additionally, we use responses to a question probing what specific forms of involvement the respondents would be interested in using following a merger (*Please indicate how interested you would be in using each of the following forms of participation following a municipal merger*) where the answer for each activity was scored on a five-point Likert scale (not interested at all-very interested). The possible answers included both traditional activities (e.g. Voting and Contacting) and ten activities that according to the definitions offered above (Geissel, 2009; Saward, 2000; Smith, 2009) constitute democratic innovations since they are not generally part of local democracy in Finland and therefore would be purposefully introduced to improve the quality of democracy (Surveys, Town hall meetings, Vote in advisory referendum, Survey via municipal homepage, Commenting on agenda of local council, Feedback via municipal homepage, Sign or author initiative for municipal referendum, Focus groups, Citizens’ initiative, Local area council). Whereas previous re-

search has often examined attitudes towards participation more generally (cf. Bengtsson, 2012), this question makes it possible to examine attitudes towards involvement in a wide range of activities.

The dependent variables for RQ2 and RQ3 concern attitudes towards the use of democratic innovations. As mentioned, it is necessary to consider the differences between democratic innovations. Previous contributions distinguish between democratic innovations based on their theoretical attributes (Newton, 2012) or examine preferences for general participation or types of democratic innovations (Dalton *et al.*, 2001; Bowler *et al.*, 2007; Fatke & Freitag, 2013). By contrast, we study differences from the respondents' point of view by examining the dimensionality of their preferences for democratic innovations. We used exploratory factor analysis to examine the dimensionality of the answers to the abovementioned question concerning attitudes towards using ten democratic innovations after a merger. Table 1 and 2 display two alternative solutions to give a better impression of the dimensionality.³

Table 1. Factor analysis of interest in using democratic innovations following a municipal merger, two-dimensional solution

Manifest variable	Two-dimensional solution - components	
	1	2
Focus groups	.798	.250
Citizens' initiative	.766	.311
Town hall meetings	.815	.218
Initiative for local advisory referendum	.741	.294
Local area council	.730	.260
Survey on municipal homepage	.137	.916
Feedback form on municipal homepage	.249	.878
Commenting on local council agenda via Internet	.470	.652
Survey via phone or mail	.352	.657
Advisory referendum	.317	.432
Eigenvalue	5.309	1.199
% Variance explained	53.1	12.0
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.883	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approx. Chi-Square (df)	11247.745(45)***	

Note: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation. *** P < 0.001. See Table 3 for question phrasing.

Table 2. Factor analysis of interest in using democratic innovations following a municipal merger, three-dimensional solution

Manifest variable	Three-dimensional solution - components		
	1	2	3
Focus groups	.802	.233	.112
Citizens' initiative	.789	.319	.024
Town hall meetings	.785	.153	.281
Initiative for local advisory referendum	.758	.294	.052
Local area council	.679	.166	.390
Survey on municipal homepage	.146	.898	.190
Feedback form on municipal homepage	.276	.886	.094
Commenting on local council agenda via Internet	.496	.661	.063
Survey via phone or mail	.313	.575	.394
Advisory referendum	.165	.198	.912
Eigenvalue	5.309	1.199	.853
% Variance explained	53.1	12.0	8.5
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.883		
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approx. Chi-Square (df)	11247.745(45)***		

Note: See Table 1.

The results clearly show that the respondents distinguish different types of democratic innovations. Furthermore, the preferences partly reflect the theoretical dimensions outlined above, although the distinctions are less finely grained than Newton's typology (2012). The Kaiser criterion suggests that a two-factor solution captures the variation in preferences for democratic innovations, where the two dimensions correspond to offline and online democratic innovations. In the following, we refer to the first dimension as *Consultation and co-governance* since it involves more demanding activities from the categories of *information, consultation and deliberation* and *co-governance* of Newton (2012). We refer to the second dimension as *E-democracy* since it involves digital activities whereby residents communicate their preferences to decision-makers. However, support for advisory referendums does not load strongly onto either dimension. There are strong theoretical reasons to expect a separate dimension tapping support for direct democracy, and of all innovations included it empowers citizens the most

(Donovan & Karp, 2006; Bengtsson & Mattila, 2009; Newton, 2012). Furthermore, the three-dimensional model suggests that this manifest indicator loads strongly onto a separate third dimension, while preserving the previous two dimensions. Considering that the three-dimensional model also provides a well-ordered solution, we use it to create the dependent variables. This is also warranted by the public support for advisory referendums (more on this below). We refer to this dimension as *Referendum* to acknowledge that advisory referendums are not the only type of direct democracy.

To measure attitudes toward each dimension, we create three indexes based on the manifest variables loading onto each dimension with a loading above 0.6.⁴ The index of Consultation and co-governance includes 'Focus groups', 'Citizens' initiative', 'Town hall meetings', 'Initiative for local advisory referendum' and 'Local area council' (Cronbach's alpha = 0.876). The index of E-democracy includes 'Survey on municipal homepage', 'Feedback form on municipal homepage' and 'Commenting on local council agenda' (Cronbach's alpha = 0.874). The measure for Referendum includes the single question on advisory referendums.

For RQ2 and RQ3, we use multilevel regression analysis to examine what factors explain the variation in support for these three kinds of democratic innovations.⁵ For RQ2, we include a number of individual level variables to explore whether democratic innovations attract citizens not otherwise engaged in politics. All variables at the individual level have been coded to vary between 0-1 and the relevant explanatory variables have been centred around the grand mean. As shown in Appendix I, all VIF-scores are well below 2.0, which indicates that there is no need to worry about multicollinearity despite some of the individual level variables measuring similar aspects.

To examine whether groups of citizens with fewer socio-economic resources are interested in using democratic innovations, we include the following *socio-demographic characteristics* known to influence the propensity to be politically active (Verba *et al.* 1995): age, gender, education, and unemployment. For examining *political and social involvement*, we include variables that probe the attachment of the respondent to the political and social spheres: 'Political interest', 'Political trust', 'Previous political participation', 'Social trust', and 'Satisfaction with the current possibilities of participation'. These measures make it possible to see whether people who are not already involved in political matters and society are interested in using democratic innovations. Furthermore, political trust allows us to probe whether the democratic innovations attract residents with sceptical attitudes to the political system. The *partisan values* variables probe the political orientation of the respondents. Hence, we examine how 'Party identification', 'Left-right ideology', 'Support for the Green party', 'Support for populist party' (The True Finns; *Perussuomalaiset* in Finnish), and a variable that probes the attitude of the respondents towards the potential merger. These variables make it possible to determine whether respondents who are not already strongly attached to a particular political point of view are interested in using democratic innovations.

In order to examine the effect of the context, we include four municipality level variables. We include population size since a number of contributions argue that this is important (Larsen, 2002; Saglie & Vabo, 2009; Lassen & Serritzlew, 2011).⁶ Additionally, we include a dichotomous measure to distinguish between living in Turku and the peripheral municipalities. This simplistic distinction has the advantage that we boost the number of units at the group level by distinguishing five residential areas in Turku from living in the remaining 13 municipalities.⁷ Furthermore, we examine the impact of the current municipal economy (Rosenstone, 1982; Radcliff, 1992) by including tax income per resident in Euros. To examine the impact of participatory traditions, voter turnout at the municipal level in the previous local elections is included. Information on questions and coding is given in Appendix I together with descriptive statistics, while the distribution of the variables at the municipal level is shown in Appendix II.

Empirical analysis

To examine RQ1 and attitudes towards democratic innovations, in Figure 1 we display opinions on the use of different options for citizen involvement.

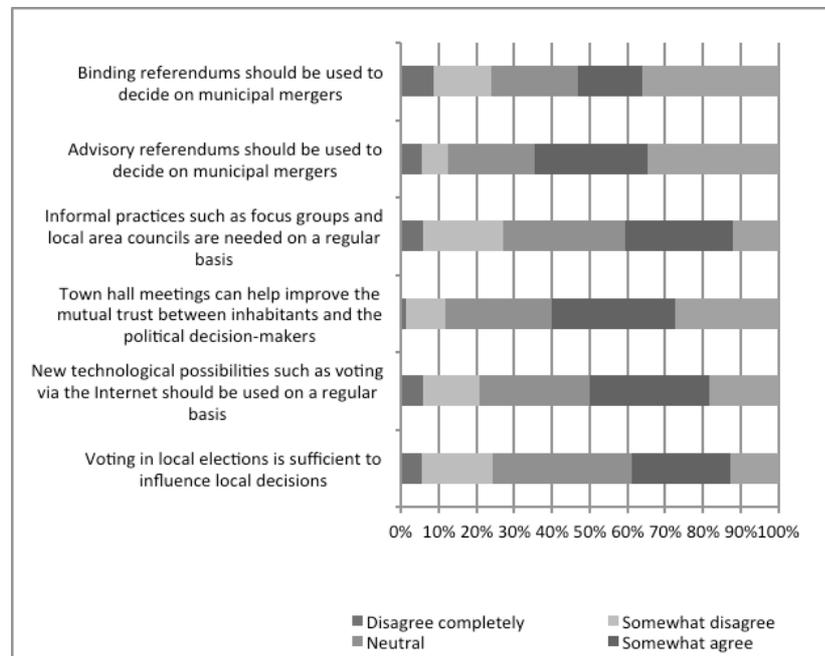


Figure 1. Attitudes towards democratic innovations following a municipal merger.

The findings generally support the idea that democratic innovations are considered important instruments by the residents after a merger. A majority agree with the use of both binding (53%) and advisory (64.5%) referendums. About 40%

think that focus groups and town hall meetings are needed on a regular basis, and a clear majority of 60% agree with the statement that town hall meetings can help improve the mutual trust between residents and decision-makers. About half of the respondents agree with the statement that new technological possibilities should be used to involve citizens more regularly. A somewhat contradictory result is the considerable minority of 38.9% who believe that voting in local elections is enough to influence local decision-making. Nevertheless, even if a fairly large minority are satisfied with voting, in line with the suggestions of Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002; see also Bengtsson, 2012), most respondents support more involvement through democratic innovations.⁸ To examine RQ1 further, we compare attitudes towards using traditional forms of participation with democratic innovations in a new municipality, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Activities performed previously and interest in using following a municipal merger

	% have done	% some- what or very interested in using
Traditional political participation		
Vote in local elections	90.7	77.4
Contacting local officials or employees	46.2	44.4
Sign petition or initiative	45.6	40.2
Voluntary work	41.5	32.0
Contacting local politicians	32.4	39.8
Active elected official (trustee)	12.9	13.6
Democratic innovations		
Survey	32.2	45.6
Town hall meetings	29.6	43.4
Vote in advisory referendum	21.6	61.3
Survey via municipal homepage	12.8	33.7
Commenting on agenda of local council	11.4	24.0
Feedback via municipal homepage	11.4	29.8
Sign or author initiative for municipal referendum	8.8	21.9
Focus groups	8.5	22.1
Citizen initiative	4.8	27.8
Local area council		31.4

Note: Question phrasings: % have done: How have you previously participated in municipal decision-making or brought issues to the municipal agenda? % Somewhat or very interested in using: Please indicate how interested you would be in using each of the following forms of participation following a municipal merger?

The percentages should be interpreted with some caution since all respondents have not had the opportunity to use all activities due to democratic innovations

not being available in all municipalities, and may not therefore have a clear picture what some hypothetical participatory innovations actually are. There are also inherent difficulties involved in estimating the extent of political participation, whether potential or realised (Karp & Brockington, 2005).

Nonetheless, the results predict problems for future involvement in a merged municipality if only relying on traditional forms of participation, since people clearly are less interested in using them following a merger. For voting, only 77% say they are interested in participating in local elections while 90% say they have done so. Although neither figure should be interpreted as accurate measures of the actual extent of voting,⁹ it shows that the respondents consider elections a less adequate source of influence following a merger. A similar pattern can be found for contacting local officials, signing petitions and doing voluntary work, which shows that the respondents consider traditional forms of engagement as inadequate tools for holding decision-makers accountable following a merger.

Conversely, we see an increased willingness to engage in democratic innovations; it is striking that large shares of the respondents are eager to use democratic innovations such as town hall meetings, advisory referendums, various e-democratic measures, focus groups and citizens' initiatives. The evidence concerning attitudes towards using democratic innovations following a municipal merger is therefore somewhat contradictory. Segments of the population remain unwilling to participate in any form, and the more traditional forms of participation remain popular. Nevertheless, there is a large share of residents who consider democratic innovations as important democratic tools following a municipal merger. The results in Table 3 also suggest that institutional differences between innovations matter for citizens' preferences, since the percentages of being somewhat or very interested in using these instruments vary from slightly over 20% to above 60% for the different activities. In terms of our classification of democratic innovations, Consultation and co-governance and E-democracy are on average supported by slightly less than a third of the respondents, while Referendum as an example of direct democracy is supported by more than 60%.

RQ2 concerns whether marginalised groups of citizens are interested in using democratic innovations. To examine this, we estimated a number of multi-level regression models presented in Table 4-6.

The individual level variables explain a considerable amount of variation at both the individual and municipal levels, which indicates that the variation at the municipal level in model 0 is largely due to differences in the distribution of individual level variables. Referendum is an exception since there is more variation at the municipal level after including the individual level factors, which indicates that the differences among the municipalities cannot be attributed to individual level factors. However, considering the limited variation at the municipal level, we do not put too much emphasis on this finding.

Table 4. Multilevel regression analyses, individual level variables, Consultation and co-governance

	Consultation and co-governance					
	M0			M1		
	<i>B</i>	<i>(SE)</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>(SE)</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Fixed part						
Constant	0.482	(0.015)	***	0.471	(0.014)	***
Socio-demographics						
Age				-0.029	(0.031)	NS
Gender (1=male)				-0.004	(0.010)	NS
Education				0.004	(0.015)	NS
Unemployment (1=yes)				0.046	(0.027)	~
Political and social involvement						
Political interest				0.171	(0.022)	***
Political trust				0.172	(0.030)	***
Previous participation				0.317	(0.022)	***
Social trust				0.159	(0.026)	***
Satisfaction with participation in current municipality				-0.030	(0.021)	NS
Partisan values						
Party identification				-0.081	(0.019)	***
Support Green party (1=yes)				0.023	(0.025)	NS
Support populist party (1=yes)				0.047	(0.019)	*
Left-right ideology (1=right)				0.002	(0.019)	NS
Attitude to merger				-0.032	(0.023)	NS
Random part						
Municipal level variance	0.003	(0.001)	*	0.002	(0.001)	*
Individual level variance	0.057	(0.002)	***	0.043	(0.001)	***
First level variance explained	N/A			25%		
Second level variance explained	N/A			21%		
Intra-class correlation (ICC)	0.05			0.05		
Deviance	-15.26			-559.35***		
N: Municipality/ individuals	14/1973			14/1906		

Note: Entries are coefficients from a multilevel hierarchical regression with standard errors in parenthesis. For the coding of the variables, see Appendix I. Significance: *** p<0.001; ** p<0.01; *p<0.05; ~ p<0.10; NS = not significant.

Table 5. Multilevel regression analyses, individual level variables, E-democracy

	E-democracy					
	M0			M1		
	<i>B</i>	(<i>SE</i>)	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>B</i>	(<i>SE</i>)	<i>Sig.</i>
Fixed part						
Constant	0.440	(0.012)	***	0.438	(0.013)	***
Socio-demographics						
Age				-0.341	(0.035)	***
Gender (1=male)				-0.018	(0.011)	NS
Education				0.055	(0.017)	**
Unemployment (1=yes)				0.038	(0.032)	NS
Political and social involvement						
Political interest				0.235	(0.025)	***
Political trust				0.204	(0.034)	***
Previous participation				0.230	(0.025)	***
Social trust				0.029	(0.029)	NS
Satisfaction with participation in current municipality				0.048	(0.024)	*
Partisan values						
Party identification				0.014	(0.022)	NS
Support Green party (1=yes)				0.026	(0.029)	NS
Support populist party (1=yes)				0.054	(0.022)	*
Left-right ideology (1=right)				-0.050	(0.022)	*
Attitude to merger				-0.002	(0.026)	NS
Random part						
Municipal level variance	0.002	(0.001)	~	0.001	(0.001)	~
Individual level variance	0.074	(0.002)	***	0.057	(0.002)	***
First level variance explained	N/A			23%		
Second level variance explained	N/A			18%		
Intra-class correlation (ICC)	0.02			0.02		
Deviance	490.50			-30.33***		
N: Municipality/ individuals	14/1990			14/1921		

Note: See Table 4.

Table 6. Multilevel regression analyses, individual level variables, Referendum

	Referendum					
	M0			M1		
	<i>B</i>	<i>(SE)</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>(SE)</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Fixed part						
Constant	0.692	(0.009)	***	0.701	(0.012)	***
Socio-demographics						
Age				0.059	(0.041)	NS
Gender (1=male)				-0.030	(0.013)	*
Education				0.035	(0.020)	~
Unemployment (1=yes)				-0.073	(0.036)	*
Political and social involvement						
Political interest				0.226	(0.029)	***
Political trust				0.042	(0.040)	NS
Previous participation				0.156	(0.029)	***
Social trust				0.124	(0.034)	***
Satisfaction with participation in current municipality				0.039	(0.027)	NS
Partisan values						
Party identification				0.062	(0.025)	*
Support Green party (1=yes)				0.053	(0.033)	NS
Support populist party (1=yes)				0.052	(0.025)	*
Left-right ideology (1=right)				-0.126	(0.025)	***
Attitude to merger				-0.020	(0.030)	NS
Random part						
Municipal level variance	0.001	(0.000)	NS	0.001	(0.001)	NS
Individual level variance	0.090	(0.003)	***	0.077	(0.002)	***
First level variance explained	N/A			15%		
Second level variance explained	N/A			-51%		
Intra-class correlation (ICC)	0.01			0.01		
Deviance	872.17			530.012***		
N: Municipality/ individuals	14/1995			14/1925		

Note: See Table 4.

The results for the socio-demographic variables indicate that marginalised groups are not particularly likely to support the introduction of democratic innovations. The most noticeable exception concerns age and E-democracy, where the significant negative estimate of -0.34 indicates that younger citizens have a more positive attitude towards this kind of democratic innovation. That younger citizens prefer online activities is well-established in Finland and elsewhere (cf. Christensen, 2012). Otherwise, the estimates are not significant and/or the effect sizes are modest, which suggests that these variables cannot explain differences in attitudes towards democratic innovations.

Concerning political and social involvement, the variables have a stronger impact and most are strongly significant for all three kinds of democratic innovations. However, high levels of involvement are connected to favourable attitudes towards democratic innovations. This suggests that democratic innovations are unlikely to attract the interest of those who are not already involved in politics and satisfied with the current situation, contrary to the suggestions of Newton (2012: 11-12) and Talpin (2012: 191-93), amongst others.

The results are less clear-cut for partisan values. For Consultation and co-governance, the significant negative estimate of -0.08 for party identification indicates that this type of democratic innovations interests others than the party cadre. On the other hand, the positive estimate of 0.06 for Referendum indicates that this innovation appeals to those who identify with a specific political party. Furthermore, supporting the Green party does not affect the attitude towards innovations, while supporters of the populist True Finns are more inclined to favour all three kinds of innovations. Although the effect is rather weak, the results show that democratic innovations interest those who otherwise support protest parties. The left-right dimension also plays a role, since left-leaning respondents are more likely to support e-democracy and referendums. All in all, the results for RQ2 generally suggest that it is mainly those who are already involved in politics who support the introduction of democratic innovations.

RQ3 concerns the effects of contextual variables on attitudes towards democratic innovations. In Table 7-9, we provide results from a series of multilevel regression models containing the estimates before and after controlling for the individual level variables. For clarity, we excluded the individual level estimates from the tables and estimated the contextual effects separately due to the limited number of municipalities.

The results generally suggest that contextual factors are of minor relevance for attitudes towards democratic innovations, especially after controlling for individual level characteristics. Concerning population size, we initially find weak significant negative estimates for Consultation and co-governance and E-democracy, suggesting that living in a larger municipality is associated with more negative attitudes. However, the estimate for Consultation and co-governance is only weakly significant ($p < 0.10$) after controlling for individual level characteristics and the effect on E-democracy evaporates completely. Hence, differences in the distribution of individual level factors rather than population size as such account for the differences in attitudes.

Table 7. Multilevel regression analyses, municipal level factors, Consultation and co-governance

	Consultation and co-governance					
	Before controls			After controls		
	<i>B</i>	<i>(SE)</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>(SE)</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Population (log)	-0.07	(0.02)	**	-0.04	(0.02)	~
ICC	0.02			0.04		
Tax income	0.00	(0.00)	NS	0.00	(0.00)	NS
ICC	0.04			0.05		
Turnout	0.01	(0.00)	***	0.00	(0.00)	NS
ICC	0.02			0.04		
Centre/Periphery [#] (1=periphery)	0.09	(0.03)	**	0.05	(0.03)	NS
ICC	0.05			0.06		
N Municipality/ individuals	14-18/1973			14-18/1906		

Note: Entries are coefficients from separate multilevel hierarchical regressions with standard errors in parenthesis before and after controlling for all individual level characteristics (see Tables 4-6).

[#]For the centre/periphery variable, we distinguish five residential areas in Turku, which increases the number of groups to 18. For the coding of the variables, see Appendix I. Significance: *** p<0.001; ** p<0.01; *p<0.05; ~ p<0.10; NS = not significant.

Table 8. Multilevel regression analyses, municipal level factors, E-democracy

	E-democracy					
	Before controls			After controls		
	<i>B</i>	<i>(SE)</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>(SE)</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Population (log)	-0.04	(0.02)	~	-0.02	(0.02)	NS
ICC	0.01			0.02		
Tax income	0.00	(0.00)	NS	0.00	(0.00)	NS
ICC	0.02			0.02		
Turnout	0.00	(0.00)	NS	0.00	(0.00)	NS
ICC	0.02			0.02		
Centre/Periphery [#] (1=periphery)	0.05	(0.03)	~	0.02	(0.03)	NS
ICC	0.03			0.03		
N Municipality/ individuals	14-18/1990			14-18/1921		

Note: See Table 7.

Table 9. Multilevel regression analyses, municipal level factors, Referendum

	Referendum					
	Before controls			After controls		
	<i>B</i>	<i>(SE)</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>(SE)</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Population (log)	0.02	(0.02)	NS	0.02	(0.02)	NS
ICC	0.01			0.01		
Tax income	0.00	(0.00)	NS	0.00	(0.00)	NS
ICC	0.00			0.01		
Turnout	0.00	(0.00)	*	-0.01	(0.00)	**
ICC	0.00			0.00		
Centre/Periphery [#] (1=periphery)	0.01	(0.03)	NS	-0.01	(0.02)	NS
ICC	0.02			0.01		
N Municipality/ individuals	14-18/1995			14-18/1925		

Note: See Table 7.

Concerning tax income, there are no significant estimates even before controlling for individual level variables. For turnout in previous local election, we find significant estimates for Consultation and co-governance and Referendum, and while the former becomes insignificant when controlling for individual level variables, the estimate for referendums remains significant, indicating that lower turnout is associated with more positive attitudes towards the use of referendums. It is worth noting that the sign of the estimate changes when controlling, suggesting that the exact impact is largely dependent on individual level factors.

Finally, we examine differences between Turku and the surrounding municipalities. As expected from the results for population, we find significant positive estimates for Consultation and co-governance and E-democracy before controlling for individual level variables, but the effects again disappear when introducing the individual level factors. Considering the increased number of units at the municipal level, this result in particular suggests that contextual factors are largely irrelevant for the attitude towards democratic innovations.

All in all, the context appears to be largely irrelevant when it comes to attitudes towards democratic innovations in a new municipality. Although there are some significant estimates, their importance is minor compared to individual level factors.

Discussion of results

The findings have clear repercussions for the prospects for resolving the democratic challenges in merged municipalities by means of democratic innovations.

The results for RQ1 suggested that certain segments of the population preferred to remain passive or rely on traditional forms of involvement, which is in line with the assertions of Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002), amongst others, who claim that people generally do not want to be involved in politics. On the other hand, many residents considered democratic innovations important for creating a functioning democracy following a municipal merger. A majority were of the opinion that different forms of democratic innovations could help ensure a functioning democracy, which gives some support for the notion that citizens are willing to engage in political decision-making (cf. Michels, 2011; Geissel & Newton, 2012; Sandberg, 2012). This was especially evident for the use of referendums, but other, less familiar types of innovations were also in demand both online and offline. Nevertheless, the clearest conclusion from this ambiguity is that citizens hold very different preferences when it comes to political decision-making (cf. Bengtsson & Christensen, 2014). While the introduction of democratic innovations may help alleviate some of the problems, it will not cure all democratic ails.

However, even if there is a demand for democratic innovations, it does not necessarily tell us anything about whose preferences are channelled to the decision-makers through these new channels. Therefore, we also examined which groups of citizens are interested in the introduction of democratic innovations to see whether groups otherwise inactive are interested in using the new possibilities. While it is desirable that democratic innovations can even out existing inequalities, several scholars have noted that those who are already active are also more likely to use the new channels (cf. Smith, 2009: 14-15). Our results showed that democratic innovations following a municipal merger generally appeal to citizens already active in other, more traditional ways of taking part in politics. Since this suggests that democratic innovations mainly replicate and reinforce existing inequalities (cf. Smith, 2009: 163), introducing them is hardly a cure-all for all democratic ails, since it is predominantly those who would nonetheless be involved who make use of the new channels. Notwithstanding, there are also some reasons for cautious optimism. In line with previous research (Christensen, 2012), e-democracy appeals to young citizens frequently found to be less active in politics (cf. Verba *et al.*, 1995). This shows that certain kinds of democratic innovations, and in particular those that are relatively easily available, may appeal to groups that are otherwise less engaged in political matters. Moreover, support for a populist party had a small positive effect on all three kinds of democratic innovations. In this sense, democratic innovations may help alleviate the lure of populism often considered problematic in representative democracies (Beyme, 2011). Nonetheless, while the results do not invalidate the use of democratic innovations, it should remind both researchers and practitioners to pay attention to recruitment strategies and accessibility for different institutional

arrangements. It is possible to decrease the participation bias with general and targeted publicity or even face-to-face mobilisation activities, as has been done for 21st Century Town Meetings (Wilson, 2008). Furthermore, random selection and personal invitation letters can convince people from marginalised groups to participate in deliberative mini-publics (Smith, 2009: 82). It is important to emphasise such strategies if democratic innovations will have any chance of levelling the playing field for political participants.

Finally, we examined the impact of contextual factors at the municipal level. The findings suggested that the context is of less relevance for attitudes towards democratic innovations in a potentially amalgamated municipality. This is surprising since previous research suggests that contextual factors such as size, economy and participatory traditions are likely to affect patterns of political participation following a municipal merger (Dahl & Tufte, 1973; Saglie & Vabo, 2009; Lassen & Serritzlew, 2011; Denters *et al.*, 2014). However, our results suggest that the effects depend on differences between the citizens living in small and large municipalities rather than the context as such. Since contextual factors are hard to change in the short term, this could entail that it is possible to create positive attitudes to involvement in the new political unit over time, although it will require considerable efforts on behalf of decision-makers.

To sum up, we conclude that there are important limitations to the extent to which democratic innovations can help sustain equal participation for all citizens in a new political entity. While the case of a municipal merger is admittedly a stern test of the usefulness of democratic innovations in times of scarcity, the results are a sobering reminder that democratic innovations may not resolve all problems when it comes to building a functioning democratic unit following a municipal merger or other hard decisions. Whether or not democratic innovations can contribute to sustain legitimacy in existing political systems remains an open question. However, we may at least conjecture that they can hardly help resolve more severe democratic problems since a certain mutual trustworthiness between residents and decision-makers seems to be necessary (cf. Font & Blanco, 2007).

The findings come with some uncertainties. Most importantly, we examine willingness to take part rather than experienced participation. Although previous research suggests that democratic preferences have consequences for political behaviour (cf. Bengtsson & Christensen, 2014), we cannot be certain that our results predict actual behaviour following a merger. Furthermore, the findings may be idiosyncratic for the Turku region and the specific history of the region. The prolonged discussions on the possible benefits of municipal mergers in the region may mean that the issue is more inflamed than what would otherwise be the case. This could entail that the residents reject all possible reforms aimed to enhance legitimacy even if they otherwise support the idea in principle. More research is therefore needed to ascertain how democratic innovations affect patterns of political participation following municipal mergers, preferably with adequate before-and-after studies. Nevertheless, our results provide valuable information concerning the possibilities for building the democratic credentials

of a new political unit formed through a municipal merger. In particular, and considering the absence of concrete evidence on participation in a similar range of diverse democratic innovations, our results give important input into the search for new forms of local democracy following a municipal merger (cf. Geurtz & Wijdeven, 2010).

Appendix I: Coding of variables, descriptive statistics and VIF

Dependent variables

Consultation and co-governance: Index measuring willingness to participate in participatory activities (see Table 1 and 2 for details). Coded 0-1 (1 highest willingness to participate). Valid n: 1976 Mean 0.46, Standard deviation (SD) 0.24, Min: 0.00, Max: 1.00.

E-democracy: Index measuring willingness to participate in e-democratic activities (see Table 1 and 2 for details). Coded 0-1 (1 highest willingness to participate). Valid n: 1992, Mean: 0.45, SD: 0.27, Min: 0.00, Max: 1.00.

Referendum: Willingness to vote in advisory referendum (see Table 1 and 2 for details). Coded 0-1 (1 highest willingness to participate). Valid n: 1996, Mean: 0.69, SD: 0.30, Min: 0.00, Max: 1.00.

Independent variables

1. Socio-demographic characteristics

Age: Age in years divided by 100. Valid n: 2001, Mean: 0.50, SD: 0.18, Min: 0.18, Max: 0.93, VIF: 1.24.

Gender: Dichotomous 0/1 (Male = 1). Valid n: 2001, Mean: 0.47, SD: 0.50, Min: 0.00, Max: 1.00, VIF: 1.05.

Education: Highest level of education completed, 5 categories, coded 0-1 (1 highest level). Valid n: 1994, Mean: 0.52, SD: 0.34, Min: 0.00, Max: 1.00, VIF: 1.13.

Unemployment: *What is your current employment?* Coded 0/1 (1=unemployed, 0=everything else). Valid n: 1995, Mean: 0.04, SD: 0.19, Min: 0.00, Max: 1.00, VIF: 1.04.

2. Political and social involvement

Political interest: *How interested are you in politics?* 5 categories, coded 0-1 (1 highest level of interest). Valid n: 1995, Mean: 0.55, SD: 0.27, Min: 0.00, Max: 1.00, VIF: 1.51.

Political trust: *To what extent do you trust the following? Political parties, MP's, local politicians, and public officials,* each scored on 4-point scale: No trust at all-complete trust. Composite index (Cronbach's alpha=0.85), coded 0-1, (1 highest extent of trust). Valid n: 1991, Mean: 0.47, SD: 0.19, Min: 0.00, Max: 1.00, VIF: 1.41.

Previous political participation: *How have you previously participated in municipal decision-making or brought issues to the municipal agenda?:* Voted local elections; Contacting local politicians; Contacting locals officials; Volun-

tary work; Active elected official/trustee; Signed petition, coded 0-1 (1=highest extent of participation; Cronbach's Alpha=0.64). Valid n: 2001, Mean: 0.45, SD: 0.26, Min: 0.00, Max: 1.00, VIF: 1.44.

Social trust: *To what extent do you trust the following? People in general,* scored on 4-point scale No trust at all -complete trust. Coded 0-1, (1= highest trust). Valid n: 1992, Mean: 0.74, SD: 0.20, Min: 0.00, Max: 1.00, VIF: 1.05

Satisfaction with current possibilities of participation: *I am satisfied with the possibilities for participation and influence in my home municipality,* 5 point Likert scale agree completely-disagree completely; coded 0-1 (1 highest satisfaction). Valid n: 1990, Mean: 0.59, SD: 0.25, Min: 0.00, Max: 1.00, VIF: 1.08.

3. Partisan values

Party identification: *How strongly do you identify with a political party?* 5 categories, coded 0-1 (1 highest party identification). Valid n: 1991, Mean: 0.63, SD: 0.31, Min: 0.00, Max: 1.00, VIF: 1.51.

Support Green party: *If municipal elections were held right now, what party would you vote?* 0/1 (1= Green party, 0=other). Valid n: 2001, Mean: 0.04, SD: 0.00, Min: 0.00, Max: 1.00, VIF: 1.06.

Support populist party: *If municipal elections were held right now, what party would you vote?* 0/1: 1=True Finns, 0=other. Valid n: 2001, Mean: 0.08, SD: 0.00, Min: 0.00, Max: 1.00, VIF: 1.05.

Left-right ideology: *Societal views in the public discussion are often illustrated on a traditional left-right scale. How would you illustrate your views using this scale?* 5 categories, coded 0-1, (1 = right), Valid n: 1963, Mean: 0.51, SD: 0.27, Min: 0.00, Max: 1.00, VIF: 1.17.

Attitude to merger: *How do you believe that citizen participation and influence will change in a potential enlarged municipal unit?* 5 grade Likert scale much worse-much better. Coded 0-1 (1= much better). Valid n: 1994, Mean: 0.27, SD: 0.23, Min: 0.00, Max: 1.00, VIF: 1.13.

4. Contextual variables*

Population: *Number of residents,* Valid n: 2011, Mean: 54461, SD: 73118, Min: 1959, Max: 180225, VIF: 1.23.

Tax income: *Tax income per resident in Euros.* Valid n: 2001, Mean: 3192, SD: 307, Min: 2576, Max: 3567, VIF: 1.11.

Turnout: *Turnout in local elections 2012.* Valid n: 2001, Mean: 60.9, SD: 4.52, Min: 54.4, Max: 68.3, VIF: 1.25.

Peripheral municipality: *Whether living in Turku (0) or surrounding municipality (1).* Valid n: 2001, Mean: 0.75, SD: 0.43, Min: 0.00, Max: 1.00, VIF: 1.21.

* VIF for contextual variables are from separate analyses.

Appendix II: Central variables, municipal level averages

Dependent variables

Consultation and co-governance: Aura 0.52, Kaarina 0.48, Lieto 0.49, Marttila 0.54, Masku 0.40, Mynämäki 0.42, Naantali 0.54, Nousiainen 0.51, Paimio 0.49, Raisio 0.40, Rusko 0.43, Sauvo 0.56, Tarvasjoki 0.55, Turku 0.40, average 0.46

E-democracy: Aura 0.51, Kaarina 0.40, Lieto 0.39, Marttila 0.48, Masku 0.43, Mynämäki 0.41, Naantali 0.55, Nousiainen 0.46, Paimio 0.47, Raisio 0.47, Rusko 0.42, Sauvo 0.53, Tarvasjoki 0.48, Turku 0.40, average 0.45

Referendum: Aura 0.67, Kaarina 0.73, Lieto 0.66, Marttila 0.68, Masku 0.70, Mynämäki 0.74, Naantali 0.70, Nousiainen 0.62, Paimio 0.73, Raisio 0.71, Rusko 0.65, Sauvo 0.67, Tarvasjoki 0.63, Turku 0.69, average 0.69

Independent variables

1. Socio-demographic characteristics

Age: Aura 0.49, Kaarina 0.49, Lieto 0.48, Marttila 0.52, Masku 0.49, Mynämäki 0.52, Naantali 0.51, Nousiainen 0.48, Paimio 0.52, Raisio 0.50, Rusko 0.50, Sauvo 0.51, Tarvasjoki 0.51, Turku 0.48, average 0.50

Gender: Aura 0.56, Kaarina 0.43, Lieto 0.51, Marttila 0.46, Masku 0.51, Mynämäki 0.47, Naantali 0.43, Nousiainen 0.51, Paimio 0.44, Raisio 0.44, Rusko 0.51, Sauvo 0.49, Tarvasjoki 0.52, Turku 0.45, average 0.47

Education: Aura 0.49, Kaarina 0.51, Lieto 0.51, Marttila 0.42, Masku 0.53, Mynämäki 0.42, Naantali 0.61, Nousiainen 0.49, Paimio 0.52, Raisio 0.54, Rusko 0.60, Sauvo 0.39, Tarvasjoki 0.41, Turku 0.57, average 0.52

Unemployment (I=yes): Aura 0.01, Kaarina 0.05, Lieto 0.03, Marttila 0.03, Masku 0.02, Mynämäki 0.06, Naantali 0.01, Nousiainen 0.02, Paimio 0.02, Raisio 0.03, Rusko 0.02, Sauvo 0.09, Tarvasjoki 0.08, Turku 0.04, average 0.04

2. Political and social involvement

Political interest: Aura 0.51, Kaarina 0.50, Lieto 0.52, Marttila 0.58, Masku 0.55, Mynämäki 0.57, Naantali 0.60, Nousiainen 0.53, Paimio 0.57, Raisio 0.57, Rusko 0.57, Sauvo 0.54, Tarvasjoki 0.59, Turku 0.56, average 0.55

Political trust: Aura 0.45, Kaarina 0.42, Lieto 0.46, Marttila 0.55, Masku 0.48, Mynämäki 0.45, Naantali 0.54, Nousiainen 0.45, Paimio 0.52, Raisio 0.43, Rusko 0.56, Sauvo 0.52, Tarvasjoki 0.51, Turku 0.44, average 0.47

Previous political participation: Aura 0.53, Kaarina 0.41, Lieto 0.45, Marttila 0.51, Masku 0.50, Mynämäki 0.44, Naantali 0.59, Nousiainen 0.34, Paimio 0.44, Raisio 0.37, Rusko 0.59, Sauvo 0.53, Tarvasjoki 0.57, Turku 0.36, average 0.45

Social trust: Aura 0.66, Kaarina 0.80, Lieto 0.76, Marttila 0.75, Masku 0.72, Mynämäki 0.77, Naantali 0.72, Nousiainen 0.79, Paimio 0.74, Raisio 0.69, Rusko 0.70, Sauvo 0.73, Tarvasjoki 0.69, Turku 0.74, average 0.74

Satisfaction with current possibilities of participation: Aura 0.59, Kaarina 0.60, Lieto 0.63, Marttila 0.64, Masku 0.64, Mynämäki 0.62, Naantali 0.63, Nousiainen 0.60, Paimio 0.52, Raisio 0.58, Rusko 0.74, Sauvo 0.66, Tarvasjoki 0.68, Turku 0.49, average 0.59

3. Partisan values

Party identification: Aura 0.65, Kaarina 0.55, Lieto 0.60, Marttila 0.69, Masku 0.65, Mynämäki 0.68, Naantali 0.69, Nousiainen 0.52, Paimio 0.65, Raisio 0.67, Rusko 0.63, Sauvo 0.61, Tarvasjoki 0.63, Turku 0.60, average 0.63

Left-right ideology: Aura 0.57, Kaarina 0.48, Lieto 0.51, Marttila 0.61, Masku 0.52, Mynämäki 0.44, Naantali 0.54, Nousiainen 0.50, Paimio 0.58, Raisio 0.45, Rusko 0.60, Sauvo 0.60, Tarvasjoki 0.60, Turku 0.46, average 0.51

Support Green party (1=yes): Aura 0.03, Kaarina 0.06, Lieto 0.02, Marttila 0.02, Masku 0.05, Mynämäki 0.03, Naantali 0.04, Nousiainen 0.09, Paimio 0.01, Raisio 0.05, Rusko 0.03, Sauvo 0.04, Tarvasjoki 0.02, Turku 0.06, average 0.04

Support populist party (1=yes): Aura 0.12, Kaarina 0.08, Lieto 0.10, Marttila 0.15, Masku 0.09, Mynämäki 0.09, Naantali 0.06, Nousiainen 0.09, Paimio 0.02, Raisio 0.13, Rusko 0.09, Sauvo 0.06, Tarvasjoki 0.07, Turku 0.04, average 0.08

Attitude to merger: Aura 0.19, Kaarina 0.21, Lieto 0.23, Marttila 0.17, Masku 0.23, Mynämäki 0.25, Naantali 0.21, Nousiainen 0.27, Paimio 0.24, Raisio 0.32, Rusko 0.18, Sauvo 0.20, Tarvasjoki 0.27, Turku 0.40, average 0.27

4. Contextual variables

Population: Aura 3971, Kaarina 31363, Lieto 17023, Marttila 2017, Masku 9671, Mynämäki 7978, Naantali 18824, Nousiainen 4846, Paimio 10591, Raisio 24562, Rusko 5907, Sauvo 3033, Tarvasjoki 1959, Turku 180225, average 22998

Log (population): Aura 3.60, Kaarina 4.50, Lieto 4.23, Marttila 3.30, Masku 3.99, Mynämäki 3.90, Naantali 4.27, Nousiainen 3.69, Paimio 4.02, Raisio 4.39, Rusko 3.77, Sauvo 3.48, Tarvasjoki 3.29, Turku 5.26, average 4.36

Tax income (€ resident): Aura 2936, Kaarina 3567, Lieto 3279, Marttila 2576, Masku 3004, Mynämäki 2701, Naantali 3531, Nousiainen 2869, Paimio 3366, Raisio 3286, Rusko 3027, Sauvo 2793, Tarvasjoki 2844, Turku 3445, average 3087

Electoral turnout (2012): Aura 62.1, Kaarina 61.2, Lieto 62.8, Marttila 65.7, Masku 61.0, Mynämäki 59.9, Naantali 65.7, Nousiainen 64.9, Paimio 59.6, Raisio 54.4, Rusko 66.5, Sauvo 68.3, Tarvasjoki 66.8, Turku 55.6, average 62.5

Centre/Periphery (1=periphery): Aura 1, Kaarina 1, Lieto 1, Marttila 1, Masku 1, Mynämäki 1, Naantali 1, Nousiainen 1, Paimio 1, Raisio 1, Rusko 1, Sauvo 1, Tarvasjoki 1, Turku 0.

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Notes

¹ We disregard this category since our focus is on citizens' participation between elections.

² 500 respondents were from Turku, 150 respondents from each of the adjacent municipalities Kaarina, Lieto, Naantali and Raisio since they are somewhat more populous than the remaining nine municipalities, which include 100 respondents each. The method of collection entails that the amount of missing data is relatively low but also that the specific response rates are unknown.

³ The Kaiser criterion specifies that factors with an eigenvalue larger than 1 should be extracted. However, the rule is only indicative (Velicer & Jackson, 1990) and it is beneficial to explore alternative numbers of dimensions to extract.

⁴ Only including activities with strong loadings rather than relying on factor scores decreases the correlation between the three dimensions.

⁵ The null models (see Table 4-6) show that most variation is found at the individual level. However, even modest amounts of intra-class correlation can bias inferences, especially when group sizes are large (Barcikowski, 1981). Hence, multilevel models are certainly justified for *Consultation and co-governance* and probably also for *E-democracy*. To make the results comparable, we proceed with multilevel models for all three kinds of democratic innovations.

⁶ The log value of population size is used in the analyses.

⁷ The unit of analysis is in this case strictly speaking not municipalities, but 18 residential areas, 13 of which are municipalities. Nevertheless, since the dichotomous variable has the same value for all five areas in Turku, we describe the second level units as municipalities.

⁸ Furthermore, of the 38.9%, 25.3 percentage points tend to agree that town hall meetings can improve the mutual trust between residents and decision-makers, more than 23 percentage points think that binding or advisory referendums should be used for deciding on municipal mergers and 14.3

percentage points think that focus groups and local area councils are needed on a regular basis. This shows that their opposition to deeper forms of involvement is less clear-cut than what this answer might suggest. While it shows that the demands of residents can be contradictory, it is beyond the present purposes to discern how these seemingly contradictory process preferences can be explained and how they might affect behaviour (cf. Bengtsson, 2012; Bengtsson & Christensen, 2014).

⁹ The average level of turnout in the latest 2012 local elections in Finland was 58.2%, and although the question did not ask about voting in the last local elections, it clearly suggests some extent of over reporting.