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PRAGMATIC CITIZENS

A BOTTOM-UP PERSPECTIVE ON PARTICIPATORY POLITICS

Hannah WERNER

Proefschrift aangeboden tot het verkrijgen van de graad van Doctor in de Sociale Wetenschappen

Bidiplomering met de Universiteit van Amsterdam

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Copromotor KU Leuven: Prof. Dr. Marc Hooghe

Onderzoekseenheid: Centrum voor Politicologie

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PREFACE

This dissertation, entitled *Pragmatic citizens. A bottom-up perspective on participatory politics* was written at the KU Leuven and the University of Amsterdam under a joint doctorate agreement. It is based on the following collection of articles.

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In all co-authored pieces, I developed the conceptual ideas, analyzed the data and wrote the majority of the texts. The co-authors contributed to the theoretical advancement, design of the studies and writing of the manuscripts.

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Replication material for all empirical studies can be found at:
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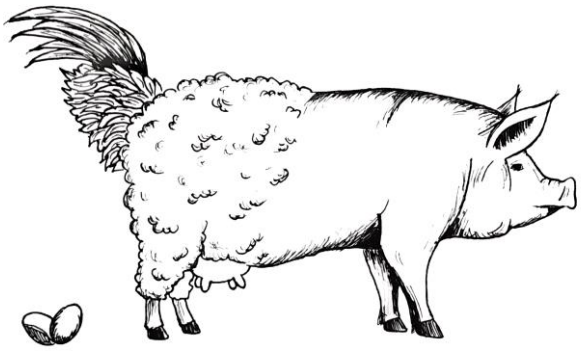
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Figure 1.1 The eierlegende Wollmilchsau



The German saying of the "eierlegende Wollmilchsau" is, despite its disturbing appearance, a metaphor for something highly appealing. It symbolizes an all-in-one solution to the problem of livestock production. This mystical creature gives wool, milk, eggs, and meat and hence addresses all possible demands of a self-sufficient carnivore. *Participatory processes* are often considered an eierlegende Wollmilchsau: a magical solution that will resolve all problems our contemporary democracies are facing when it comes to so-called *legitimacy deficits* (Bächtiger & Parkinson, 2019; Warren, 2017). The answer to the problems of democracy is, as the argument goes, more democracy. But are participatory processes indeed a panacea, a magical solution, to legitimacy deficits? In the following introduction I describe the contemporary discourse around participatory processes and carve out the research puzzles to be addressed in this dissertation. Then, I outline how this dissertation contributes to both academic and societal understandings of participatory processes and, finally, provide an overview of the chapters of this dissertation.

PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES: A PANACEA TO PERCEIVED LEGITIMACY DEFICITS?

Many citizens in Western democracies are dissatisfied with the way politics works in their country (e.g. Dalton & Welzel, 2014). Among academics, journalists and politicians there is a deep concern about a deficit in perceived democratic legitimacy[1], indicated by a lack of trust in political institutions and representatives, lack of compliance and cooperation, support for

[1] Legitimacy as used in this dissertation refers to legitimacy as perceived by citizens. See Chapter 2 for a definition and justification of this approach.

protest parties and a general sense that politics is an elite affair where the ordinary citizen is not heard (Citrin & Stoker, 2018; Dalton, 2004; della Porta, 2013; Klingemann, 2014). Finding ways to address such popular dissatisfaction is a crucial challenge of contemporary democracies (Mansbridge, 2018; Neblo, Esterling, & Lazer, 2018; Norris, 2011; van Wessel, 2017).

Participatory processes are seen as instruments that could tackle this deficit in perceived legitimacy (Fung, 2015). The idea, advocated first by participatory and deliberative democratic theorists (Barber, 1984; Pateman, 1970; going back to Rousseau and J. S. Mill), is that involving citizens in the political process can foster a sense of efficacy, responsiveness and acceptance of decisions, and can reconnect citizens to their political institutions and representatives (Budge, 1996; Gutmann & Thompson, 2004; G. Smith, 2009). Especially the past decades have seen a renewed interest in such participatory processes, which can range from nationwide referendums to small-scale deliberative citizen assemblies. A recent OECD report even speaks of a *deliberative wave* (OECD, 2020; see also Dryzek et al., 2019; Sintomer, Herzberg, Röcke, & Allegretti, 2012)[2]. Prominent examples are the Irish Citizens' Assembly and subsequent referendums on abortion and gay marriage (Farrell, Suiter, & Harris, 2019), participatory budgeting processes in Latin America (Röcke, 2014), and state-level referendums in California (Allswang, 2000).

Some scholars expect that the rapid expansion of participatory processes will alleviate public dissatisfaction with politics (Bowler & Donovan, 2002; Geissel & Newton, 2012; Hawkins, Kaltwasser, & Andreadis, 2020). But is this actually the case? Can participatory processes play a part in the major task of addressing political dissatisfaction and strengthening perceived democratic legitimacy?

To gain insights into this question, this dissertation focuses on the perspectives, perceptions and opinions of citizens. What do citizens think of these participatory processes? What is the effect of these processes on citizens' perceptions of legitimacy? To evaluate the potential of

[2] The definition of participatory processes, as outlined in Chapter 2, focuses on decision-making on policy issues and hence excludes elections.

participatory processes to address deficits in perceived legitimacy, it is paramount to look at the perspective of those people whose opinions about the political system are expected to improve. Judging from public opinion surveys, many citizens indeed find the notion to give citizens a greater say in the making of political decisions appealing. Survey studies across established democracies document consistently high numbers of support for direct decision-making by citizens. Such questions are most often asked about referendums (e.g. C. Anderson & Goodyear-Grant, 2010; Bengtsson & Mattila, 2009; Bowler, Donovan, & Karp, 2003; Collingwood, 2012; Dalton, Bürklin, & Drummond, 2001; Grotz & Lewandowsky, 2020), but also occasionally for deliberative processes (e.g. Neblo et al., 2010). For instance, in 2012, the European Social Survey asked citizens whether they think that the important political decisions in their country should be decided directly by citizens through voting in a referendum (ESS, 2012). Across 29 European countries, an impressive 72.2 % of respondents gave a score of eight or higher on a scale from 0 to 10, indicating high support for this proposal. Scholars have attributed the spread of participatory processes at least partly to this public demand for more involvement (Budge, 1996; Donovan & Karp, 2006).

TWO RESEARCH PUZZLES

While many citizens thus support the idea of introducing more participatory processes, several questions remain unanswered. Two puzzles demand particular attention.

COGNITIVE MOBILIZATION VS. STEALTH DEMOCRACY

The first puzzle concerns the interpretation of the high public support for participatory processes. Some scholars, whose work is rooted in literature on political cultures and value shifts, consider the public support for participatory processes as evidence of the rise of the assertive citizen in established democracies (Dalton & Welzel, 2014; Klingemann, 2014; Welzel, 2013). The argument is that societies move towards a higher level of emancipative, self-expressive and post-materialist values. Citizens have become more critical of political structures because their political resources grow as a result of rising education levels and larger access to information (Norris, 2011). Dissatisfaction with old structures and a more critical mind-set evoke a desire for alternatives, because: "existing channels for participation fall short

of democratic ideals" (Norris, 1999, p. 27; also Hooghe, Marien, & Oser, 2017). Different specifications of this approach have been formulated under labels such as cognitive mobilization, new politics, or the dissatisfaction hypothesis (Dalton, Bürklin, et al., 2001).

Another camp, however, doubts that citizens really desire a more participatory version of democracy. From their perspective, support for direct democratic processes is merely an artifact of frustration with the establishment (Webb, 2013, see also Bowler, Donovan, & Karp, 2007; Neblo et al., 2010; Schuck & de Vreese, 2015). As Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) most famously argued, "the last thing people want is to be more involved in political decision making" (p. 1). While they argue and show that citizens care more about processes than about policy, they posit that the process people want is a stealth democracy. Accordingly, citizens would prefer politics to run smoothly in the background – invisible like a stealth bomber. Politicians should be benevolent and competent leaders and leave citizens in peace. If, however, politicians are primarily focused on their own interests and do not focus on the common good, citizens must have the opportunity to step in and exert control over the "rascals". More citizen involvement is therefore not considered to be desirable, but rather a "medicine they must take in order to keep the disease of greedy politicians and special interests from getting further out of hand" (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002, p.131). This argument is in line with the sentiment among several contemporary writers that are skeptical about the potential and the demand for "more" democracy (e.g. Achen & Bartels, 2016; Brennan, 2016).

These two accounts offer fundamentally different hypotheses about how citizens think about participatory processes. The growing amount of empirical research on the topic has not yet provided conclusive evidence for either side. Across studies in various countries, the most consistently found predictor is dissatisfaction with politics (e.g. C. Anderson & Goodyear-Grant, 2010; Bengtsson & Mattila, 2009; Dalton, Bürklin, et al., 2001; Grotz & Lewandowsky, 2020; Schuck & De Vreese, 2011; Seyd, Curtice, & Rose, 2018 but see Bowler et al., 2007). The interpretation of this finding is however unclear because it fits into both the cognitive mobilization story and the stealth democracy story. Hence, some authors consider this as support for the idea that referendums can be a tool to appeal particularly to the people that are frustrated with the political system and demand more say in politics (Schuck & De Vreese,

2011; Seyd et al., 2018). Most scholars however take these findings as evidence that citizens merely express frustration and disdain with politics and hence do not genuinely desire more participatory processes (Bengtsson & Mattila, 2009; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002; Webb, 2013).

Hence, it remains unclear what drives citizens' support for participatory processes, and in turn whether these processes can be an adequate response to deficits in perceived legitimacy. For example, if citizens' preferences for participatory processes is exclusively driven by a general frustration with politics and does not symbolize a real demand for such processes, it is unlikely that they can address deficits in legitimacy. In fact, as Hibbing & Theiss-Morse (2002) point out themselves, the introduction of such processes could then even lead to greater frustration. Accordingly, uncovering citizens' motivations for demanding a greater say in politics is an important first step to address the legitimacy-enhancing potential of these processes. What is required is a more fine-grained analysis that focuses on *why* citizens want these processes, which move beyond the broad models of stealth democracy and cognitive mobilization. Which kind of dissatisfaction drives citizens' support for participatory processes? Are there other reasons why citizens would be in favor of these processes?

Therefore the first research question of this thesis is:

RQ 1. What explains citizens´ support for participatory processes?

PROCESSES VS. OUTCOMES?

The second puzzle concerns the causal effects of participatory processes on political legitimacy. Empirically, the core finding from this research line is that the *outcomes* of the decision have a large and consistent effect on the legitimacy perceptions of the process (Esaiasson, Persson, Gilljam, & Lindholm, 2019; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2008; Ulbig, 2008). This means that winners tend to exert a higher level of legitimacy perceptions than losers – a finding that also holds in criminological, legal and psychological studies on procedural fairness. Recently, some studies have documented that these outcome effects even exceed the size of process effects (e.g. Arnesen, 2017; Esaiasson et al., 2019). This has led some scholars

to be skeptical about the potential of these processes to solve a deficit in perceived legitimacy (Esaiasson et al., 2019; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2008; Ulbig, 2008). However, the presumed tension between process and outcome effects is undertheorized. Is the existence and size of the winner-loser gap sufficient ground to dismiss participatory processes?

To answer this question, it is crucial to account for the tension between policy outcomes and processes when studying the potential of participatory processes to foster perceived legitimacy. Political decision-making is first and foremost a means to allocate scarce resources, which naturally leads to winners and losers. The need for perceived legitimacy is particularly high for a specific, yet often changing, subgroup of the population: decision losers. Those citizens that are satisfied with the substance of policy decisions have little reason to question the processes and actors that brought about this favorable outcome (Blais & Gélineau, 2007). For decision losers, however, this is a much harder task. They are expected to look beyond the disappointment of receiving an undesired policy outcome, accept their defeat with good grace and take comfort in the knowledge that the game has been played fairly and that they will have a new chance of winning next time around. The expectation underlying "losers' consent" is that the quality of the process can compensate, at least partly, for dissatisfaction with the outcome (C. J. Anderson, Blais, Bowler, Donovan, & Listhaug, 2005; Tyler, 2006). But if decision losers cannot derive perceptions of legitimacy from decision outcomes, from what should it be derived? By what mechanism can participatory processes create perceptions of legitimacy for decision losers, and importantly, more so than the status quo of representative processes? What is required is therefore, first, a theoretical account of why participatory processes should contribute to legitimacy perceptions and, second, empirical evidence of whether they work.

This leads me to the second research question of this dissertation:

RQ2. Do participatory processes produce more perceived democratic legitimacy than representative processes, especially among decision losers?

HOW THIS THESIS WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THE LITERATURE

By addressing these two research questions, I will gain important insights into the overarching research objective: *Can participatory processes play a part in the major task of addressing political dissatisfaction and strengthening democratic legitimacy?* More specifically, this thesis will contribute to our understanding of the potential of participatory processes to enhance democratic legitimacy in three ways.

First, it contributes theoretically. Referring back to the image of the eierlegende Wollmilchsau (Figure 1.1), I advocate for overcoming the idea of participatory processes as a magic solution. For too long, participatory and deliberative democracy were considered a normative goal in themselves, rather than a means to achieve democratic goods (Dean, 2016; Warren, 2017). But, as Hibbing and Theiss-Morse put it, "we need to stop acting like naïve cheerleaders and become hard-headed analysts of the specific situations in which involvement increases or diminishes trust, legitimacy, and happiness" (2008, p. 4). Indeed, what is required is a more pragmatic account, focusing on the specific problems that such processes can solve from a citizens' perspective. Inspired by Warren's (2017) problem-based approach to democratic theory, I argue that participatory processes will hardly be a cure for all ills; at best they can offer specific solutions to specific problems connected to democratic legitimacy (see also Beauvais & Warren, 2018).

Concretely, I suggest theoretical explanations for citizens' support for direct decision-making and their relationship to perceived legitimacy. To this end, I connect democratic theories about participatory and deliberative democracy with psychological theories on procedural fairness to arrive at more nuanced explanations for why citizens would value participatory processes (Chapter 2). While the basic premise of procedural fairness theory has been applied extensively in political science, the different mechanisms that are proposed in this literature to explain the importance of involvement in decision-making receive much less attention, even though they yield useful insights. From these theories I derive two potential explanations. On the one hand, citizens could value participatory processes as a tool to reach desirable outcomes and hence follow an *instrumental* motivation. On the other hand, following the *relational* model, participatory processes could be valued as informational signals that authorities care for and respect citizens and their opinions.

In this context I theorize about the tension between process and outcome effects and how participatory processes should be evaluated. I argue that we should not plot outcome and process effects against each other and thereby measure participatory process against a utopian model of citizens' behavior, but rather compare these processes to the status quo of representative decision-making (see Chapter 9).

Second, this thesis contributes empirically by providing a more nuanced understanding of citizens´ perspectives on participatory processes. I study both citizens' preferences for participatory processes as well as the effects on perceived legitimacy using various methodological angles, such as cross-national datasets, original cross-sectional surveys, panel surveys, experimental data and qualitative interviews. Furthermore, I combine the study of real cases – a referendum in the Netherlands and a participatory process in Belgium – with the study of general preferences and reactions to hypothetical scenarios. Through this multi-method approach I gain a comprehensive perspective on the relationships under study. This is especially important because I investigate two different kinds of participatory processes that demand different methodological approaches: referendums, and small-scale participatory processes, often referred to as mini-publics. These types of processes are different from each other in terms of mode of participation and scale, and potentially can address different specific problems that citizens see with democracy. Therefore, I study them separately, also using different methods. For instance, since referendums are much more known to citizens, they can easily be studied with short questions in surveys. For small-scale participatory processes, this is different. Few citizens know what they are and entail and hence simple survey items run the risk of measuring non-opinions (Christensen, Himmelroos, & Grönlund, 2016; Webb, 2013). Therefore, I study these processes using qualitative interviews after a direct experience of a participatory process (Chapter 6), and by using scenario experiments where the participatory process is audio-visually described (Chapter 7 and 8).

I find some evidence that citizens' preferences for referendums are both associated with instrumental (Chapter 4) and relational (Chapter 3) concerns. The crucial subgroup of populist citizens turns out to not be more driven by instrumental concerns than non-populist citizens. For small-scale participatory processes the qualitative analysis reveals that participants value

these processes strongly for their relational value. While the experimental chapters show that instrumental concerns strongly shape legitimacy perceptions of small-scale processes, they still tend to have positive effects on legitimacy for decision losers, even when they did not participate personally.

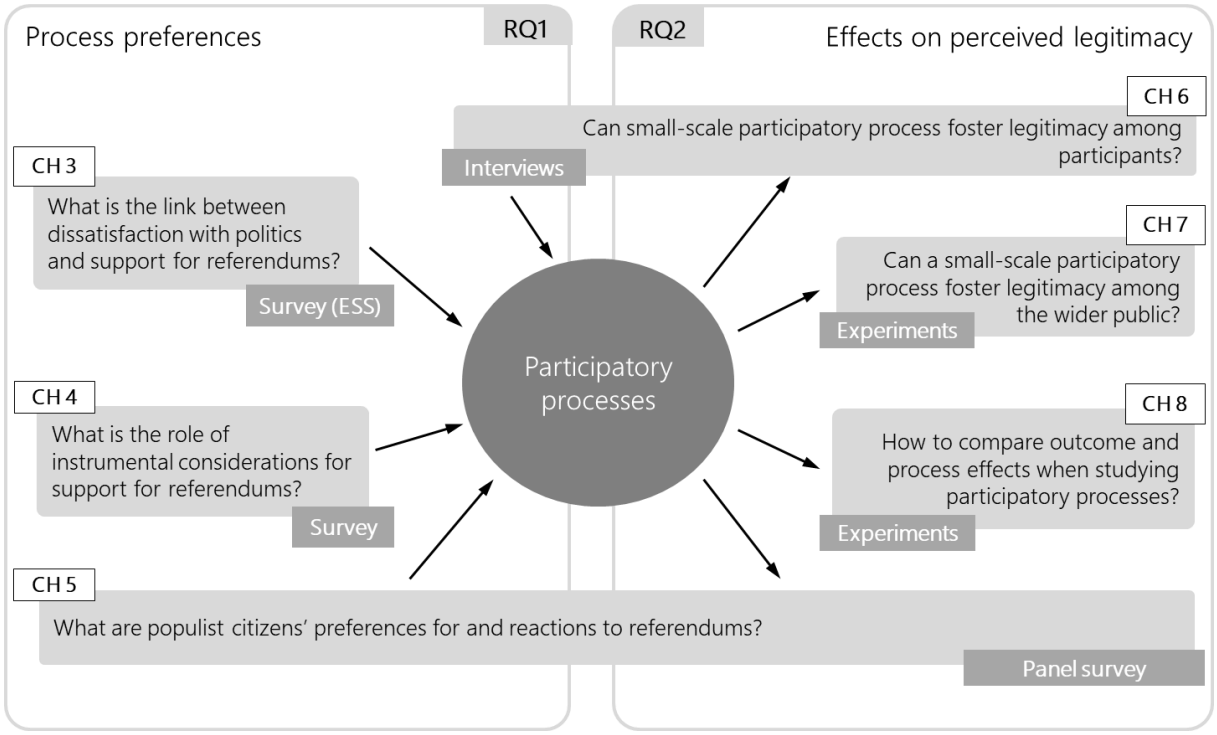
Last, this dissertation also aims to make a societal contribution. It provides insights into how we can strengthen perceived democratic legitimacy and whether participatory processes are a useful tool to reach this goal. This is crucial, first, because of growing concerns about citizens' dissatisfaction and potential alienation from the political system. At the same time, many politicians respond to an apparent public demand for more participatory opportunities by making these processes part of their policy platforms and introducing them once in office (Donovan & Karp, 2006). This thesis helps to understand the underlying motivation of this demand. Second, substantial amounts of resources are used across the globe to experiment with and implement participatory processes. For instance, the costs of organizing the Irish Citizens' Assembly ran up to roughly 1,500,000 euros (Hurley, 2019). This thesis contributes to our understanding of whether these resources are well invested and whether participatory processes are worth our time, money and energy.

OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION

In the next chapter, Chapter 2, the theoretical premises are discussed. First, the key concepts of this dissertation, participatory process and perceived democratic legitimacy are introduced. Second, following a problem-based approach, I derive arguments for why participatory processes would foster democratic legitimacy, starting with participatory and deliberative theory and moving to procedural fairness theories. These different accounts are integrated in one theoretical framework. Afterwards, a brief review of the empirical literature is provided.

The subsequent chapters consist of the empirical research conducted for this dissertation. This dissertation is based on articles, so all chapters can be read as standalone pieces. Accordingly, some theoretical overlap between the chapters is unavoidable. Figure 1.2 provides an overview of the chapters, their core research questions and how they relate to the two overarching research questions.

Figure 1.2 Overview of empirical chapters



Chapter 3 presents the first empirical study of this dissertation. In this chapter, together with Sofie Marien and Andrea Felicetti, I follow up on the consistent finding from previous research that dissatisfaction with politics drives support for referendums. Drawing on the problem-based approach outlined earlier, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of this link. Multilevel analysis of survey data from the European Social Survey (2011-2012) reveals that only specific types of dissatisfaction relate to support for referendums whereas others do not. Specifically, people that are more dissatisfied that governments do not listen to them are more supportive of referendums. In contrast, people that are more dissatisfied that governments do not take the lead are less supportive of referendums. This relationship also varies across contexts. In countries that have more experience with referendums, dissatisfaction is less strongly related to support for referendums. This indicates that referendums as a solution to a lack of responsiveness is a more attractive idea to citizens that experience referendums less often in their own country.

Chapter 4 investigates the role of instrumental considerations in shaping support for referendums. I argue that citizens are particularly supportive of referendums when they are in

favor of the policy proposal under discussion and have the perception of being in the majority. An original survey was designed and conducted in the Netherlands (N=1,289) that contains both between- and within-respondent variation across a range of policy proposals. The findings confirm these arguments: both the desire for a specific policy change and the perception of being in the majority with one's policy preference affects support for the use of referendums across policy proposals and levels of governance.

Chapter 5 zooms in on a specific subgroup of the population, namely citizens with populist attitudes. Contemporary concerns about the perceived legitimacy deficit are especially pronounced for such populist citizens, making it important to study the potential of participatory processes to address their dissatisfaction. This is especially so because populist citizens exert high levels of support for decision-making via referendums. Does this mean participatory reform can foster legitimacy among populist citizens? Or are they merely supportive of referendums to reach their desired policy outcomes, so are they even more instrumental than non-populist citizens? To answer this question, Kristof Jacobs and I use panel data from a recent national referendum in the Netherlands (Information Law Referendum in 2018). We find that, contrary to popular wisdom, populist citizens are less instrumental than their fellow citizens in their preferences for referendums and are more willing to accept the outcomes of the referendum even if they lose.

Chapter 6 turns to small-scale participatory processes, often referred to as mini-publics. What do citizens think about these processes and can they foster legitimacy? In this chapter I present the findings of a qualitative study that I conducted about a citizens' dialogue in the German-speaking community of Belgium in 2017 on the topic of childcare. A small sample of 25 citizens were randomly recruited to meet on three Saturdays to discuss the topic, interview experts and draft a recommendation report which was handed over to the local parliament in the last session. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 14 participants, two weeks after the process had concluded, to gain insights into citizens' views on the process and to what extent it had changed their impression of local government and the political system more generally. The main finding is that participants valued the process primarily because they felt included, respected and listened to by local politicians. The experience of being heard and recognized was more important to most participants than getting their desired policy outcome.

Chapter 7 tests the effects of mini-publics on legitimacy perceptions of the wider public experimentally. I, together with Sofie Marien, make the case that for these small-scale participatory processes to play any role in tackling a legitimacy deficit, their effects must run beyond the handful of citizens who are involved directly. Building on the findings from Chapter 6, we argue that mini-publics can influence the wider public because they function as a signal to citizens that the authority cares about them, respects them and values them as members of the community. We conduct three survey experiments in the Netherlands and find that small-scale participatory processes can increase legitimacy perceptions, even if the issue is highly controversial and the outcome is unfavorable to the individual.

Chapter 8 discusses an evaluation framework for how to interpret studies on participatory processes in light of strong outcome effects. How do we understand this apparent instrumental motivation and what does it mean for the potential of participatory processes? Sofie Marien and I argue that we should move beyond comparing outcome and process effects. Citizens are both instrumentally and procedurally driven and we should instead investigate which processes can boost the legitimacy perceptions of those that are unsatisfied with the policy outcome. We analyze secondary data from 12 experiments to illustrate the differences in approaches.

Chapter 9 integrates the findings of this dissertation and elaborates on limitations and avenues for future research. I close by discussing the normative and societal implications of these findings.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES AND PERCEIVED LEGTIMACY

In this chapter I will discuss the theoretical foundations of this thesis. First, I will define the two main concepts: *participatory processes* and *perceived legitimacy.* In a second step, I will turn to the relationship between participatory processes and legitimacy. I build on insights from political philosophy (i.e. *expansive theories*) and political psychology (i.e. *procedural fairness theories*) to derive potential explanations for *why participatory processes are expected to produce legitimacy*. As will be shown, the two research traditions overlap considerably in how they expect political participation to affect citizens' perceptions of legitimacy. In the last section, I briefly present the empirical evidence to date on the research questions of this thesis.

DEFINING PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

I define participatory processes as *formally initiated* processes that involve *ordinary citizens* in *decision-making processes* on specific *political issues*. I will briefly unpack the different elements of this definition and what I mean by them. First of all, it is important to differentiate between participation that is organized outside of the formal structures of policy making, such as protests or the formation of activist groups, and processes that are designed and installed by governments or other (sometimes also non-governmental) institutions. Given the specific focus of this thesis on the potential of deliberative attempts by political actors and institutions to tackle a legitimacy deficit through organized involvement of citizens, I will focus exclusively on these formally initiated processes, without questioning the importance of bottom-up engagement for the health of a democracy.

Second, I only consider participatory processes that are targeted at ordinary citizens. By that I exclude processes that are designed to bring different activist or lobby groups to the table to debate with politicians, as happens frequently. Of course, citizens that are members of such groups are not excluded from participating in a referendum or a mini-public, but the process as such has to be targeted at citizens generally and hence provide, at least in theory, an equal chance for all citizens of the respective polity to participate. As Smith (2009) puts it: "We are interested in democratic institutions that engage citizens because they are citizens, rather than because they claim expert authority or are the representatives of an organized group within society" (p. 2).

Third, participatory processes must be connected to decision-making processes, understood in a broad sense. This does not imply that the participatory processes as such have to hold decision-making power or even arrive at a specific decision. But it requires that these processes are linked to a broader process of policy making, which Smith (2009) calls *institutionalized* forms of participation. Hence participatory processes can be used to generate issue agendas, provide arguments or to arrive at a specific recommendation. This might range from immediate decisions, which is often the case in referendums, to long-term decisions on questions like climate change, abortion, or genome editing. Importantly, this component also demands that participatory processes are linked to the formal process of decision-making in a visible way. Even though they do not have to be necessarily organized or initiated by governments themselves, they have to be engaged in one way or the other with the process, for instance through formally receiving the recommendations and responding to them or by publicly supporting the process.

Last, the process needs to address one or more policy issues. With this I intend to draw an important distinction between participatory processes as considered here, and elections which are of course also a process in which citizens participate. It must therefore be emphasized that participatory processes do not equal political participation. They refer specifically to structured processes connected to the making of political decisions on *policy issues* and hence exclude the selection of representatives or non-institutionalized types of participation such as protesting.

Two demarcating details are worth noting. First, I do not pose any requirements on the nature, structure and size of the process. As mentioned previously, participatory processes are a diverse family, ranging from one-shot direct votes through referendums on the national level that potentially involve all eligible voters, to citizens' forums on the local level that randomly select 30 citizens to debate an issue over the course of several months. Second, the definition presented here aligns closely to common definitions in the field of democratic innovations research, particularly the one proposed by Smith (2009, but see also Fung, 2003; Ryan & Smith, 2014; Warren, 2009 for more specific definitions of mini-publics). However, I refrain from using the label *democratic innovation* for two reasons. First, it implies that the process in question

must be novel. Both theoretically and in political practice, this might not always be the case for the participatory processes and, more importantly, is not relevant for addressing the question of whether such processes are useful additions to representative democracy. For instance, direct vote processes in Switzerland or town hall meetings in the U.S. can hardly be considered novel. Second, it must be acknowledged that there are multiple possible types of innovating democracies that are either unrelated to participatory processes or even run counter to them. One might think of term limits, regulations of campaign financing, expansion or reduction of executive powers and so forth. Consequently, I will use the term participatory processes throughout this thesis.

DEFINING PERCEIVED LEGITIMACY

As outlined in the introduction, this thesis aims to investigate the perspective of citizens on democratic decision-making. Therefore, legitimacy is understood as *perceived* legitimacy. I define perceived legitimacy as an individual's *belief that a political decision-making process, a political authority or the political system as a whole are proper and just and that the decisions produced by those actors ought to be accepted*. Therefore, perceived legitimacy is not a property of an institution or actor but of the individual citizen (or group of citizens).

This approach is in line both with sociological understandings of legitimacy inspired by Max Weber (2013; e. g. Netelenbos, 2016) as well as psychological accounts of legitimacy such as the one by Tom Tyler (2006). As Habermas (1996) points out, "how the validity and acceptance of a social order can be stabilized … in the view of the actors themselves" is a crucial question (p. 25, cited in Netelenbos, 2016). In these terms, the appropriateness of a particular social arrangement is entirely dependent on being recognized as such by the members of the collective. This is in contrast to a normative understanding of legitimacy, where the scholar or expert compares the functioning of a political system to a normative model of legitimacy and gives her verdict, for instance criticizing a lack of inclusivity or equality.

While legitimacy can refer to different kinds of objects and levels, in this thesis I will focus primarily on the legitimacy of specific decision-making processes, given the focus on participatory processes. So while the empirical study of legitimacy therefore remains on the

micro-level in this thesis, I do assume a connection between small specific instances where legitimacy is both generated and required to obtain citizens' compliance, and the legitimacy of the system more broadly. Accordingly, individual experiences and legitimacy judgments accumulate and over time can affect citizens' attitudes toward institutions and structures more broadly. This argument is supported by empirical research; for instance, studies show that experience with street level bureaucrats, e.g. the police (Marien & Werner, 2018; Rothstein & Stolle, 2008; van Sluis & Van de Walle, 2015) welfare officials (Kumlin, 2004) or schools (Abdelzadeh, Zetterberg, & Ekman, 2015) are used by citizens to extrapolate to judgments of trust in political institutions as a whole.

WHY PERCEIVED LEGITIMACY MATTERS

Why should it matter whether citizens perceive the political arrangement as legitimate when we can document objectively whether it does or does not live up to normative standards? Perceived legitimacy is a necessary resource for a democratic system because it provides a mechanism by which decision-making, or selection more generally, can be performed by a small number of actors and institutions and is considered valid by a larger collective (Ramelet, 2020).

One of the core problems of representative democracies is that a few people make decisions that affect a large number of people and expect them to accept and follow these decisions, even if they sometimes are not beneficial to the individual (e.g. paying taxes). How can this deference be obtained? Coercion is costly and contradicts the core democratic value of freedom (Barber, 1984). Hence, a voluntary mechanism is required, which is where perceived legitimacy comes in. As Tyler (2006) points out, "irrespective of whether the focus is on an individual authority or an institution, legitimacy is a property that, when it is possessed, leads people to defer voluntarily to decisions, rules, and social arrangements" (p. 376). This makes legitimacy: "an additional form of power that enables authorities to shape the behaviour of others distinct from their control over incentives or sanctions" (ibid., p. 376). This notion of legitimacy as enabling compliance and hence stability and social order is widespread in the

scholarly literature (Easton, 1965; Levi, Sacks, & Tyler, 2009; Suchman, 1995; Weatherford, 1992; see also Netelenbos, 2016 for an overview).[3]

Importantly, legitimacy does not translate to complete satisfaction with the outcomes of political decision-making. In fact it becomes most important in its capacity to overcome the rationale of immediate self-interest when these interests are not catered to (Weatherford, 1992). This means that even when political decisions are not favorable to the individual, the legitimacy of the institutions and process by which the decision was arrived at can soften the blow and persuade citizens to play along. This notion of *losers' consent* emphasizes that the losers of political decisions do the heavy lifting to maintain the functioning of democratic systems (C. J. Anderson et al., 2005; Sabl, 2015). While those who are satisfied with the content of the decision have no reason to object to it, those who disagree are expected to bite the bullet and comply and cooperate. As Nadeau and Blais (1993) state in the context of elections: "In the end, the viability of electoral democracy depends on its ability to secure the support of a substantial proportion of individuals who are displeased with the outcome" (p. 553).

Since, almost by design, political decision-making will always leave a subgroup of the population substantively dissatisfied, obtaining losers' consent is a core task for democratic societies (Esaiasson, 2011; Grimes, 2006; Sabl, 2015). However, the relationship between outcome and process considerations is empirically more complex and intertwined than the previous discussion implies. This tension will be discussed in Chapter 8 and will feature prominently throughout the thesis.

As I have argued, perceived legitimacy is important because it matters in practice for the functioning of democracies. Moreover, perceived legitimacy is also what is meant in the prominent discussions of a *crisis of legitimacy* (Dryzek et al., 2019; Kriesi, 2013; Mansbridge, 2018; Norris, 2011). It points to citizens allegedly turning away from mainstream politics and questioning the distribution of power in societies. Accordingly, it is also the concept at the

[3] Netelenbos (2018) makes the convincing argument that functions of legitimacy should be understood as much broader than simply maintaining stability in societies. However, there is no room to discuss this here at length.

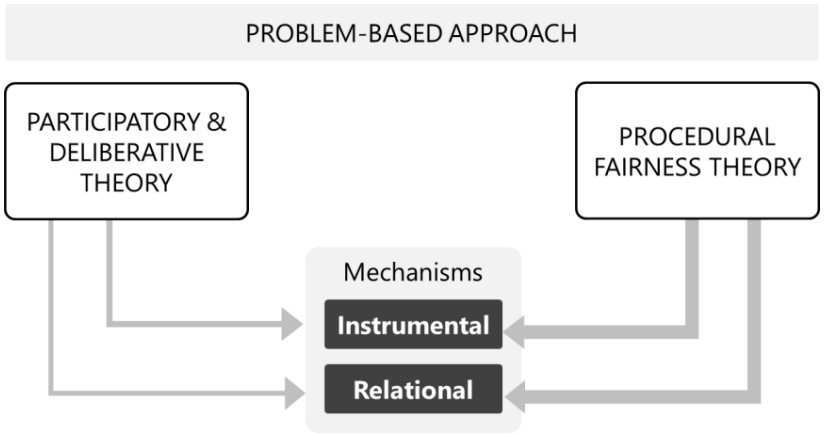
heart of the arguments that proponents of a more participatory democracy make: involving citizens in decision-making will uplift attitudes toward the system and its actors.

There are several reasons why obtaining legitimacy has become both more challenging and more important for democratic societies. On the one hand, the costs of disobedience have gone down: citizens have easier access to information, including information that is not managed and organized by traditional gatekeepers, and mobilization and organization of collective action has become easier through digital means (Grimes, 2006). In addition, shifts of power to supranational levels, the complexity of modern-day politics and the temporal magnitude of political decisions (for instance on climate change) requires an even larger 'reservoir of support' in Eastonian terms (Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994; Mansbridge, 2018; Neblo et al., 2018). The concern about deficits in legitimacy is especially pronounced for certain subgroups of the population: those that either withdraw from the political process altogether or, and much more prominently so in recent years, those that turn to populist parties that embody anti-establishment sentiments and a disdain for the political system as it stands (e.g. Mansbridge & Macedo, 2019). Because of the particular concern about this subgroup in the public debate and recent scholarship, Chapter 5 will focus on citizens with populist attitudes and whether legitimacy can be increased for them through the use of participatory processes.

HOW CAN PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES GENERATE LEGITIMACY?

In this section, I connect the two core concepts of this dissertation as defined above, i.e. participatory processes and legitimacy. Following the problem-based perspective outlined in Chapter 1, I specifically focus on the question of *why* participatory processes would be conducive to fostering legitimacy. To this end, I engage with two strands of literature, namely participatory and deliberative democratic (*expansive*) theory, and procedural fairness theories. While both approaches start out from different premises, they ultimately overlap in the causal mechanisms that they assume. The integration of these approaches results in two key mechanisms: an instrumental and a relational mechanism (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 How participatory processes can produce legitimacy



EXPANSIVE DEMOCRATIC THEORIES

The strands of democratic theory that provide insights into the benefits of participatory processes for legitimacy creation are well summarized by Warren (1992) as *expansive theories* of democracy. This label describes theories of democracy that envision a greater say of citizens in the making of political decisions. To start with, classical thinkers such as Rousseau and J. S. Mill[4] envisioned a democracy where citizens self-govern wherever possible. Under the heading of "participatory democracy" the idea gained new traction in the 1960s where social movements demanded a greater say in politics, the workplace, and the family (Floridia, 2017). Theorists at the time criticized minimal, Schumpeterian accounts of democracy which saw danger in expanding participation and decision-making power (Pateman, 1970). Later on, starting in the 1980s, deliberative democracy became popular and has since then been the most active field of democratic theory, especially connected to participatory processes (Bächtiger & Parkinson, 2019; Dryzek et al., 2019).[5] It is not my aim to discuss in depth the history and the similarities and differences of both theoretical strands (I recommend Floridia, 2017) for that purpose); instead I want to focus on what scholars from both traditions claim about the benefits of involving citizens in decision-making for legitimacy.

[4] However J. S. Mill's position is contested. While Pateman (1970) considers him an early advocate of participatory societies, Morell (1999) argues that he held rather elitist views and considered acceptance of an educated elite the primary goal of education through participation.

[5] Even though the systemic turn in deliberative theory has removed the involvement of citizens in decision-making from the spotlight, the inclusiveness of all voices remains a key basic tenet of deliberative approaches to democracy (e.g. Habermas, 1992).

Expansive theories closely tie participatory ideas of democracy to legitimacy, yet the relationship is complicated. First, these accounts often refer to normative understandings of legitimacy and are built on democratic virtues of liberty and autonomy (e.g. Pateman, 1970) see also Klarenbeek, 2020). So when Barber (1984) states that only a strong democracy is a legitimate democracy, he does not speak of an empirical causal process in which more involvement *results* in legitimacy but that a participatory democracy is more legitimate by (his) definition. This ties to the second point that legitimacy is sometimes seen as almost synonymous with increased participation. For instance, Böker (2017) argues that legitimacy has a distinct meaning in the deliberative tradition because it is derived from the reasonableness and justification of the better argument. Hence, deliberative theory is a theory of legitimacy (Böker, 2017).

Of course, it can be argued that citizens think similarly about what comprises a legitimate political process as democratic theorists of the expansive tradition. This means that they share the same normative ideas about what constitutes legitimate decision-making and why participatory processes may be considered to be more democratic, inclusive, or empowering and subsequently superior. This argument is in line with what proponents of value change theories have argued: Citizens have become much more egalitarian in their normative expectations of democracy (Dalton & Welzel, 2014; Klingemann, 2014; Norris, 1999; Welzel, 2013). In addition, arguments about why citizens should perceive participatory processes as more legitimate are often based on such normative criteria. For instance, Christensen (Christensen, 2020) uses factors such as inclusiveness, transparency and efficiency to study what participatory processes citizens would prefer. Hence, citizens could consider participatory processes to be more legitimate because they are more in line with their normative vision of what democracy ought to look like.

Aside from these normative conceptions, many authors of the expansive tradition also claim that participatory processes will result in higher levels of *perceived* legitimacy (Fung, 2003, 2007; Habermas, 1996; Parkinson, 2003). Pateman (1970) explicitly states acceptance of decisions as one of three positive benefits of participatory democracy. Barber (1984) implicitly agrees when stating that: "I am part of the community, I participated in the talk and deliberation, and so I regard myself as bound" (p. 192). Morrell (1999) also refers to Marsiglio,

an often-overlooked political theorist of the expansive tradition, who argued that the "laws thus made by the hearing and consent of the entire multitude will be better observed, nor will anyone have any protest to make against them" (cited in Morell, 1999, p. 299).

Why this should be the case is much less discussed. There are two rather implicit explanations of how participatory processes can contribute to perceived legitimacy found in the expansive tradition. The first appears in the notion of self-transformation through participation (Warren, 1992). Pateman (1970) discusses this educative function at length and builds on Rousseau and J. S. Mill to argue that in a participatory society, citizens will overcome self-interest and see the public interest as their own. Since citizens can directly influence the decision-making, they can ensure that such public interest is realized. This in turn results in greater satisfaction with the outcome and accordingly acceptance of the law. Hence, this is a rather instrumental argument where legitimacy is derived from favorably regarded outcomes (Fung, 2015). As Morell (1999) argues, this is how Rousseau envisioned the legitimacy-creating impact of participation: "Citizens are more likely to accept decisions because they recognize that the results of the participatory process represent the general will, not because their voice was heard and acknowledged through participation" (p. 296).

The second implicit explanation is also explained best by Pateman (1970). While she considers the educative function (and the emancipation of citizens) as the core goal of a participatory democracy, she states that: "subsidiary hypotheses about participation are that it has an integrative effect and that it aids the acceptance of collective decisions" (p. 43). Using the example of participation in the workplace, she points out that workers experience an increased sense of group harmony, satisfaction and co-operation. Drawing on Rousseau, she argues that these outcomes occur because of the "impersonal" nature of the decision (or law), meaning that by participating, citizens make it their own, personal obligation to comply. This argument is more closely tied to the process itself. By participating in a decision-making process, citizens become morally bound to the process and the authorities, and consequently more accepting of the decision, independent of the instrumental value of the outcome.

To conclude, even though the general notion that participatory processes will increase democratic legitimacy is prevalent in expansive democratic theories, there are only few, often

implicit explanations for why this would be the case. As set out in Chapter 1, understanding the reasons why citizens would desire and consider such processes as more legitimate is a core aim of this thesis. Hence, I will turn to psychological theories on procedural fairness and subsequently compare the two theories.

PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS THEORIES

Procedural fairness[6] theories, developed mostly in social psychology and organizational research, offer important insights about potential reasons why participatory processes could foster legitimacy. The core argument is that individuals care deeply about how decisions are made and whether those procedures are fair (Bøggild & Petersen, 2015; Colquitt & Rodell, 2015; Folger, 1977; Grimes, 2005; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Tyler, 1990). Research on the *fair process effect* ((Folger, 1977) has repeatedly shown that there is a strong relationship between the fairness of the process and legitimacy, often operationalized as acceptance of the decision outcome, compliance or attitudes toward the decision-making authority (e.g. Blader & Tyler, 2003; Colquitt et al., 2013; Tyler, 2011).

This theory is useful for the study of participatory processes because voice, i.e. having a say in the decision-making process, is considered a core element of a fair procedure (Brockner et al., 2001; De Cremer, Cornelis, & Van Hiel, 2008; Tyler, 1990). If individuals receive the chance to state their opinions and preferences, they are more likely to perceive the procedure as fair, and subsequently more likely to accept the decision and the authority who took it.

Within the procedural fairness framework, broadly two sets of explanations can be found for why voice enhances perceptions of legitimacy. The first wave of theories that sought an explanation of the link between voice and legitimacy in the procedural fairness framework highlighted the control function of voice. The argument, most prominently advanced by Thibaut & Walker (1975) and Leventhal (1980), is that people value voice in decision-making processes because it increases expectations of reaching the desired decision outcome

[6]Psychological literature also frequently uses the term "procedural justice". While there are some debates about the differences between fairness and justice, most parts of the literature use both terms synonymously. To enhance readability, I stick to the term procedural fairness.

(Hildreth, Moore, & Blader, 2014; Tyler, Huo, & Lind, 1999). Accordingly, the preference for and positive reaction to voice stems from the assumed instrumental benefits of such a process. Voice is considered a means to the end of getting the desired outcome. Among advocates of the instrumental explanation, several distinctions are made, for instance between process control and decision control (Thibaut & Walker, 1975) or between short-term and long-term favorability of outcomes (Leventhal, 1976). But "the one common theme in all instrumental analyses is that procedures are ultimately judged not in terms of their own qualities but rather in terms of their implications for outcomes or for external relationships." (Tyler & Lind, 1992, p. 139). I will refer to this explanation as the *instrumental model*.

The second wave of procedural fairness theories argued that people value the fairness of the process itself, independent of the outcomes it produces. These so-called *relational theories* (Leung, Tong, & Lind, 2007) state that people value fair procedures because of the information they signal about the intentions of leaders and an individual's status within a group. The informational value of processes surpasses the informational value of decision outcomes, "because outcomes are generally viewed as one-time responses to particular situations whereas procedures have an enduring quality; this makes an unfair procedure much more threatening than a single unfair outcome" (Tyler & Lind, 1992, p. 135)[7]. This *relational model* has been further expanded and connected to other socio-psychological theories.

In political psychology, evolutionary approaches have been applied to theorize about why fairness matters to people. The fairness effect is hence approached as a social phenomenon that yielded an evolutionary advantage to pre-historic groups. These scholars link the human desire for fair processes to the importance of judging the benevolence of a group's leader(s) toward the group and toward the self to estimate the group's chance of survival (Bøggild & Petersen, 2015; K. B. Smith, Larimer, Littvay, & Hibbing, 2007). In organizational psychology, social exchange theory has been applied to the study of fairness (Colquitt et al., 2013). In this tradition, fairness is thought to create a context of shared norms and values which results in

[7] Tyler and Lind (1992) go one step further and make the argument that people are concerned about how political authorities treat them because leaders are used as proxies for ones standing in society as a whole.

employees and managers conceiving of their relationship as one of mutual exchange and trust, which in turn leads to compliant and cooperative behavior (Colquitt et al., 2013)[8]

The advent of the relational theories undermined the popularity of instrumental approaches (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2008; Hildreth et al., 2014). Studies showed that people appreciate voice even after a decision was made, lending support for the relational model (Lind, Kanfer, & Earley, 1990). However, there seems to be a consensus that both instrumental and relational theories hold explanatory power for process effects in small-group settings such as in legal hearings, organizations, or individual encounters with the police.

Yet, whether these theories also extrapolate to the macro-level of politics is debated. Especially the explanatory value of the relational model is questioned. For instance, Leung et al. (2007) ask: "does it really make sense to suppose that the average citizen in the street feels personally valued if, say, his or her government uses fair procedures to determine the increase in sales tax or to adjust the interest rate?" (p. 477). The main problem that is identified is that relational theories were developed based on group-theory models that focus on relationships *within* groups. In contrast, the political context can be conceived of as a between-groups conflict of interest. These group identities typically activate self-interest (or rather group-interest) concerns over procedural concerns (e.g. Leung et al., 2007). Hence, some scholars doubt the explanatory power of the relational model, and expect citizens to be more driven by instrumental concerns in the political context than in small-group settings.

Whether this is the case is still unclear, and "the role of procedural fairness in shaping the legitimacy of political institutions remains more of a theoretically compelling argument than a causal relation substantiated by empirical observation" (Grimes, 2006, p. 288). While procedural fairness theory has received a considerable amount of attention in political science literature, most often this engagement remains on the general level of the fair process effect as such, and whether it exists in political settings (Esaiasson, Gilljam, & Persson, 2012; Grimes,

[8] A third model, most prominently put forward by Van den Bos, is the fairness heuristic theory which states that people care about procedural fairness because it is used as a heuristic to evaluate decision outcomes. Scholars in this line of thought stress the importance of fairness indicators in contexts of uncertainty. Translated to the political world, this resonates with arguments put forth by Mansbridge that increasing complexities and uncertainties require more legitimacy and more efforts to obtain them.

2006; Ulbig, 2008) So far, political science scholars have been less interested in the mechanisms by which this effect might occur.

While skeptics are critical of whether the relational model holds in political settings, there are some arguments that can be made in its favor. Most importantly, concerns about status, respect and recognition of citizens and particularly certain groups of citizens take center stage in discussions about democratic deficits (Neblo et al., 2018). The polity might therefore also function as a group in the sense that decisions are made that affect all members of the group and it reveals information about the leaders' benevolence and value of citizens generally, and certain subgroups in particular. Nonetheless, the extent to which the fair process effect holds and whether it is primarily the instrumental or the relational model that can explain it is ultimately an empirical question for which we lack evidence to date.

INTEGRATING ACCOUNTS OF DEMOCRATIC THEORY AND PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS THEORY

Interestingly, there is considerable overlap between the explanations that influential theorists such as Pateman (1970) indicated for the legitimacy-generating effect of citizen involvement, and what psychologists have explicitly theorized about the function of voice in decision-making. Both consider one explanation that is focused on *outcomes* (instrumental) and another that derives legitimacy directly from the process and its meaning for the relations between citizens and authorities (relational). The instrumental model predicts participatory processes to be primarily tools to reach desired outcomes, which is in line with social choice approaches that conceive of politics as a competition of interests. The relational model puts the social nature of individuals central and considers decision-making processes as not merely an allocation of resources but also as an important information cue about one's status in the collective. By providing voice to individuals, an authority can signal interest, respect and care which will in return result in higher legitimacy. For participatory processes, this means that they can also build legitimacy by functioning as a symbol for the unobservable relationship between citizens and political authorities.

Teasing out the exact differences between expansive democratic theories and procedural fairness theories is difficult, because the relationship is rarely discussed in detail in the former, and there are multiple slightly different accounts in the latter.

Yet, two differences stand out. First, theorists like Barber (1984) and Pateman (1970) assumed that self-interest will be transformed into public interest, and hence this public interest becomes the yardstick for judging decisions. In contrast, the control model in procedural fairness theory does not assume such a transformation but considers citizens to simply arrive at the table with their policy preferences. They are then expected to value a process that provides them with more control and hence a bigger chance of acquiring the desired outcome. Second, while both Pateman (1970) and Lind & Tyler (1995) argue that legitimacy can be derived from the process itself, the reasons why this would be the case are much less explicit in Pateman's account. Lind & Tyler (1990) offer a concrete explanation of why citizens would value participatory decision-making which focuses on relational cues[9].

To conclude, I have distilled two general explanations for why citizens would favor participatory processes and express higher levels of legitimacy: the instrumental model and the relational model. But to what extent do they play a role empirically? Are citizens' preferences for participatory processes driven by instrumental or relational concerns? And if these processes are applied, can they foster legitimacy independent of the decision outcome? These empirical questions will be tackled in the following chapters. Before that, I provide a brief review of the empirical literature to date.

OVERVIEW OF PAST RESEARCH

PREFERENCES FOR PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

In regards to the first research question, namely why citizens want more participatory processes, the literature on so-called process preference has yielded some insights. Due to the dominance of the cognitive mobilization and stealth democracy approaches (see Chapter 1),

[9] Importantly, there are also other potential explanations, for instance trust in fellow citizens (MacKenzie & Warren, 2012), improved descriptive representation (Warren, 2008) or a better understanding of fellow citizens' policy preferences.

most research has focused on demographic and attitudinal correlates of support for participatory processes (mostly operationalized as support for referendums in this literature). The findings do not converge on many predictors. For instance, ideology – given that concerns about polarization are often considered a core predictor of political beliefs – is unrelated to support for referendums in most studies (e.g. D. A. Smith, Tolbert, & Keller, 2010; Wojcieszak, 2014) with some showing higher support for left leaners (Donovan & Karp, 2006; Seyd et al., 2018) and others for right leaners (Bengtsson & Mattila, 2009) or the political extremes (Schuck & de Vreese, 2015). Especially lower educated citizens tend to be supportive of referendums (C. Anderson & Goodyear-Grant, 2010; Bengtsson & Mattila, 2009; Coffé & Michels, 2014; Collingwood, 2012; Dalton, Bürklin, et al., 2001) but see (Mohrenberg, Huber, & Freyburg, 2019) whereas age and gender are unrelated in the majority of studies. The same holds true for political interest, which is often positively (Bowler et al., 2007; Donovan & Karp, 2006; Mohrenberg et al., 2019; Schuck & de Vreese, 2015) but also sometimes negatively (Dalton, Bürklin, et al., 2001; Donovan & Karp, 2006) associated with the desire for referendums.

One predictor, namely dissatisfaction with politics, however stands out in regards to both the effect sizes and the regularity with which significant associations are reported in different countries in Europe and North America (C. Anderson & Goodyear-Grant, 2010; Bengtsson & Mattila, 2009; Dalton et al., 2001; Goldberg, Wyss, & Bächtiger, 2020; Grotz & Lewandowsky, 2020; Schuck & de Vreese, 2015; Seyd et al., 2018 but see Bowler et al., 2007). As explained in the introduction, in the process preference literature, this finding is debated because it fits into both the cognitive mobilization story and the stealth democracy story. Hence, some authors consider this as support for the idea that referendums can be a tool to appeal particularly to the people that are frustrated with the political system and demand more say in politics (Schuck & De Vreese, 2011; Seyd et al., 2018). Most scholars however take these findings as evidence that citizens merely express frustration and disdain with politics, and hence do not genuinely desire more participatory processes (Bengtsson & Mattila, 2009; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002; Webb, 2013).

Importantly, the narrow focus in this literature on cognitive mobilization and stealth democracy has limited our understanding of the link between dissatisfaction and support for participatory processes. This is especially so because these broad labels are interpreted in

various ways and different indicators are used to test them. More concrete theoretical explanations and subsequent tests will result in a more nuanced understanding of which citizens want participatory processes and why. For instance, the instrumental and the relational explanations are not mutually exclusive and both could potentially explain parts of the effect of dissatisfaction. Citizens who are *dissatisfied with the policy output* of a political system might be more inclined to favor alternative decision-making processes that increase the (perceived) chances of favorable policies. Citizens who are *dissatisfied with the extent to which they feel respected, cared for and listened to* by political authorities might also demand a greater say in participatory decision-making. These questions will be addressed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

EFFECTS OF PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES ON LEGITIMACY

While the psychological literature on procedural fairness has documented overwhelming support for the positive impact of participatory processes ("voice", in that literature) on perceptions of legitimacy (De Cremer et al., 2008; De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2003; Folger, 1977; Lind et al., 1990), the state of evidence is less clear in the political context, despite innovative scholarship in recent years. Scholars like Peter Esaiasson have conducted experiments on process and outcome effects on legitimacy perceptions. Most studies found some support for the legitimacy generating effect of direct involvement in decision-making (Boulianne, 2018; Esaiasson et al., 2012, 2019; Grönlund, Setälä, & Herne, 2010; Herian, Hamm, Tomkins, & Pytlik Zillig, 2012; Sulkin & Simon, 2001; Terwel, Harinck, Ellemers, & Daamen, 2010; Ulbig, 2008), though some studies did not find such effects (Gash & Murakami, 2009; Morrell, 1999). Observational studies have similarly yielded mixed findings, with some finding positive (but small) associations between referendums and legitimacy perceptions (Bauer & Fatke, 2014; Jäske, 2018; Marien & Kern, 2018). Studies focusing especially on deliberative forums generally find that citizens perceive the political system as more responsive to citizens after participating in such a forum (Grönlund et al., 2010). However, research on such small-scale processes has typically focused on the effects on participants. Only recently have scholars shifted the focus to effects on the broader public such small-scale processes are embedded in (Boulianne, 2018; Knobloch, Barthel, & Gastil, 2019). Chapter 7 explicitly addresses this research gap.

Turning to the potential reasons why participatory processes might affect legitimacy, it seems at first sight that there is substantial support for the instrumental model. A core finding is that the outcomes of the decision have a large and consistent effect on the legitimacy perceptions of the process (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2008; Marien & Kern, 2018; Ulbig, 2008). This means that winners tend to exert a higher level of legitimacy perceptions than losers. Recently, some studies have documented that these outcome effects even exceed the size of process effects (Arnesen, 2017; Esaiasson et al., 2019). This has led some scholars to conclude that citizens care more about outcomes than processes and hence question the potential of participatory processes to solve a deficit in legitimacy (Esaiasson et al., 2019). However, as I will argue in Chapter 8, we need to reflect on how we evaluate participatory processes, and eliminating instrumental motives is not a realistic (or useful) benchmark because we know that citizens judge procedures by the outcome in representative processes as well. Instead it is useful to focus on whether participatory processes can increase legitimacy perceptions among decision losers. I follow this approach and test this relationship in Chapters 7 and 8.

In regards to the relational model, there is little explicit empirical research in political science. García-Espín and Ganuza (2017) conducted focus groups to uncover citizens' perspectives on democracy and participatory processes. They find that some people are concerned about these processes not leading to them being heard or that they would result in undesirable policy outcomes, indicating relational as well as instrumental concerns. Even though not featured prominently in the conclusions and the scholarly uptake of their influential book, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse's (2002) analysis of qualitative interviews aligns well with the relational model. They find that citizens do not desire sudden policy changes but that policymakers treat them and their views with the utmost respect and seriousness. In addition, research on responsiveness has shown the importance of feeling listened to by representativeness (Esaiasson, Gilljam, & Persson, 2017). But little is known about whether relational concerns drive positive reactions to participatory processes. I will address this in Chapters 6 and 7.

OUTLOOK

This chapter has laid out the theoretical foundations of this dissertation. To start with, I have defined my two core concepts, participatory processes and perceived legitimacy. In this context I emphasized the importance of studying legitimacy perceptions of decision losers, as their consent is hard to obtain but at the same time crucial for the functioning of democracies. Afterwards, I looked for potential explanations of why participatory processes might be attractive to citizens and produce higher levels of perceived legitimacy. The synthesis of expansive theories (especially Pateman, 1970) and procedural fairness theories (especially Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Tyler & Lind, 1992) has highlighted two potential explanations: the instrumental model and the relational model. Even though procedural fairness and expansive theories are commonly applied in the study of participatory processes, these two potential explanations have received little to no attention so far. Both of them will feature prominently throughout this thesis.

The following empirical chapters focus on several individual pieces of the puzzles outlined here and in Chapter 1. First, I will investigate the drivers of citizens' preferences for participatory processes, especially the referendum, in Chapters 3 and 4. Then I will turn to the effects of participatory processes in Chapter 5 (referendums) and Chapters 6, 7 and 8 (small-scale participatory processes). Given that all chapters use different methodological approaches, the design of the studies will be discussed in the respective chapters. Lastly, the findings are integrated and discussed in Chapter 9.

CHAPTER 3

DISSATISFIED WITH WHAT? A CROSS-NATIONAL INVESTIGATION INTO SUPPORT FOR REFERENDUMS

AT A GLANCE

RESEARCH QUESTION

What type of dissatisfaction relates to support for referendums?

METHOD AND DATA

Multilevel regression analysis of ESS survey data (29 countries; N= 37 070)

MAIN FINDINGS

1. Not all types of political dissatisfaction are associated with support for referendums
2. Dissatisfaction with the listening function of government is associated with more support for referendums, dissatisfaction with the leading function of government is associated with less support for referendums
3. The association between dissatisfaction with the listening function of government and support for referendums is weaker in countries where referendums occur more often

CHAPTER BASED ON

Werner, H., Marien, S., & Felicetti, A. (2019). A problem-based approach to understanding public support for referendums. *European Journal of Political Research*

INTRODUCTION

Public opinion surveys reveal strong support for direct decision-making by citizens (ESS, 2012; ISSP, 2016). While there is no consensus on how to interpret or explain this popular support, dissatisfaction with politics lies at the heart of extant explanations. Literature focusing on the post-material value shift in society argues that citizens are dissatisfied with the limited ability to provide input to democratic government under current institutional arrangements. Hence, support for referendums is interpreted as a desire for more opportunities for voice in political decision-making processes (Bowler et al., 2007; Dalton & Welzel, 2014; Inglehart, 2008; Norris, 1999, 2011). However, this interpretation of a widespread genuine desire for participatory processes has been challenged, most prominently by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002). They interpret the support for direct decision-making practices as a reflection of dissatisfaction with representatives. Because representatives cannot be trusted, citizens feel they need to intervene, although that is not their preferred course of action (Bowler & Donovan, 2007; Dalton, Burklin, & Drummond, 2001; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002; Schuck & de Vreese, 2015). Empirically, dissatisfaction with representative democracy emerges as a core driver of support for referendums, as documented by recent survey research (C. Anderson & Goodyear-Grant, 2010; Bengtsson & Mattila, 2009; Collingwood, 2012; Dalton, Burklin, et al., 2001; Schuck & de Vreese, 2015; Webb, 2013; for an exception Bowler et al., 2007). Yet the meaning of this link remains unclear. What kind of dissatisfaction drives citizens' desire for this alternative decision-making arrangement?

In this chapter, we[10] aim to contribute to a better understanding of popular support for referendums across Europe. Inspired by Warren's (2017) problem-based approach to democracy, we argue that citizens employ a pragmatic approach to referendum support. There can be different problems with representative democracy and citizens see referendums as a potential solution to some of them, though not all. We illustrate how this approach plays out by focusing on how preferences for and evaluations of representative practices relate to support for direct decision-making via referendums.

[10] This chapter is based on joint work with Sofie Marien and Andrea Felicetti. Therefore I will use the pronoun *we* throughout the chapter.

To this end, we connect to the literature on representation and draw on the well-known distinction between delegate and trustee representation. Following the delegate view representatives should listen and follow public opinion (of their electorate) closely. In the trustee view, representatives have greater freedom to follow their own judgement and lead the way. We expect that preferences for these different models of representation are related to opinions about the role of citizens in decision-making processes. If listening is strongly valued, then, support for more opportunities for voice in political decision-making processes and interventions by citizens will be higher. Furthermore, we argue that dissatisfaction with representation relates to support for referendums in different ways. That is, dissatisfaction with the government to fulfil its function to listen to citizens is expected to relate to high levels of support for referendums. On the contrary, we do not expect such a relationship to occur with regard to dissatisfaction with the government's ability to lead because referendums are not a solution for this specific problem. Finally, we investigate whether the relationship between dissatisfaction with the listening function of government and support for referendums varies across countries depending on the level of experience a country has with referendums as a decision-making tool. It could well be that referendums are considered more or less suitable to tackle the problem of unresponsive government depending on whether and to what extent a society has experienced referendums in practice.

We test these expectations using regression analyses on the 2012 European Social Survey data (ESS, 2012). The sixth round of this biannual survey is particularly suited for this test as it includes questions about respondents' conceptions of the government's role (listening or leading) as well as its performance on this criterion. Interviews were conducted in 29 countries covering information on 37,235 respondents in total. The data is cross-sectional, which limits the possibility for causal inference, but it does allow for a first insight into the associations between preferences and evaluations of government responsiveness and support for referendums in a large number of European countries.

The results show that citizens who prefer the government to listen rather than lead are more supportive of referendums. Importantly, dissatisfaction with the listening function of the government relates positively to support for referendums, whereas dissatisfaction with the government's ability to lead is negatively related. This supports our argument that only specific

types of dissatisfaction are associated with higher support for referendums. Furthermore, we find that the relationship between dissatisfaction with listening and support for referendums is weaker in countries with more experience with referendums. These findings indicate that direct decision-making practices could address dissatisfaction with some representative practices, but not all kinds of dissatisfaction can be addressed by more direct interventions featuring citizens. We need a more nuanced understanding of how dissatisfaction affects support for referendums. By connecting normative expectations and evaluations of representation to support for referendums this chapter provides an important step in this direction.

DISSATISFACTION AND SUPPORT FOR REFERENDUMS

There is a vibrant literature that aims to explain popular support for referendums (e.g. Bowler, Donovan, & Karp, 2006; Webb, 2013) and different models of citizenship and democracy more generally (Bengtsson & Mattila, 2009; Coffé & Michels, 2014; Dalton, Bürklin, et al., 2001; Font, Wojcieszak, & Navarro, 2015). In this literature, normative ideals on how democracy should function and dissatisfaction with current democratic performance have attracted substantial attention as potential drivers of support for referendums.

In the two most prominent approaches to process preferences (also discussed in Chapter 1), dissatisfaction takes a central yet different role. First, the cognitive mobilization thesis describes the emergence of critical, assertive or self-actualized citizens who are dissatisfied with the limited role that current representative structures entail for citizens to take matters in their own hands. This sentiment is argued to emerge from a shift towards post-materialist and emancipative values and rising levels of education and information access (Dalton & Welzel, 2014; Inglehart, 2008; Norris, 1999, 2011). Second, for the stealth democracy thesis, the argument goes that citizens are not genuinely supportive of more participation opportunities but rather want government to quietly fulfill its tasks without much involvement or even monitoring by citizens. Only when citizens are dissatisfied with how politicians do their job, will they demand for means to take over control, such as through referendums (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002) for an overview of both approaches: Bowler et al., 2007).

While both strands of the literature put dissatisfaction central, its nature and specific role in driving support for participatory processes is rarely specified. Furthermore, empirical work has mostly relied on general indicators such as satisfaction with democracy or political trust. Interestingly, the consistent effect of dissatisfaction on support for referendums (Bengtsson & Mattila, 2009; Schuck & de Vreese, 2015; Webb, 2013) has mostly been interpreted as support for the stealth democracy thesis. Hence, the dissatisfaction effect has been considered evidence that citizens do not genuinely desire participation, and high levels of support for referendums are seen as expressions of their overall frustration with politicians.

In this chapter, we aim to gain a better understanding of the relationship between (different types of) dissatisfaction and support for referendums. In addition to the more abstract and value-oriented considerations about the ability of referendums to counter diffuse dissatisfaction with political institutions, we argue that support for referendums is also affected by pragmatic considerations. In a recent influential contribution, Mark Warren (2017) has argued for a problem-based approach to democracy. According to Warren, we should refrain from thinking about democracy only in terms of some democratic models we favor. Rather, we should consider also which institutions are capable of tackling different democratic problems in political systems (see also Chapter 1). Inspired by Warren's call, we seek to show that pragmatic considerations actually play a role also when it comes to citizens' support for referendums.

In effect, referendums could offer pragmatic solutions for specific problems that citizens see in contemporary politics. This approach allows us to see that dissatisfaction does not always lead to support for referendums. Referendums might be deemed suitable for dealing with some types of dissatisfaction but not others. It is important to note that our approach does not contradict existing approaches to understanding process preferences, such as the cognitive mobilization thesis or the stealth democracy thesis. Rather, we assume that individuals' preferences for different procedural arrangements have different components: some of them value-based and stable, and others context-dependent and dynamic (see also Chapter 4 and Chapter 9).

We illustrate our argument by connecting our research on process preferences to the literature on representation. The classic distinction between delegate and trustee as formulated by Burke is useful in this regard (see, for instance, Fox & Shotts, 2007). In the delegate model, representatives need to follow citizens' instructions and closely monitor and represent the opinions of the electorate. In contrast, trustee representation refers to politicians acting autonomously and on behalf of the public interest. For this chapter, we adopt Bowler's notion of 'government as listeners' and 'government as leaders' that he devised to mark the distinction between the approaches pursued by members of parliament, which the delegate and trustee labels have traditionally been used for. As Bowler (2017) recently showed, citizens hold diverging views as to whether politicians should act as listeners or as leaders (see also Barker & Carman (2012). Furthermore, citizens can be dissatisfied with the government's ability to listen to its constituents as well its ability to lead.

We argue that both preferences for different representation ideals as well as their evaluation relate differently to support for referendums. First, we expect citizens who prefer the government to listen to be more in favor of decision-making via referendums than citizens who prefer the government to lead. Both a responsive government and implementing a referendum result approach the ideal of policy following public opinion. Hence, if citizens prefer one, they are likely to prefer the other. This is different for citizens who think the government should lead. To these citizens, responsibility is more important than responsiveness; representative government is not expected to rule by following the sway of public opinion. During elections governments would be dismissed if they perform poorly, but in the meantime, they should be free to follow their own initiative. Hence, support for the use of direct decision-making practices is expected to be lower for this group of citizens.

This expectation is expressed in the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: *People who believe the government should closely listen and respond to public opinion are more supportive of referendums than citizens who prefer the government to lead.*

Second, we expect dissatisfaction with these different functions to affect support for referendums differently. If citizens are dissatisfied with the government's ability to listen to the

public, support for referendums is likely to be high. This is because referendums are likely considered a direct solution to a deficit in perceived responsiveness. If the government does not voluntarily take public opinion into account, then referendums are a suitable strategy to make their voices heard and be translated into policy. In contrast, when citizens are dissatisfied with the government's performance on leading, support for referendums is not expected to increase. If it is the government's job to take decisions and to lead, then direct interventions by citizens, for instance via referendums, do not represent a solution to this particular problem. In sum, whereas we expect dissatisfaction with the listening function of a government to be related with higher support for referendums, we expect no such relationship for dissatisfaction with the leading function of a government.

Accordingly, we formulate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a: *People who are more dissatisfied with the government's ability to listen to public opinion are more supportive of referendums than people who are less dissatisfied.*

Hypothesis 2b: *People who are more dissatisfied with the government's ability to lead are not more supportive of referendums than people who are less dissatisfied*.

These expectations have not been extensively tested within the rich literature on process preferences. Citizens' expectations of representation and the respective evaluations have rarely been included in efforts to explain support for direct democratic practices. Yet, there are indications that support for referendums relates to preferences and evaluations of responsiveness. Bowler, Donovan, and Karp (2003) focus on legislators' responsiveness using data from Californian voters. They show that a delegate view is associated with more support for referendums than a trustee view. (Allen & Birch, 2015) show that citizens who are more critical of politicians' integrity and responsiveness tend to express support for greater levels of popular involvement in political decision-making. In a recent article, Fernández-Martínez and Font Fábregas (2018) connected people's views on responsiveness to their support for referendums. Their analyses show that for some people these views are strongly connected, while this is not the case for others. We contribute to this literature by linking citizens' expectations of representation and their evaluations thereof to support for referendums.

In addition, we explore how the relationship between dissatisfaction with the listening function and support for referendums varies across country context. We are especially interested in the role that experience with referendums plays in this regard. In some countries, supporting referendums is a rather hypothetical exercise because the country has little practical experience with national-level referendums, either because they are not legally possible or because they occur only rarely (for an overview see: Qvortrup, 2014; Setälä, 2006). In other countries, however, referendums are used more frequently and hence support for referendums refers to an existing decision-making tool. It may be possible that citizens in contexts where experience with referendums is low have different expectations of what kind of problems referendums can solve compared to contexts where such experience is high. Possibly, referendums are an instrument that looks only appealing as a solution for unresponsive governments in the abstract and is considered less of a solution for this problem once it is in place. On the other hand, the experience with referendums might also lead to higher confidence in referendums to counteract a lack of government responsiveness. Since we have no grounded expectation of the direction of this relationship, we posit the following research question without formulating specific hypotheses:

RQ2: *Does country-level experience with referendums moderate the relationship between dissatisfaction with governments' ability to listen and support for referendums?*

DESIGN

We use data from the European Social Survey (ESS, 2012). The interviews were conducted face-to-face in 2012 and 2013. They are highly suitable for our research because the survey included a new module called "Understandings and evaluations of democracy". This module asked several questions on how citizens think democracy should work and also on how they evaluate the performance of their respective political system (Ferrín & Kriesi 2016). The dataset includes 54,673 interviews in 29 countries. After excluding missing data, our analytic sample consists of 37,070 European citizens. For country-level information on experience with referendums, we use the C2D database (2019) and the SUDD database (Müller, 2018). The data are analyzed using multilevel regressions. Following ESS guidelines, we apply post-stratification weights.

MEASURES

Outcome variable: support for referendums. We use one of the items of the battery on understandings of democracy that reads: '*How important it is for democracy that citizens have the final say on political issues by voting directly in referendums'*. The answers are measured on a 0 to 10 (11 point) scale.

Explanatory variables. Round 6 of the European Social Survey includes a question that taps into respondents' preferences regarding government responsiveness. The question asks respondents to choose between two options regarding what the interviewee *'thinks is best for democracy in general': a) The government should change its planned policies in response to what most people think; and b) the government should stick to its planned policies regardless of what most people think.* There is a coding for 'it depends on circumstances' and 'don't know' answers that are not mentioned by the interviewer.

Subsequently, respondents are asked to what extent government fulfills this function today (11 point scale from 0 'never' to 10 'always'). As a result, we can gain insight into the extent to which these different views on government responsiveness are shared in European societies and how well governments are performing according to these expectations. The question on adherence to the listener or leader view served as a filter question. Respondents who indicated they adhere to the 'listener' model were only asked about evaluation of this function. Respondents who indicated they adhere to the 'leader' model were only asked about evaluation of this function. Respondents who indicated their opinions 'depend' or they 'don't know' were questioned on the listener function.[11] We recoded the evaluation question so that high values indicate dissatisfaction with government performance.

Moderator: experience with referendums. To grasp country-level experience with referendums, we construct a variable based on the C2D database (C2D, 2019). This database, hosted by the

[11] These don't know respondents are excluded from the main analysis to maintain the same sample sizes across the hypotheses. However we also run robustness checks that include these cases in the main model, resulting in substantially the same results. Results available upon request.

ETH Zurich, contains information on national-level referendums for several countries across the globe from 1970 until today (it is updated regularly). The data we use stem from May 2019. The database contains information for all countries in our dataset with the exception of Kosovo. For this country, we relied on data from the SUDD database (Müller, 2018). Both databases are regularly used in scholarly research on referendums (e.g. Mendez & Germann 2016).

Control variables. We include measures that are known to affect support for referendums: education (Coffé & Michels, 2014; Collingwood, 2012), age, sex, left-right placement, political interest and generalized trust. Further, we also include satisfaction with democracy to see whether the specific types of dissatisfaction we focus on in this study play out differently than the commonly used general indicator for dissatisfaction. As we are also measuring evaluations of the government in each country, we include a dummy variable on whether or not the interviewee voted for an incumbent party (i.e. the party is included in the cabinet).

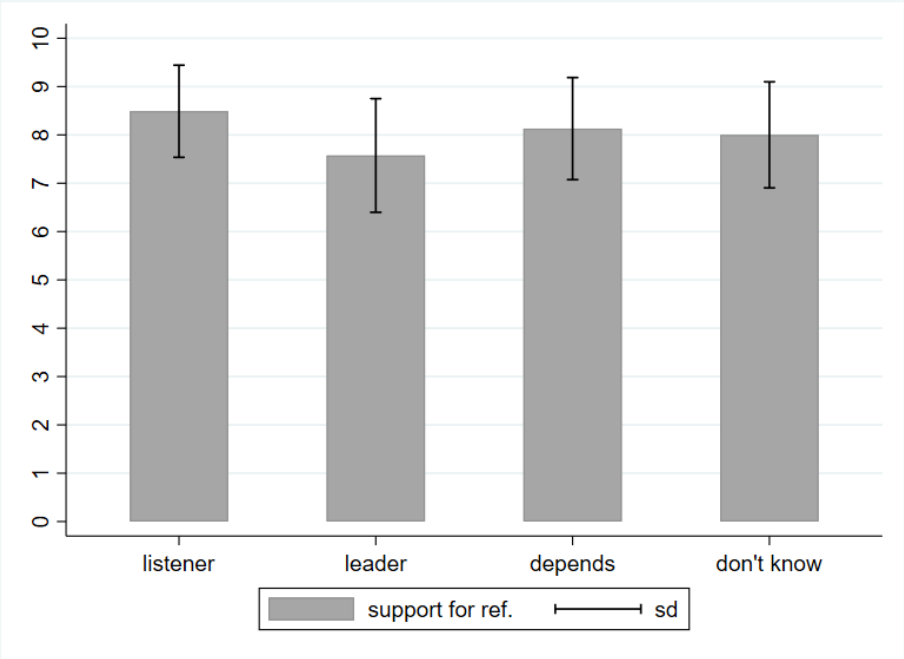
RESULTS

As expected, support for referendums in Europe is high. The mean score is 8.27 on a 0-10 scale, with a standard deviation of 2.04. While this is a high mean, there are individual variations that are interesting to explore further. There is also quite some diversity in respondents' views on how their government should act. In the sample, the majority of respondents expects the government to closely listen and respond to public opinion (66%). Another 17% of the sample prefers the government to act as a leader rather than to shift policies in line with public opinion. Another 12% says it depends while 5% say they do not know. While the listener view is clearly widely shared, it is not the only preferred model among European citizens. When recoding the data to the two main models "listener" and "leader", the distribution is approximately 80% holding the listener view and 20% holding the leader view (in the full sample and in the analytical sample).[12]

[12] For more information on correlations between the leader and listener model and democratic norms, see the Appendix, Table A3.2.

Given the nested nature of the data in 29 countries and our interest in cross-level interactions we employ multilevel regression modelling using Stata 14 to test our hypotheses. Turning first to H1, we predicted that citizens who prefer the government to listen exert higher support for referendums than citizens who prefer the government to lead. When simply plotting the means (see Figure 3.1) this seems to be indeed the case.

Figure 3.1 Support for referendums across representative ideals



Note. Data: 2012 European Social Survey, 29 countries. N= 54,515.

The respondents preferring the government to first and foremost listen have higher average levels of support for referendums than the respondents who prefer government to lead (M_{Listen} = 8.49, *SD* = 1.90 ; M_{Lead} = 7.57, *SD* = 2.35). The multilevel regression model confirms that listeners have a significantly higher level of support than leaders. The full model can be found in the Appendix, Table A3.3.

Table 3.1 Multilevel regression explaining support for referendums

	Model I			**Model II**		
	coef	*p*	*rob.SE*	*coef*	*p*	*rob.SE*
dissatisfaction listening function	**.07**	**.000**	**.01**			

dissatisfaction leading function				**-.07**	**.003**	**.02**
satisfaction with democracy	-.04	.010	.02	-.02	.381	.03
voted for incumbent	.01	.740	.04	-.08	.390	.09
generalized trust	.01	.539	.01	-.04	.005	.01
political interest	.16	.000	.02	.08	.350	.09
left-right placement	.01	.636	.02	.03	.299	.03
gender	.01	.860	.03	-.20	.001	.06
education						
lower secondary	.42	.000	.07	-.05	.745	.16
upper secondary	.51	.000	.10	.18	.013	.07
advanced vocational	.44	.000	.09	-.20	.362	.22
university degree	.34	.000	.07	-.57	.000	.10
age	.01	.000	.00	.00	.144	.00
constant	7.24	.000	.21	8.16	.000	.27
variance (intercept)	.13	.000	.03	.32	.000	.09
Wald Chi2	3687.96	.000		482.22	.000	
N	28849			8221		

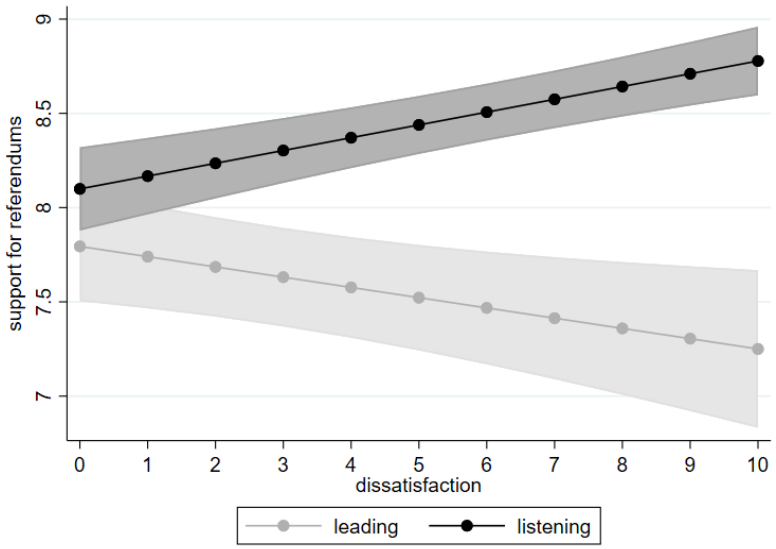
Note. Non-standardized coefficients are presented, coefficients relating to hypotheses are printed in bold. Weights are applied. Data: 2012 European Social Survey, 29 countries.

Turning to our main hypotheses, H2a and H2b, we investigate to what extent dissatisfaction with the listening and leading functions of the government is associated with support for referendums. As Model I in Table 3.1 shows, dissatisfaction with the listening function of the government relates positively and significantly to support for referendums, even when controlling for general dissatisfaction[13]. This means people who are dissatisfied with the government's ability to listen to citizens' views are also in favor of decision-making via referendums. Turning to dissatisfaction with the leading function, we expected no such relationship. However, the data indicates a significant negative relationship, as can be seen in Model II. Accordingly, citizens who are dissatisfied with the government's ability to lead are even less supportive of referendums than those who are satisfied with its performance on this particular function. Apparently, referendums decline in popularity when other problems, such as leading, become more pressing in the eyes of citizens.

[13] We also run our main analyses without satisfaction with democracy as a control variable. These models yield substantially the same results; see Table A3.7 in the Appendix.

These findings confirm H2a and disconfirm H2b. As theorized, not all types of dissatisfaction are related to increased support for referendums. As the data show, some types of dissatisfaction can even have the reverse effect. We visualize the different effects of these two different types of dissatisfaction in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 Support for referendums across different levels of dissatisfaction

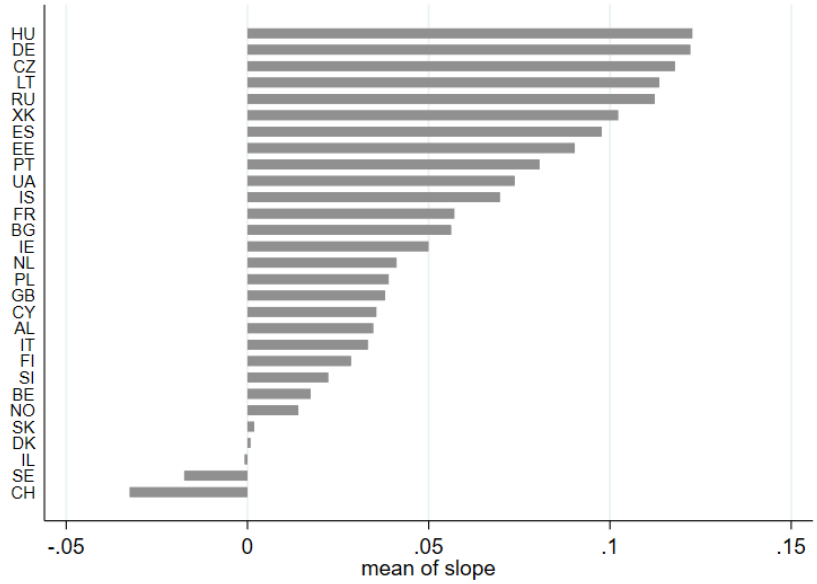


Note. Estimates are the result of a multilevel regression (see Table 3.1, Model III). Data: 2012 European Social Survey, 29 countries. N= 37,235

EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS

Turning to the second research question, we aim to investigate the relationship between dissatisfaction with the listening function and support for referendums, taking contextual factors into account. In a first step, we run a random slope model to see if there is variation of the strength of this association across countries. As Model I in Table 3.2 shows, the significant variance and the reduced Wald Chi2 indicate that this is the case, although the reduction in Wald Chi2 seems moderate. Figure 3.3 visualizes the different slope coefficients for the different countries under study.

Figure 3.3 Slope coefficients for the effect of dissatisfaction with listening on support for referendums across countries



Note. Estimates are the results of a multilevel regression with random slopes (Table 3.2, Model I). Weights could not be applied for this visualization. Data: 2012 European Social Survey, 29 countries. N= 28849.

In a second step, we try to explain this variance by including national level experience with referendums as a moderator. Switzerland presents a complication in this regard. Given the enormous amount of referendums that have been held there on the national level since 1970 (645), this case is likely to distort the analysis (average across all other countries: 13). We address this problem by running 4 types of models: (1) excluding Switzerland (presented here), (2) including Switzerland with its true score, (3) including Switzerland capped at a score of 100 and (4) including Switzerland and applying a log transformation of the experience variable. The results of models 2, 3 and 4 largely confirm the results and are presented in the Appendix, Table A3.5.

Table 3.2 Random slopes models explaining cross-country variation

	Model I			**Model II**			**Model III**		
	coef	*p*	*r. SE*	*coef*	*p*	*r. SE*	*coef*	*p*	*r. SE*
country level									
exp. with referendums				.01	.001	.00	.01	.000	.00
individual level									
diss. listening function	**.05**	**.000**	**.01**	.05	.000	.01	.07	.000	.01
interaction: diss. listening x exp. with ref.							**.00**	**.001**	**.00**
sat. with democracy	-.04	.013	.01	-.04	.011	.02	-.04	.009	.02
voted for incumbent	.01	.750	.04	-.02	.649	.03	-.02	.543	.03
generalized trust	.01	.504	.01	.01	.486	.01	.01	.465	.01
political interest	.16	.000	.02	.15	.000	.02	.15	.000	.02
left-right placement	.01	.575	.02	.01	.842	.03	.01	.839	.03
gender	.00	.893	.03	.01	.871	.04	.01	.838	.04
education									
lower sec.	.41	.000	.07	.43	.000	.08	.43	.000	.09
upper sec.	.52	.000	.10	.52	.000	.11	.52	.000	.11
vocational	.43	.000	.09	.39	.000	.10	.39	.000	.10
university	.34	.000	.08	.32	.000	.09	.32	.000	.09
age	.01	.000	.00	.01	.000	.00	.01	.000	.00
constant	7.33	.000	.20	7.23	.000	.23	7.19	.000	.24
variance (intercept)	.16	.000	.04	.14	.000	.038	.13	.000	.04

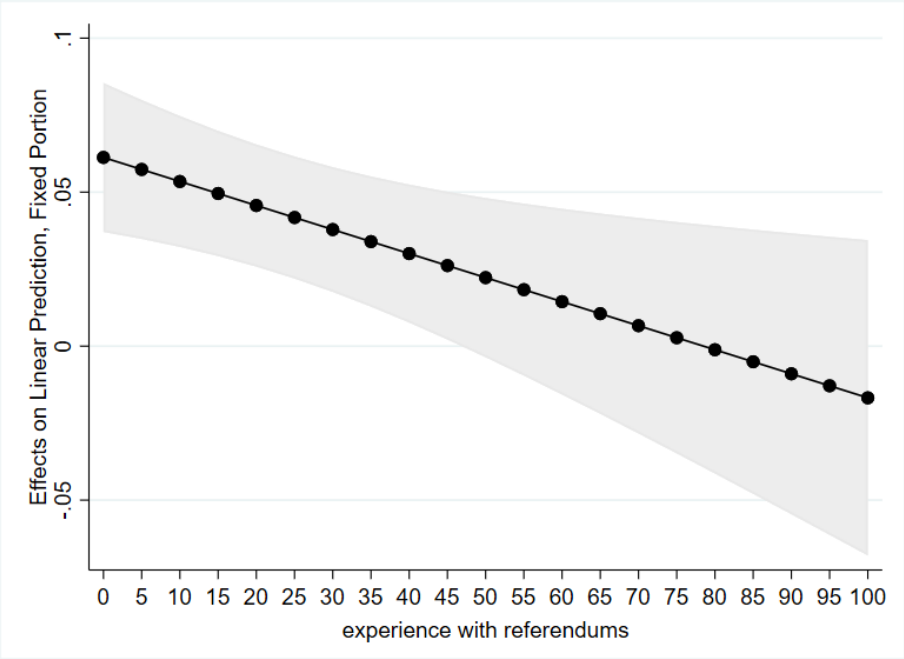
variance (slope)	.00	.000	.00	.00	.00	.000	.00	.000	.00
Wald Chi2	3122.45	.000		2444.53	.00		2548.69	.000	
N	28849			25881			25881		

Note. Estimates are the result of a multilevel regression. Non-standardized coefficients are presented. Weights are applied. In Model II and III Switzerland is excluded from analysis. Data: 2012 European Social Survey, 29 countries.

As can be seen in Model III, the interaction coefficient turns out significant and negative. This means that in countries with higher levels of experience with referendums, the relationship between dissatisfaction with the listening function and support for referendums is weaker than in countries with lower levels of experience.

Figure 3.4 visualizes this interaction in a marginsplot. As can be seen, the model predicts dissatisfaction with listening to cease to be positively associated with support for referendums after about 47 referendums since 1970, approximately 10 referendums per year. Most countries in the sample score far below that threshold.

Figure 3.4 The marginal effect of dissatisfaction with listening function on support for referendums across experience with referendums



Note. Estimates are the result of a multilevel regression (see Table 3.2, Model III). Experience with referendums presents the amount of referendums that have been held on the national level since 1970. Switzerland is excluded from analysis.

Interestingly, experience with referendums as such has a very small positive effect or no significant effect on support for referendums, depending on the specifications of the Swiss case (Appendix, Table A3.5). Hence, it is not the case that experience with referendums as such lowers support, but it is specifically the association between dissatisfaction with listening and support for referendums that depends on country-level experience. This indicates that referendums are a tool that looks appealing as a solution for unresponsive governments in the abstract but the available experiences with referendums to date seem to make people more critical about the potential of referendums to address specific responsiveness problems.

ROBUSTNESS CHECKS

We conduct a range of additional checks to assess the robustness of these findings. First, we want to address the specific feature of the survey design that the sample was split based on whether respondents preferred the listener or the leader model. In our main model we find that dissatisfaction with the listening function relates positively with support for referendums whereas dissatisfaction with the leading function relates negatively. However, both dissatisfaction questions were asked to different subgroups of people. Potentially, there are two explanations for this effect. First, in line with our argument, different types of dissatisfaction relate differently to support for referendums. Second, it is also possible that for citizens that have different representation ideals, dissatisfaction in general relates differently to support for referendums.

To address which of the two explanations is valid, we explore whether the general relationship between dissatisfaction and support for referendums is different for citizens who supported the leader or the listener model. If we find a significant interaction, this indicates that dissatisfaction matters differently for support for referendums depending on what representation style respondents preferred. If we do not find such an interaction, this indicates that it is the specific type of dissatisfaction (government fails to listen or to lead) that is associated with support for referendums. To this end, we run a moderation analysis where we interact citizen preferences on representation with satisfaction with democracy. We find no

interaction effect, nor do we find one for other indicators of dissatisfaction, such as satisfaction with government and political trust (see Appendix, Table A3.7).

Accordingly, it seems that the link between dissatisfaction and support for referendums depends on the specific political function that citizens are dissatisfied about. If the government does not listen, referendums are considered a suitable solution for this particular problem. If the government does not lead, referendums do not tackle the problem in the eyes of citizens.

Second, we test whether dissatisfaction with other aspects of the political system are positively related to support for referendums. To this end, we run the analysis with evaluations of the impartiality of the courts, of the government's success in fighting poverty, and of the media's ability to provide factual information to judge the government. For all three we would expect no association with support for referendums because referendums are hardly a solution to any of these problems. Indeed, for the evaluations of court impartiality and government success in tackling poverty, we find no significant effect. However, for the issue of unbiased media coverage we find a negative significant effect, indicating that referendums are even less desirable when one is dissatisfied with the functioning of the media (Appendix, Table A3.6). This finding again confirms that it is the type of dissatisfaction rather than the subsamples that drive our main effects.

Third, we also conduct our main analyses without general satisfaction with democracy as a control to ensure that it is not the relationship between the different dissatisfaction variables that drives the effects. When dropping satisfaction with democracy from the models, the effects are highly similar in direction, with slightly higher levels of significance (see Appendix, Table A3.8).

DISCUSSION

It is well known that people who are dissatisfied with representative democracy are more supportive of direct democratic practices such as referendums. What is less well known is which kind of dissatisfaction affects support for referendums. By focusing on preferences and perceived evaluations of government responsiveness, we aim to contribute to a better

understanding of support for referendums. We build on the literature on representation to distinguish between two core functions of government: listening and leading. If the government is expected to listen rather than lead, support for referendums is higher. To reach the ideal of a close representation of the opinions of the represented, responsive governments, but also referendums, can be appropriate. Second, dissatisfaction with the government's ability to listen to public opinion is associated with higher support for referendums, whereas the opposite is the case for dissatisfaction with the government's ability to lead. If you cannot count on the government to be responsive, direct interventions of citizens might be a way to have policies that better match public opinion. Lastly, we find that this relationship is especially strong in countries where referendums occur less frequently in political practice.

There are several key lessons to take from this study. First, it is not the case that general frustration with politics uniformly drives support for referendums. Some kinds of dissatisfaction relate strongly and positively to support for referendums while others might even decrease support. Second, support for alternative models of governance can be understood as a pragmatic solution to specific problems that citizens see with the political system. Those citizens who are dissatisfied due to a deficit in responsiveness consider referendums a good solution, whereas citizens that are dissatisfied due to a deficit in leadership do not. Importantly, this study shows that process preferences should not be studied in isolation but always in connection to the actual context of representative democracy. Depending on what problems citizens see with contemporary politics, they might desire different kinds of institutional reforms to address these problems. Also, the extent to which different decision-making tools actually fulfill their promise after regular use turns out to shape public preferences for referendums. Whereas more experience with referendums on the country level is not associated with less support for referendums as such, they seem less suitable as a solution to the problem of responsiveness. More in-depth analysis of country cases or panel studies could provide insights into why this is the case. One potential explanation is that when citizens demand more responsiveness they primarily demand responsiveness to their personal policy positions. The question of whether such instrumental considerations play a role in shaping support for decision-making via referendums remains unanswered (but will be addressed in Chapter 4). Plausibly, more experience with referendums also shows citizens that they sometimes win and sometimes lose. Yet, it is also possible that

citizens are critical of the way referendums are practiced now. They might prefer direct democratic processes that are better integrated in the working of contemporary democracies than is usually the case (Chambers, 2018; Gastil, Richards, & Knobloch, 2014).

This study is not without limitations. Most importantly, the observational nature of the data does not allow us to make causal claims. We can only theorize about the causal direction as well as the presence of absence of confounding factors, but cannot address the endogeneity problem at hand. Hence, we advocate for future studies that can include experimental or panel data to unpack the causality between dissatisfaction and support for referendums further. Second, we focused on the differential effects of dissatisfaction with leading and listening. However, we want to emphasize that we consider the listening and leading functions of government as only two out of many possible objects of dissatisfaction among citizens that can potentially shape preferences for different democratic reforms. Despite this limitation, our study contributes to the literature on process preferences by taking a first step at disentangling the relationship between dissatisfaction and support for referendums. To further parcel out the dissatisfaction effect, it is advisable for future studies to take representative democracy as a composite system with different institutions and procedures that citizens can be dissatisfied with, rather than relying on broader measures of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy or trust in political institutions.

Dissatisfaction remains a central correlate of support for referendums. However, besides more abstract and value-oriented considerations about the ability of referendums to counter diffuse disappointment with existing institutions, there seem to be also pragmatic considerations shaping citizens' views on referendums. In particular, citizens' practical experience with referendums and the expectation that referendums might address specific problems of political systems also affect popular demand for referendums. The idea that different citizens might demand different institutional reforms depending on what they believe is wrong with representative democracy should receive greater attention when thinking about potential reforms to representative democracy.

What remains unclear is what lies underneath the notion of referendums as a potential solution to not being listened to by representatives. Referring back to the two outlined mechanisms in

chapter 2, citizens could be dissatisfied with the listening function because politicians do not implement their policy preferences (policy responsiveness) or they could be dissatisfied with politicians relational behavior in not respecting and recognizing citizens and their views (Mansbridge, 2018; Neblo et al., 2018). Accordingly, we do not know whether citizens support referendums for relational reasons or because they think that referendums would increase their chance of achieving desired policy outcomes. The next two chapters will address this question.

CHAPTER 4

THE ROLE OF INSTRUMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS IN EXPLAINING SUPPORT FOR REFERENDUMS

AT A GLANCE

RESEARCH QUESTION

To what extent is support for referendum driven by instrumental, policy oriented concerns?

METHOD AND DATA

Within-between random effects analysis of original survey data collected in the Netherlands (N= 1 289)

MAIN FINDINGS

1. Citizens support for referendums varies substantially across policy issues

2. Citizens support for referendums is instrumentally motivated. Support is substantially higher…

    a. when they prefer the proposed policy change over the status quo

    b. when they think the majority of fellow citizens shares their policy preference

CHAPTER BASED ON

Werner, H. (2020). If I'll win it, I want it. The role of instrumental considerations in explaining support for referendums*. European Journal of Political Research*, 59(2)

INTRODUCTION

As discussed in Chapter 3, decision-making via referendums is popular among citizens in established democracies which has been repeatedly shown by public opinion surveys (Bengtsson & Mattila, 2009; Bowler et al., 2007; Dalton, Burklin, et al., 2001; Font et al., 2015; Neblo et al., 2010; Schuck & de Vreese, 2015; Webb, 2013). For instance, in 2012, the European Social Survey documents that 72.2% of respondents across Europe give a score of eight or higher out of ten when asked how important it is for democracy that citizens have the final say on political issues by voting directly in referendums (ESS, 2012). What drives support for referendums? Understanding the determinants of these preferences is crucial because broad public support for referendums is often interpreted in academia and political practice as a reason to adapt the political structures to cater to this apparent public demand for direct citizen involvement (e.g. Dalton & Welzel, 2014; Dean, 2016; Donovan & Karp, 2006). Chapter 3 has provided insights into the role that dissatisfaction plays in shaping support for referendums. This Chapter explores a different potential driver of support for referendums.

In the literature on process preferences, support for direct decision-making is often explained by either citizens' higher normative expectations of democracy or – in contrast – by sheer frustration with the political elites (Bowler et al., 2007). Both explanations implicitly assume process preferences to be rather stable attitudes that reflect broader views on democracy or the state of the political system. The argument developed in this chapter is that process preferences are not merely stable, abstract attitudes about how democracy should work. I argue that citizens' support for decision-making via referendums can vary substantially across policy proposals. Further, these variations can be explained by instrumental considerations. I theorize that citizens think about whether a referendum will increase their chances of achieving the policies they desire. As a result, I expect citizens to be especially supportive of decision-making via referendums on a given policy proposal if they either have a strong desire for the proposed policy change or if they believe they are in the majority with their opinion on this proposal.

Despite the fact that the importance of instrumental considerations has been widely acknowledged in political science, this factor has remained understudied in research on

process preferences. This chapter aims to shed light on the role of such considerations by building on research on instrumental reactions to electoral loss in the US context (Bowler et al., 2007; D. A. Smith et al., 2010) and on research on the role of outcome favorability on the evaluation of decision-making processes (e.g. Esaiasson et al., 2019).

The argument is put to an empirical test by using an innovative survey design which can offer insights into the proposed non-stable component of support for referendums. Respondents were questioned on their support for referendums, preferences and majority perceptions across a wide range of policy proposals at the national and local level (data collected in the Netherlands, N=1,289). The results of the within-between random effects analysis allow to better understand the variations in support for referendums *between* individuals and the variations in support for referendums on different policy proposals *within* the same individual (e.g. Bell & Jones, 2015). In particular, the within-analysis provides a strong test of the causal argument, as alternative explanations for the support for referendums are held constant within the individual.

The results provide broad and consistent support for the instrumental hypothesis. Across levels of governance and policy proposals, preference for policy proposals and perceptions of being in the majority are associated with higher support for referendums between and within respondents. These findings open up exciting avenues for future research and contribute to a more detailed understanding of the determinants of process preferences by showing that these preferences vary across policy proposals and are influenced by outcome preferences and expectations.

EXPLANATIONS FOR SUPPORT FOR DIRECT DECISION-MAKING BY CITIZENS

How should political decisions be made from the viewpoint of contemporary citizens in established democracies? In recent years a body of scholarly literature has emerged that studies individuals' preferences for political decision-making processes and documents a high amount of support for direct decision-making such as through referendums. In the current

debate, two prominent approaches to explain such broad support can be identified (see also Chapter 1 and Chapter 3).

The first notion of citizens' process preferences is best reflected in the literature on political cultures which describes the emergence of 'assertive citizens' (Dalton & Welzel, 2014), 'self-actualizing citizens' (Bennett, 2008) or 'critical citizens' (Norris, 1999) in established democracies. The argument goes that societies move towards a higher level of emancipative, self-expressive and post-materialist values. Citizens have become increasingly critical of political structures as their political resources grow as a result of rising education levels and greater access to information (Norris, 2011). For instance, Dalton and Welzel (2014) have argued that this new generation of assertive citizens has higher egalitarian expectations of the political system and specifically calls for institutionalized involvement of the ordinary citizen. Thus, dissatisfaction with old structures and a more critical mind-set evoke a desire for alternatives because "existing channels for participation fall short of democratic ideals" (Norris, 1999, p. 27, also Hooghe, Marien, and Oser, 2017). Different specifications of this approach have been suggested under labels such as *cognitive mobilization, new politics*, or the *dissatisfaction* hypothesis (Dalton, Bürklin, et al., 2001). They all share the basic assumption that citizens have high democratic aspirations which spark genuine support for new opportunities for citizen involvement (Norris, 2011).

The second approach opposes this notion. As Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) most famously argued, citizens are not at all in favor of more participation – they have simply become so deeply frustrated with current politics that they would choose almost any alternative. In the preference ranking of those citizens, decision-making by benevolent politicians or experts is most desirable. If, however, politicians are primarily focused on their own interests and do not focus on the common good, citizens must have the opportunity to step in and exert control over them. More citizen involvement is therefore considered a second-best option, a "medicine they must take in order to keep the disease of greedy politicians and special interests from getting further out of hand" (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002, p. 131). Accordingly, support for direct democratic processes stems primarily from citizens' general frustration with the establishment (Bowler & Donovan, 2007; Dalton, Bürklin, et al., 2001; Neblo et al., 2010; Schuck & de Vreese, 2015).

Even though both accounts challenge each other in their substantial implications and their relation to normative accounts of participatory democracy, they do share several assumptions. First, they assume that support for direct democratic processes is relatively stable within individuals at a certain moment in time, depending on citizens' values or general frustration with politics. As such, we would expect citizens to hold stable preferences for referendums across policy proposals. Second, in both approaches, the preference for referendums is assumed to emanate from general ideas about how democracy should work and focus solely on the process through which decisions ought to be made.

The argument put forward in this chapter challenges these assumptions. I argue that citizens' process preferences are more dynamic than previously assumed. It is plausible that citizens have a baseline attitude towards referendums which is shaped by values and evaluation of politicians generally. However, I argue that process preferences also have a non-stable, context-dependent component that has so far remained understudied (see also Wojcieszak, 2014; Dean, 2016). Furthermore, to explain support for the use of referendums, I propose to look beyond general values and frustration and take instrumental considerations into account. Citizens care about the outcomes of political decision-making and the expectation of such outcomes can shape preferences for certain decision-making arrangements. Generally, context variation and instrumental considerations have remained largely neglected in the debate on process preferences. This is especially surprising as these considerations receive a substantial amount of attention in other research on political behavior (for instance rational choice approaches to voting). However, there are some notable exceptions that this chapter builds on that will be reviewed in the following section.

PREVIOUS FINDINGS ON THE VARIABILITY OF PROCESS PREFERENCES AND THE ROLE OF INSTRUMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Wojcieszak (2014) studied process preferences in Spain for three different issues by drawing on the distinction made by Carmines and Stimson (1980) between easy and hard issues. She found that particularly for the "easy" issue of abortion, support for decision-making by citizens is highest, followed by the issue of migration and the "hard" issue of taxation. Similarly, in his

qualitative interviews (Q-method) with citizens and civil servants, Dean (2016) found differences in support for citizen involvement depending on issue area.

Instrumental considerations are rarely discussed in the literature on process preferences, yet one notable exception is Smith et al. (2010). Inspired by a study by Bowler and Donovan (Bowler et al., 2007) on the relationship between electoral loss and support for institutional reform, Smith et al. (2010) studied support for a national referendum in the US context. Using panel data, they showed that support for a national referendum increases directly after an election if participants lost in the election. The authors explain these findings by arguing that there are "strategic pockets of support (and opposition) for a national referendum" (p. 509). Because citizens know that they have less of a chance of getting their desired outcome through representative decision-making if their party is not in power, it is 'rational' to be more in favor of referendums to reach desired policies. Notwithstanding this study's important contribution, further evidence is required to comprehensively test the existence of instrumental considerations in process preference formation because there are various explanations for why losing in elections and support for alternative forms of decision-making can be linked (such as retrospective denunciation of the electoral process, see Daniller, 2016).

Instrumental considerations were also found to be of importance for related topics, such as support for national primaries after elections in the US (Tolbert, Redlawsk, & Bowen, 2009), electoral reform (Aldrich, Reifler, & Munger, 2014; Blais, Laslier, Poinas, & Van Der Straeten, 2015; Bowler & Donovan, 2007) or support for institutional change among politicians (Bowler et al., 2006). Lastly, another strand of literature has documented that evaluations of political procedures are influenced by their outcome favorability (e.g. Arnesen, 2017; Arvai & Froschauer, 2010; Esaiasson, Persson, Gilljam, & Lindholm, 2016; Marien & Kern, 2018) . This study aims to expand this notion by arguing that the same holds true for the *anticipation* of outcomes when thinking about preferred decision-making procedures. To what extent this expectation holds empirically is unclear to date.

A NEGLECTED DETERMINANT OF PROCESS PREFERENCES: INSTRUMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are two main arguments in this chapter. First, the assumption that citizens hold only stable, all-encompassing preferences has to be qualified. I argue that citizens' preferences for referendums also entail a non-stable component which leads to support for decision making via referendums in some cases but not in others. Rather than being merely principled supporters or opponents of referendums, citizens might switch from referendum supporter to referendum opponent based on the policy proposal at hand. This notion of variability of process preferences does not compete with or disqualify existing explanations for support for direct democratic decision-making. I do not argue that broader democratic aspirations or general dissatisfaction play no role. In fact, it seems most plausible that citizens' process preferences consist of a stable and non-stable component.

Second, I argue that individual expectations of achieving desired policy outcomes play a substantial role in shaping preferences for referendums. According to this instrumental explanation, citizens would prefer referendums to be used to make political decisions when they perceive that this process is likely to yield more favorable outcomes. I expect such instrumental considerations to manifest themselves in two ways. First, I expect citizens that support specific policy proposals that entail a shift away from the status quo to be more supportive of decision making via referendums on these proposals. The argument here is that citizens who desire a specific deviation from the status quo have nothing to lose by demanding a referendum on such a proposal but could potentially gain the desired change. In contrast, citizens who do not support the proposal but would rather stick to the status quo or favor a different kind of policy change have nothing to gain from such a referendum but potentially much to lose (for a similar argument in regards to voting in referendums, see Schuck and de Vreese 2009). Therefore, I expect particularly the proponents of a policy proposal to favor a referendum on this proposal.[14] The second and related expectation is that citizens who believe they are in the majority with their opinion on a given proposal will be more supportive of

[14] This is not to say that citizens could not also be supportive of other reforms or changes that would bring about the desired change, such as support for new elections or decision making by experts. As research has documented, citizens can be supportive of different (sometimes seemingly contradicting) processes simultaneously (e.g. Webb, 2013).

decision-making via a referendum. Here the assumption is that citizens evaluate how likely it is that they might win a referendum and adapt their support for this decision-making arrangement accordingly.[15]

These two effects can be specified on two different levels. First, I expect that citizens who favor a specific policy proposal that moves away from the status quo are more supportive to make a decision on this proposal via a referendum than citizens who favor this specific policy proposal less. I expect that citizens who perceive they hold the majority position to be more supportive to make a decision on this proposal via a referendum than citizens who believe they are not in the majority. As such, I expect differences *between* citizens ('*between* individuals effects').

Hypothesis 1a: *Individuals who favor policy proposals that entail a shift away from the status quo are more supportive of the use of a referendum on these proposals than individuals who are less in favor of these policy proposals.*

Hypothesis 2a: *Individuals who believe they hold the majority on specific policy proposals are more supportive of the use of a referendum on these policy proposals than individuals who believe they do not hold a majority.*

Second, I expect that citizens can prefer different decision-making processes depending on the specific policy proposal at stake. Hence, in addition to the differences in process preferences *between* individuals, I expect that someone can hold a diverse set of process preferences depending on the policy proposal that is up for decision (i.e. differences *within* individuals). I argue that this non-stable component of process preferences can be, at least in part, explained through instrumental considerations. I expect that someone is more supportive of decision-making by referendum if she or he is in favor of the specific policy change to be decided or thinks his or her position on this proposal is the majority position. Accordingly, I

[15] Majority perceptions do not necessarily have to be accurate. I theorize the *perceptions* of being in the majority to matter and therefore make no assumption regarding citizens' levels of sophistication and information.

also assume individuals hold different preferences across different policy proposals ('*within*-individual effects').

Hypothesis 1b: *Individuals are more supportive of the use of a referendum on a policy proposal when they favor the proposal compared to when they favor the proposal less.*

Hypothesis 2b: *Individuals are more supportive of the use of referendum on a policy proposal when they think they are in the majority compared to when they think they are in the minority.*

This approach differs from the current explanations in its assumption of stability of process preferences and its outcome orientation. It implies that rather than merely procedural characteristics, citizens also take into account the actual outcome of a referendum. The assumption is that citizens take political decision-making seriously for what it eventually does: allocating scarce resources. While the term "instrumental" may imply a focus on personal gain, this argument refers more broadly to policy preferences, whether they are egotropic or sociotropic.

DESIGN

To put the proposed argument to an empirical test, a design was required that contains measures both between and within individuals to investigate the existence of a non-stable component in process preferences and explain it with the suggested instrumental considerations. To this end, survey data was collected to retrieve information on the preferences for referendums and policy proposals as well as majority perceptions across a range of policy proposals (ten) on the national and the local levels among 1,289 Dutch citizens. Collecting data on the same individual across various proposals enables me to study whether the same individual supports decision-making via referendums on some proposals but not on others and to what extent this variation can be explained by support for specific policy change and perceptions of being in the majority. The additional advantage of designing a within-component is that confidence in the causal argument can be strengthened. Since all other individual-level factors are held constant in such an analysis (such as demographic

characteristics or political attitudes), all confounding variables at the individual level can be ruled out by design.

In the Dutch context advisory initiative referendums on the national level were legally possible at the moment of data collection[16]. Even though nationwide referendums occur rarely (so far only three (Müller, 2018)), advisory referendums on the local level are more frequent (193 referendums between 1906 and 2014 (van der Krieken, 2015)). This indicates that citizens are familiar with the institutional tool of a referendum and find its use credible. Accordingly, the Netherlands presents a rather representative case for most European countries where referendums occur from time to time but are not a frequent part of everyday political decision-making as is the case for instance in Switzerland (Qvortrup, 2014). As Jacobs (2018) points out, it is crucial for the study of referendums to move beyond the usual suspects that hold regular referendums such as Switzerland or the US. The potential of generalizing from this case to other countries will be addressed in the discussion section.

DATA

Data was collected with the help of an online-panel company (PanelClix) in July 2017. PanelClix employs a stratified sampling approach to reach population distributions on age, gender, education and region[17]. The obtained sample consists of 1,289 Dutch citizens with an average age of 51 years. 44% are female, 35% hold a college degree and respondents come from 334 different Dutch municipalities. According to Dutch census data, the sample represents the Dutch population that is eligible to vote well (>18 years old), yet men are slightly overrepresented (Statistics Netherlands CBS, 2018). To avoid oversampling of politically interested and engaged citizens, the invitation referred merely to "decision-making" as the topic of the survey. Respondents that raced through the questionnaire and exerted impossible

[16] Since then, the law on constitutional referendums has been abolished.
[17] Quotas were soft and not interlocked

response times (less than 25% of the average response time[18]) were excluded from the analysis.[19]

MEASURES

To measure preferences for the use of referendums, previous research has often simply asked respondents if they desire "more direct democracy" or "more referendums" without being particularly specific about the actual procedure this would entail. As a result, both quantitative and qualitative research suggest that citizens have limited and different understandings of such broad approaches to political decision-making arrangements (e.g. Craig, Kreppel and Kane, 2001). There are several forms of referendums which can potentially be desirable to citizens to a different extent. Therefore, it is necessary to provide participants with a clear description of what was meant by referendum in the context of this survey, even though this comes at the expense of only collecting data about one of various potential types of referendums (for a discussion of this trade-off, see Dean 2016). Accordingly, before answering questions on their process preferences, participants read a short description of the type of referendum they were being questioned about:

"In the Netherlands, political decisions are usually taken by elected representatives. But in many countries and also in the Netherlands, there is a debate about whether more decisions should be made by citizens directly, for instance via binding referendums. In a referendum all citizens can vote on a specific issue. Binding means that the government has to follow the result of the referendum. The outcome of a referendum is only valid if a critical mass of people take part, typically 30 %."

Afterwards, respondents were asked if they are generally in favor of using such binding referendums at the national level when important political decisions are to be made. The answer options ranged from completely against (1) to completely in favor (7). This question was adapted to measure preferences for the local level and across specific policy proposals at

[18] The study was combined with another unrelated study on mobile app use of similar length. The average response time excluding the 1st and 99th percentile was 27 minutes.

[19] An additional analysis was conducted including these "racers", yielding similar results. Results are presented in Appendix, Table A4.17

the national and local levels. The policy proposals respondents were questioned on are presented in Table 4.1. The goal was to achieve a diverse set of proposals to prevent the findings being driven by a particular issue family. The choice of policy proposals at the national level was guided by what issues are considered (somewhat) relevant by the Dutch population based on survey data from the Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2017) while also including specific proposals that were present in the public debate at the time of the survey, such as the debate on home care at the local level. Further, to build on previous research by Wojcieszak (2014) who found that citizens are more supportive of decision making by citizens on easy issues compared to hard issues (based on the distinction by Carmines and Stimson (1980)), both issue areas were covered in this survey. Furthermore, proposals were selected that address different cleavages in society, such as high vs. low income, low vs. high medical needs, young vs. old, culturally progressive vs culturally conservative, etc. to ensure variation on policy preferences.

Table 4.1 Policy proposals used in study

National level	Local level
• people with high incomes should pay more taxes	• cars should be banned from the center in [municipality]
• we should drop the "own risk" in health care payments	• more police officers should be employed in [municipality]
• more migrants should be allowed to come to the Netherlands	• more houses in [municipality] should be reserved for social housing
• abortion should be allowed after the third month	• home care should be publicly regulated in [municipality] instead of run by private companies
• unemployed people should receive more financial support	
• pension payments should be increased	

The main independent variables of interest are support for specific policy proposals that entail a shift away from the status quo and perception of being in the majority on this specific proposal. Support for the specific policy proposals was measured by asking the respondents whether they agreed with a number of specific proposals, which were all framed as deviation from the status quo (see Table 4.1). Answer options ranged from 1 (completely disagree) to 7

(completely agree). An overview of respondents' support of these proposals can be found in the Appendix (Table A4.15).

To assess *perceptions of being in the majority* for each of the presented policy proposals, respondents were asked whether they thought that most people in the Netherlands have the same opinion on the respective proposal as them, with answer options *yes*, *no* and *don't know*. In addition, the general assessment of the overall belief of being in the majority was measured. To this end, individuals were asked to what extent they believed that citizens in the Netherlands/their municipality generally share their opinions. The scale ranged from 1 (not at all) to 7 (absolutely), including a don't know option.

The ordering of the questions was designed as follows: 1) Preference for a referendum on the described policy proposal, 2) preference for these policy proposals, 3) perceptions of holding a majority view on these proposals. This order was chosen to avoid guiding respondents in the direction of the theoretical argument. Further, respondents were first questioned on their general preferences and then on policy-specific preferences. To avoid ordering effects, all items within the policy-specific batteries were presented in random order.

Control Variables. The advantage of a within-design is that it by definition controls for individual characteristics, such as political attitudes or demographics. This is because comparisons are made within the same individual and thus (possibly confounding) individual characteristics are kept constant. Accordingly, the within part of the analysis does not require additional control variables. For the between-individuals part of the analysis, a range of variables that are typically found predictive in research on process preferences were included. First, as advanced by advocates of the cognitive mobilization hypothesis, political interest and emancipative values are assumed to positively relate to the desire for more inclusive decision-making procedures and were thus included. Political interest was measured with the standard ESS item (*how interested are you in politics?* 1-7, ESS 2017). A short battery assesses emancipative values comprising the PVQ[20] measures of the Schwartz values of Universalism and Self-direction (Beckers, Siegers, & Kuntz, 2012). Second, drawing on the stealth democracy

[20] Portrait Value Questionnaire, see Appendix A4 for wording

thesis, stealth democratic attitudes were measured using the scale proposed by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002). Further, political trust and other measures of political support have been shown to negatively relate to the preference for referendums (e.g. Bengtsson & Mattila, 2009; Dalton, Bürklin, et al., 2001; Webb, 2013). Therefore, a standard measure of trust in institutions was included (*how much trust do you have in the following institutions? Parliament/politicians/political parties/legal system/police,* and for the local level*: city council in [municipality], local government in [municipality]?* 1-7, ESS, 2017). Risk aversion is included because it seems plausible that individuals who are more prone to taking risks are also less hesitant to risk direct democratic procedures (Bowler & Donovan, 2007). Risk aversion was measured by asking: *Are you generally a person who is fully prepared to take risks or do you try to avoid taking risks?* 1-7, (Dohmen et al., 2011). Level of education has been shown to negatively relate to preferences for direct democratic decision-making (C. Anderson & Goodyear-Grant, 2010; Coffé & Michels, 2014) and was therefore included. Lastly, respondents were questioned on their age, gender and generalized trust (*most people can be trusted*, 1-7, ESS 2017). The complete questionnaire as well as descriptive information on the measures can be found in Appendix A4.

ANALYSIS STRATEGY

To study the hypothesized relationships on the within and the between levels, the data is reshaped into a long format. This yields a clustered dataset with responses to the different proposals nested within respondents. I use regression models with clustered robust standard errors to analyze the data. Employing a multilevel regression approach yields substantially the same results (see Appendix, Table A4.18).

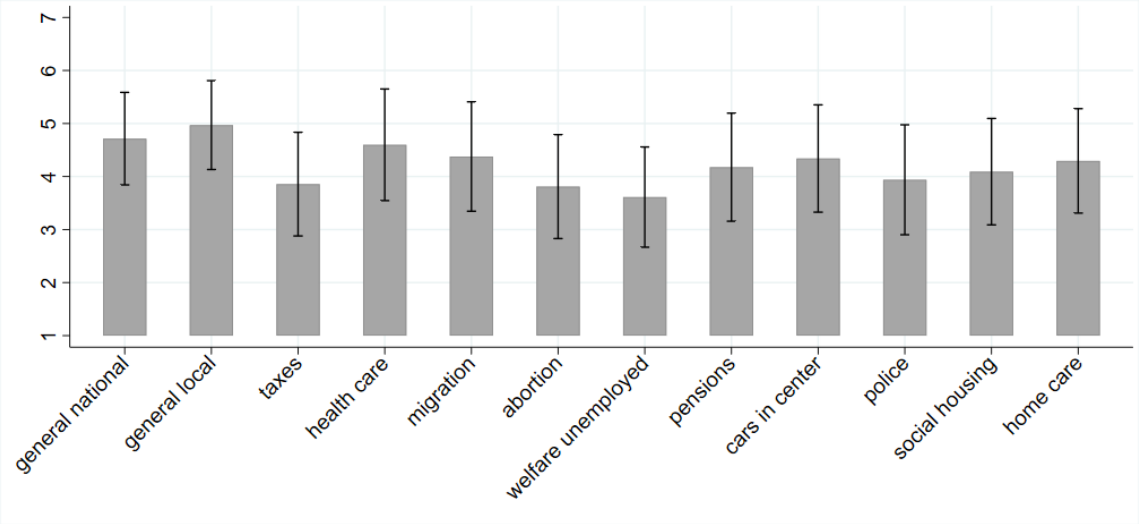
The study was designed to estimate effects *between* and *within* respondents. Accordingly, an analysis strategy was required that is able to distinguish between effects both between and within individuals. Such a method, referred to as the unified within-between random effects (RE) framework, has been developed for analyzing nested or panel data (Bell and Jones, 2015; for a recent empirical application see de Blok et al., 2017). To separate within-effects from between-effects, the variance of the independent variable is decomposed into a respondent-specific mean value (between-respondent effect) and a value for the difference between the

actual score and the respondent-specific mean value. This framework allows the estimation of within- and between-level effects separately and combines the advantages of both fixed and random effects by modelling causal heterogeneity instead of simply controlling for it (for further information on the method, see Bell and Jones, 2015; de Blok et al., 2017).

RESULTS

Before turning to the core analysis of this chapter, descriptive information on the main dependent and independent variables of interest are presented. First, the overall support for the use of binding referendums is quite strong (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 Support for the use of referendums across policy proposals and levels of governance



Note. Mean scores, N=1,289, error bars represent standard deviations.

On the national level, the mean on a 7-point scale is 4.7 with 60% of people being rather or completely in favor of binding referendums. On the local level, support is even slightly stronger, with a mean of 4.9 and 65% of participants being rather or completely in favor of binding referendums. This is in line with findings from large-n surveys such as the ESS (2012) or the LISS panel for the Dutch context (e.g. in 2012, 62.55% supported the use of referendums (LISS panel, 2012)). Overall, support for referendums on specific policy proposals is lower with substantial variation across proposals and between individuals (as the standard deviations indicate).

Second, the stability of process preferences across policy proposals is examined. To this end, respondents are categorized in three groups: stable supporters, stable opponents and switchers (with a conservative estimate of switchers). As can be seen in Table 4.2, the predominant majority of respondents fall into the switcher category, strongly indicating that preferences for referendums contain a non-stable component[21]. Hence, there seems to be more to citizens' preferences for the use of referendums than a stable attitude about how political decisions should generally be made.

Table 4.2 Types of referendum supporters

	stable opponents	*switchers*	*stable supporters*
N	200	832	257

Note. *Stable opponents* are individuals that are neutral or against referendums across all policy proposals, *stable supporters* are individuals that are neutral or in favor of referendums on all policy proposals. *Switchers* are all the others. N=1,289.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PREFERENCE FOR PROPOSED POLICY CHANGE, MAJORITY PERCEPTIONS AND SUPPORT FOR THE USE OF REFERENDUMS

To test the main argument of this study, an OLS model with clustered robust standard errors is run, including the previously described between- and within- components for the two independent variables of interest. Figure 4.2 plots the unstandardized regression coefficients of this analysis both for the variables at the within and between levels (all control variables are at the between level). In Figure 4.2, we see at the between-level that both the preference for the proposed policy change and perceptions of being in the majority have positive and significant effects on support for decision-making via referendums across all 10 different policy proposals. This means that individuals who support the proposed policy change or believe their opinion is shared by the majority exert higher levels of support for decision-making by referendums on these proposals than individuals who have a lower desire for the proposed policy change or perceive themselves to be in the minority. The same substantial results are obtained by running bivariate analyses for the individual independent variables without controls (see Appendix, Table A4.20).

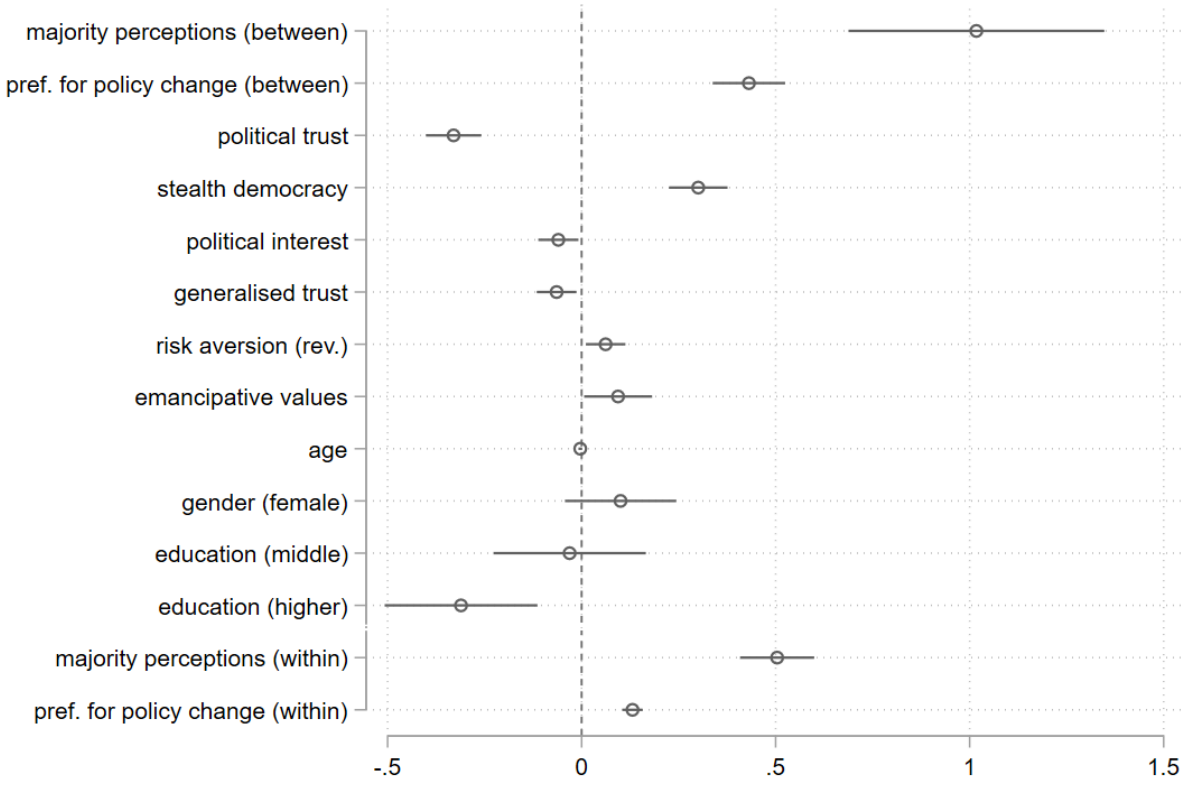
[21] For a table with further descriptive information about these groups see Appendix, Table A4.19

Hence, H1a and H2a are supported by the data. These findings on the between level support the general argument of instrumental considerations, but despite controlling for other predictive factors, alternative explanations cannot be completely ruled out at this point.

Turning to the within-level, the model controls for all between-respondent differences and therefore can confidently rule out alternative explanations. As can be seen in Figure 4.2 we also see that the preference for policy change and majority perceptions have positive and significant effects at the within level. Accordingly, the more in favor one is of a specific policy proposal that entails a shift away from the status quo, the more supportive one is of decision-making via a referendum on this proposal. If one thinks one holds a majority position on a specific policy proposal, one is more supportive of decision-making via a referendum on this policy proposal.

The same results are obtained running a fixed effects model for the within level only (see Appendix, Table A4.21). These findings support H1b and H2b. Excluding these instrumental explanations from the model results in a drop in R2 from .25 to .17, indicating a substantial explanatory power of the independent variables of interest.

Figure 4.2 Explaining support for the use of referendums between and within respondents



Note. R^2 = .25, N=8847. Non-standardized coefficients are presented, CI = 95%, "don't knows" are excluded from the analysis, the estimates are the results of an OLS regression with clustered robust standard errors (proposals nested within individuals). The corresponding table can be found in Appendix, Table A4.16.

SCOPE CONDITIONS

To gain more insights into the scope conditions of the effects at play, additional analyses are run including moderators. Given that these analyses are post-hoc tests, these results and particularly the obtained significance values must be interpreted with caution. First, majority perceptions could be more influential when the preference for a specific policy proposal is strong and vice versa. However, these possible interaction effects at both the between and within levels are not significant (see Appendix, Table A4.22). Thus it seems that majority perceptions and support for specific policy proposals operate independently of each other.

Second, the magnitude of the majority perceptions effect on process preferences might depend on the public salience of an issue. Based on Eurobarometer data (European Commission, 2017) most proposals studied can be classified as related to debates that are either highly, moderately or barely important to the Dutch public at the moment of surveying.

Including this salience variable as a moderator of majority perceptions results in positive interaction effects both at the between and within levels (see Appendix, Table A4.23). This provides first indications that majority perceptions are particularly important as drivers of support for decision-making via referendums when the issue underlying a proposed policy change is salient in the public debate.

Third, the certainty individuals attach to their perceptions of being in the majority could also moderate the relationship at hand. To this end a measure of overall certainty is interacted with majority perceptions at the between level for national and local policy proposals. It does not seem that the effect is stronger or weaker for individuals that are less certain of their majority perceptions (see Table A4.24 and A4.25 in the Appendix). However, while this first indication suggests that certainty is less important, the measure is rather coarse and cannot tap into within-respondent variation.

Fourth, the level of education might moderate the relationships of interest at the within level. It is possible that highly educated people have more principled views on decision-making via referendums and instrumental considerations play less of a role for them (see also Collingwood 2012). Indeed, the interaction analysis reveals that majority perceptions and support for specific policy change are more strongly associated with the preference for referendums on these proposals for lower-educated respondents than for higher-educated respondents (see Appendix, Table A4.26).

Fifth, both on the local and national levels there are substantial positive significant associations of perceptions of *generally* being in the majority and *general* support for the use of referendums (Appendix, Table A4.27).

ROBUSTNESS CHECKS

Lastly, the results of a range of tests are reported that assess the robustness of the main findings. First, I address the previously described idea that citizens' process preferences consist of both a stable baseline component and a more dynamic, context dependent component. To this end, I include the general preference for referendums as a control variable in the model.

As expected the general preference does significantly predict support for referendums on specific policy proposals (see Appendix, Table A4.28). However, both at the within and the between levels we still see significant positive effects of policy-specific instrumental considerations that barely change in magnitude compared to the main analysis presented in Figure 4.2). This finding lends support to the notion that specific process preferences are shaped both by a general preference for this decision-making arrangement and by policy-specific instrumental considerations.

Second, respondents with "don't know" responses to the majority perceptions questions are taken into account. This cannot be done in the main within-between random effects model due to the calculation of within and between variance, but can be included in a general OLS with clustered robust standard errors. The results show that respondents who stated that they did not know about the opinions of their fellow citizens do not differ from respondents who perceived they are in the minority, while the effect of perceptions of being in the majority remains positive and significant (Appendix, Table A4.29). This finding fosters confidence that it is indeed the perception of being in the majority that is positively related to support for referendums. Third, to prevent the detected effects from being driven by one or two specific policy proposals, the main analysis is also run for each proposal separately (see Appendix, Table A4.30 and Table A4.31). The majority perception effect can be found across all proposals but less so for the proposals related to taxation (also: p=.051) and social housing (not significant). The effect of favorable preferences on policy proposals is also robust across most proposals except cars in city centers (not significant) and immigration (significant negative effect). The latter can be explained by a strong correlation between being in favor of referendums generally and opposing more migration (see Appendix Table A4.32). In short, it seems that the effects documented in the main analysis hold across most proposals and are not merely driven by a single proposal. The robustness checks showed that the documented effects hold across a range of additional specifications and analysis types.

DISCUSSION

Understanding the origins of citizens' process preferences is crucial. Almost any discussion of the virtues of democratic innovations and increased citizen involvement is to some extent based on an apparent public demand for such decision-making arrangements. Studying

process preferences is thus not only relevant to scholars working in this field but also because of the political influence of the observed desire for more direct democratic policy-making across Europe (Smith 2009).

In this chapter, the argument was put forward that individuals take their outcome expectations into account when expressing support for political decision-making procedures. To my knowledge, this study is the first to explicitly make this argument and provide a comprehensive test across different policy proposals, levels of governance and between and within individuals. The results of the presented study show that preferences to use a referendum indeed vary across policy proposals. These preferences are significantly associated with support for a specific policy proposal and the perception of having the majority on one's side – which holds across proposals, levels of governance and between and within respondents.

These findings have important implications for our understanding of citizens' attitudes towards direct democratic decision-making. Citizens seem to think more pragmatically about decision-making procedures than previously accounted for in the literature. This means that process preferences are not (only) stable political attitudes but also contain non-stable, context-specific component. In this study the vast majority of respondents (65%) was neither fully committed nor fully opposed to decision-making by referendum but supported its use occasionally. It thus seems that categorizing citizens as strictly "assertive citizens" or "stealth democrats" can only apply for a small minority of the citizenry. These findings echo a recent discussion by Dean (2016) who calls for "understanding different forms of participation not as alternative models of governance but as responses to specific problems" (see also Warren, 2017). The debate about process preferences might benefit from shifting the focus away from existing accounts of normative models of democratic decision-making to a more context- and problem-specific perspective. In this study, the existence of a non-stable component in process preferences could be shown already by simply varying the policy proposals while keeping the broader political context constant. There are a multitude of other factors that can vary given a specific referendum and that can potentially impact citizens preferences, such as the initiator of the referendum, parties in power or question wording, to name but a few.

Second, the findings have important implications for the potential of referendums to foster democratic legitimacy. If the anticipation of policy outcomes is a core driver of preferences for citizen involvement, a crucial factor in determining satisfaction with the process and its outcomes is the accuracy of such anticipation. If majority perceptions are accurate, it might actually be good from a normative perspective if citizens that overwhelmingly desire a certain policy demand a direct tool to fulfil this preference. As such, referendums can be used as a shortcut to realizing broadly supported policies without lengthy negotiations between parties. Presumably, scenarios with a strong majority across party lines do not occur too often. Examples could be socio-cultural issues such as gay marriage or the right to abort pregnancy. From a perspective of increased legitimacy perceptions, individuals that correctly assumed they are in the majority, demand a referendum and subsequently win this referendum, will be satisfied as well (Marien & Kern, 2018).

Yet, if outcome expectations do not align with the actual distribution of preferences in society, referendums could potentially even cause a decline in legitimacy beliefs. If the main reason to demand a referendum is a high expected utility, satisfaction will only be the consequence if the outcome lives up to the expectations. The implementation of a referendum could result in surprised losers that expected to win and eventually lead to frustration, especially among those that called for a referendum in the first place (see Chapter 5).

This could be of particular importance as it seems that especially those citizens that hold extreme views and support policy change will develop a more favorable attitude towards decision-making via referendums and potentially advocate for it in public. This parallels the observation that referendums have recently received substantial support from populist parties on the fringes of the political spectrum (e.g. Mudde, 2007; Bowler et al., 2017) and their supporters in Europe (Bjånesøy & Ivarsflaten, 2016). Research on the motivation of politicians to introduce referendums have similarly found instrumental considerations such as maintaining or expanding power play an important role (Bowler et al., 2006; Ruth-Lovell & Welp, 2019).

As with every empirical investigation, the present study does not come without limitations. Most importantly, the study was cross-sectional in nature, therefore limiting strong claims

about causality. Yet, with regards to potential confounding variables, the within-analysis provided strong evidence that it is indeed the perceptions of being in the majority and support for the specific policy proposals that elicit the effects, as all other variables were held constant within the individual. Whereas the within-analysis is powerful in ruling out confounding variables, it cannot establish the temporal order criterion to establish the direction of causality. The only possible response to this objection in the context of this study is that it seems theoretically less plausible that individuals' process preferences for specific policy issues cause their perceptions of being in the majority or their substantial preferences on these issues. Nonetheless, the present design cannot provide conclusive answers to these questions and experimental research on the topic is required to strengthen confidence in the causal argument. In addition, despite all the practical advantages of using the services of Online Panel companies, the stratified sampling approach (which does not include the whole population as a sampling frame) constrains our ability to make inferences about the general population. While this is particularly problematic when it comes to absolute scores and less so when focusing on the existence of a relationship between variables (Yeager et al., 2011), it would certainly be beneficial to replicate the study on a cross-national probability sample.

Also the design comes with some limitations due to the balance between realism and maintaining a high level of control and parsimony of research design. While particular efforts were made to cover a wide range of issues, the argument regarding support for specific policy proposals and perceptions of being in the majority could play out differently for other issues that were not included in the present study, for instance policy proposals in the exact opposite direction of the ones used in this study (e.g. decreasing taxes for higher incomes). This also affects the measurement of majority perceptions which could not grasp nuances between large or tight majorities or citizens certainty about their judgements. Further, since the chosen policy proposals were hypothetical in nature, mapping on to broader societal questions, they were not as specific as real-life referendum proposals. Particularly, the role that parties and partisanship play in the initiation of and public debate on a referendum (see for instance Jacobs, Akkerman, & Zaslove, 2018) could not be taken into account in the present study. Future studies could take up these factors and study them in conjunction. One example of a suitable design approach can be found in Arnesen et al. (2019), where they use conjoint

experiments to uncover the conditions under which citizens consider referendums on EU membership legitimate.

What also demands discussion are the broader scope conditions of the present study. The theoretical argument was tested in the Dutch context where nationwide referendums occur rarely, like in most other European countries. Thus, referendums are still considered an unusual way of decision-making that is only implemented if political will or popular demand is strong. Given the comparability of the Netherlands to other European countries in regards to frequency of referendums, I also assume the general mechanism to occur in most other European countries as well (indications are found in Dean, 2016 and Wojcieszak, 2014). Yet future investigations in other national contexts are required. It is likely that the situation is different in countries such as Switzerland, where referendums are institutionally embedded in regular political decision-making. It is plausible that a learning effect occurs when the alternation between winning and losing is experienced in the referendum process – in particular for citizens that hold inaccurate beliefs about being in the majority across policy proposals. Further, the degree to which instrumental considerations shape process preferences can change depending on other context factors. Particularly salient topics that are high on the public agenda could trigger instrumental considerations to play out whereas this might be less so with less salient topics.

Despite these limitations, the present study provides a novel contribution to research on process preferences by shedding light on an understudied driver of support for referendums. Instrumental considerations shape citizens' preferences for direct democratic decision-making arrangements, and these are more variable and context-dependent than previously assumed. Two questions emerge from this chapter. First, are all citizens equally instrumental in their preference for referendums? Or are some subgroups more focused on the utility they might gain from referendums than others? And second, what happen when referendums disappoint the expectations of desirable policy outcomes? These two questions will be investigated in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

ARE POPULISTS SORE LOSERS? EXPLAINING POPULIST CITIZENS' PREFERENCES FOR AND REACTIONS TO REFERENDUMS

AT A GLANCE

RESEARCH QUESTION

Are populist citizens more instrumental in their preferences for and reactions to referendums than non-populist citizens?

METHOD AND DATA

Regression analysis of original Panel Data collected in the context of the Dutch Information Law Referendums 2017 (N=665/1319)

MAIN FINDINGS

1. Populist citizens are equally instrumental in their preferences for this referendum than non-populist citizens

2. Populist citizens are more, not less willing to accept unfavorable referendums outcomes than non-populist citizens

3. In contrast to Chapter 3, majority perceptions are not associated with more support for this referendum. In line with Chapter 3, support for the policy proposal is associated with more support for this referendum

   But citizens that expected to win are less willing to accept an unfavorable outcomes and decrease in their general support of referendums

CHAPTER BASED ON

Werner, H. & Jacobs, K. (2020). Are populists sore losers? Explaining populist citizens' preferences for and reactions to referendums. *Under Review*

INTRODUCTION

Discontent about politics is widespread and so are concerns about the consequences for the health of democracies. This concern is exemplified, if not motivated, by the recent rise in visibility of populist citizens who feel that politicians are an elitist group that does not listen to citizens. This chapter addresses this particular subgroup of the population and their support as well as reactions to referendums. They are often employed as a response to public discontent (Bowler & Donovan, 2013; Bowler et al., 2006; Cain, Dalton, & Scarrow, 2006; Marien & Kern, 2018; Scarrow, 2001). However, little is known about the impact of these referendums on the citizens whose desires it wishes to meet, especially those with higher degrees of populist attitudes.

A limited number of studies has examined the relationship between citizens with a higher degree of populist attitudes and preference for decision-making via referendums.[22] These studies suggest that citizens with populist attitudes[23] are especially supportive of decision-making via referendums (Bjånesøy & Ivarsflaten, 2016; Jacobs et al., 2018; Mohrenberg et al., 2019). But does this mean they will consider the outcomes of these referendums as more legitimate? Can referendums function as a tool to re-establish democratic legitimacy and alleviate dissatisfaction among citizens with populist attitudes? This is an especially pressing question because it seems that when populist *parties* lose a referendum they do not "take No for an answer" (Verdugo, 2017). As Chapter 4 has shown, citizens' support for referendums is at least partly driven by *instrumental* considerations. Those citizens that favor the policy proposal or those that expect to win the referendum were particularly supportive of the referendum in question. Is it possible that the demand for referendums among citizens with

[22] Most of these studies have done so by examining the link *indirectly* via proxies such as trust (Bowler et al., 2007; Donovan & Karp, 2006) a preference for stealth and/or dissatisfied democracy (Webb, 2013), voting for populist (Rooduijn, 2018) or populist radical right parties (Bowler, Denemark, Donovan, & McDonnell, 2017b). Recently, three studies tested the relationship *directly* by using populist attitudes measurements themselves rather than proxies (Bjånesøy & Ivarsflaten, 2016; Jacobs et al., 2018; Mohrenberg et al., 2019). Especially the latter studies find a strong positive relationship between populist attitudes and support for direct democracy.

[23] An important note on the terminology. For ease of formulation we present populist attitudes in a binary way. However, we wish to stress that empirically we conceptualize and measure populist attitudes in a continuous dimension, ranging from low populist attitudes to high populist attitudes (cf. method section).

populist attitudes is merely an expression of the hope that referendums can function as a shortcut to materialize their own policy preferences? If they indeed 'don't take No for an answer' either, holding referendums could backfire and undermine the legitimacy of the political system even further.

In this Chapter, we[24] examine the following research question: *How do citizens with populist attitudes react to a referendum, particularly when they lose it (i.e. when the result is not in line with their policy preferences)?* So far, this question has remained unanswered in the literature. This study is the first to address this gap. Specifically, we look at three possible sub-questions: (1) Are populist citizens more instrumental in their preferences for a referendum? (2) Are populist citizens less willing to accept the referendum outcome if they lost? And (3), Are populist citizens more inclined to reduce their general support for referendums after they lost?

Answering these research questions requires complex data: the data need to be longitudinal, include measures about preferences and reactions to a referendum, as well as voting behavior, and needs to include a measurement of populist attitudes which is not substantially correlated with vote choice in the referendum. The Dutch 2018 national referendum survey meets these requirements and therefore offers a unique opportunity to study the aforementioned research question.

We find that, counter to our expectations based on the behavior of populist parties, citizens with a higher degree of populist attitudes turn out to be not more, but rather less, instrumental in both their preference for and reactions to a referendum. Even after they lost the referendum, citizens with populist attitudes were more likely to accept the unfavorable outcome than their non-populist counterparts, making populists the more gracious losers. Our findings have important implications for our understanding of populist citizen's desire for different democratic decision-making arrangements and for the potential of referendums to foster legitimacy among this critical subgroup of citizens.

[24] This chapter is based on joint work by me and Kristof Jacobs. Therefore I use the pronoun "we" throughout the chapter

POPULIST CITIZENS AND REFERENDUMS

In what follows we first discuss the notion of populism and our choice to use the ideational approach to populism for this study. Afterwards we link populism to referendums, whereby we zoom in on support for referendums and their response to losing actual referendums. We then combine these insights with the literature on citizens' decision acceptance to dig deeper into the relationship between referendums and citizens' degree of populist attitudes. In this last theoretical section we also provide the hypotheses that guide our empirical analysis.

DEFINING POPULISM

It is sometimes assumed that there is little to no consensus about the definition of populism. There is some truth to this claim: there is still debate in the literature about the exact nature of populism. One could for instance wonder whether populism is a set of ideas (Mudde, 2004),a strategy (Weyland, 2001)) or a political style (Moffitt, 2016).[25] However, despite this debate, it should be noted that "scholars have become more concordant within the last few years. Increasingly, they agree that populism should be defined as a set of ideas" (Rooduijn & Akkerman, 2017, p. 194). The popularity of the ideational approach is probably partly due to its versatility, as it is the only of the aforementioned approaches that allows examining the populist demand-side: the degree to which *citizens* hold populist attitudes (Mudde, 2017).[26] As we examine citizens, we therefore approach populism as a set of ideas in this study.

The ideational approach is best summarized by the definition offered by Mudde (2004). He defines populism as a set of ideas "that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus the 'corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people" (Mudde, 2004, p. 543). Mudde's definition of populism thus focuses on three core ideas. *First*, populism is people-centered. For populists 'the people', considered as one homogenous whole, represent the focal point of democracy. *Second*, the people must be

[25] Though these are the most influential approaches that exist (Kaltwasser, Taggart, Espejo, & Ostiguy, 2017) this is by no means an exhaustive list.

[26] It makes little sense to examine populism among citizens when one considers it as a strategy to win votes or exercise power or as a specific political style.

juxtaposed with the elite. It is the elite that threatens the people-centered notion of democracy. *Third*, the distinction between the people and the elite is framed as antagonistic (i.e. Manichean). Thus, the people are viewed as good and the elite as evil and corrupt (see also Akkerman, Mudde, & Zaslove, 2014). It is important to point out that populist attitudes are not the same as voting for populist parties, although empirically there is substantial overlap (Jacobs et al., 2018).

POPULIST ATTITUDES AND REFERENDUMS

Based on the aforementioned definition, it is possible that citizens with a higher degree of populist attitudes genuinely consider referendums as a more legitimate way of making decisions and prefer referendums out of *normative considerations*. Indeed, part of the populist ideology is the belief that citizens should be their own rulers and political elites only stand in the way of 'government by the people'. This notion implies that populist citizens hold different values regarding the structure and legitimacy of democratic decision-making (Mohrenberg et al., 2019). They desire "an alternative to the existing notions of political representation" (Geurkink, Zaslove, Sluiter, & Jacobs, 2020, p. 250) and referendums are considered to be such an alternative. As Jacobs and colleagues (2018) put it: "Referendums fit with each of the three key aspects of populism: they are people-centered, reduce the power of the elite and are a means to keep the corrupt elite in check (at least to some extent)" (p. 524).

There are only few empirical studies conducted on the relationship between populist attitudes and support for referendums. The first strand in the literature covers *indirect* tests of the relationship between populism among citizens and support for referendums. Using proxies such as trust or voting for populist parties, these studies find that there is indeed a significant relationship in many cases, though they also find some disconfirming cases (Bowler et al., 2007; Rooduijn, 2018). The second strand *directly* estimates the relationship between the degree populist attitudes of citizens and their preference for referendums. All three direct tests found a (strong) relationship between populist attitudes and support for referendums (Bjånesøy & Ivarsflaten, 2016; Jacobs et al., 2018; Mohrenberg et al., 2019). Based on this evidence we formulate a first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. *The higher the degree of populist attitudes of a citizen, the more she supports the referendum in question.*

Yet, even if we find such a positive relationship between populist attitudes and referendum support, this does not necessarily mean that support for referendums is based on normative considerations about how democratic decisions ought to be made. In fact, a second, more pessimistic, expectation would be that populist citizens favor referendums for different reasons, namely *instrumental considerations*. Chapter 4 demonstrated that this holds for most citizens. Their support for referendums is substantially associated with instrumental, policy oriented, considerations. Two instrumental factors played a role. *First*, if citizens preferred policy proposals that moved away from the status quo, they were more in favor of holding a referendum on this proposal. *Second*, if citizens thought that a majority of citizens shared their policy preference (and hence they would win a potential referendum), they were more supportive of holding a referendum on the issue.

One can expect that the sub-group of populist citizens relies *even more* on instrumental considerations to support and evaluate referendums because of their homogenous understanding of public opinion and their understanding of the people and the elite as two opposing groups with potentially different policy goals. Indeed, an important element of the populist mindset is the belief that citizens form a homogenous body, 'the people', which shares the same experiences, desires and therefore the same policy preferences in contrast to the political elite which follows its own policy agenda (Geurkink et al., 2020). Probably, citizens with such a mindset assume that they are part of this group of "the people" and hence that their opinions and preferences are widely shared by the citizenry., Hence, populist citizens might simply consider referendums as the ideal tool to achieve their own desired policy outcomes by bypassing the political elites. Perceived legitimacy is then not derived from the process as such, but from the favorability of the outcome. While there is, to our knowledge, no previous research on this question, the literature on populist *parties* shows that these parties seem to consider referendums indeed rather as an instrument than a normatively superior form of making decisions (Taggart, 2000)., When populists-in-power lose referendums, they tend to react by ignoring the outcome (Roberts, 2012)) and/or blaming the

elites and others for their loss (Pállinger, 2019; Castanho Silva, 2019). Building on these insights from previous research on referendums, we therefore expect:

Hypothesis 2a. *The higher the degree of populist attitudes, the stronger the relationship between support for the specific policy proposal and support for a referendum on that topic.*

Hypothesis 2b. *The higher the degree of populist attitudes, the stronger the relationship between majority perceptions about an issue and support for a referendum on that topic.*

If citizens with populist attitudes are not genuinely in favor of referendums, but rather consider it a convenient tool to reach desired policies, this also has consequences for how legitimate they judge the outcome of a referendum. Therefore, the reaction of citizens with populist attitudes that *lose* referendums are of particular importance to this analysis. Recent work both on elections and on procedural fairness has shown that outcome favorability plays an influential role in determining citizens evaluations of the decision-making process and their likelihood to accept the decision (Esaiasson et al. 2019; Arnesen 2017; Marien and Kern 2018; Doherty and Wolak 2012; Daniller 2016; Ulbig 2008; C. J. Anderson et al. 2005; Merkley et al., 2019). For instance, Marien and Kern (2018) show that a boost in legitimacy after a referendum is driven purely by decision winners. This winner-effect could be especially pronounced for citizens with populist attitudes when they root their support for referendums on the expectation of positive outcomes (cf. instrumental considerations), requiring a separate analysis of populist decision losers. As outlined in the previous paragraph, populist citizens might be more likely to support referendums based on such considerations because of their homogenous understanding of public opinion. Accordingly, we expect that citizens with populist attitudes that lost the referendum will be less accepting of the decision outcome.

Hypothesis 3. *The higher the degree of populist attitudes, the lower the willingness to accept the outcomes of the referendums among decision losers.*

Furthermore, citizens with populist attitudes might be more likely to change their beliefs about *referendums in general* after experiencing loss. From prior studies, we know that in general, electoral losers are likely to at least partially blame the system for their loss (Daniller, 2016;

Esaiasson, 2011). The same seems to hold for referendums. In an analysis of Bavaria, Finland and the Netherlands, Brummel (2020) finds that referendum losers become less supportive of referendums in general. What role might populist attitudes play here? Given that citizens with a higher degree of populist attitudes are more likely to blame the elites for their loss, this could spill-over to a stronger reduction in referendum support when they are compared to other losers. While referendum support is typically seen as a way to bypass the elites, a referendum loss may shake that belief and prove to such citizens that elites are also able to 'hijack' referendums. We therefore expect:

Hypothesis 4. *The higher the degree of populist attitudes, the higher the decrease in support for referendums in general among referendum losers.*

DESIGN

CASE

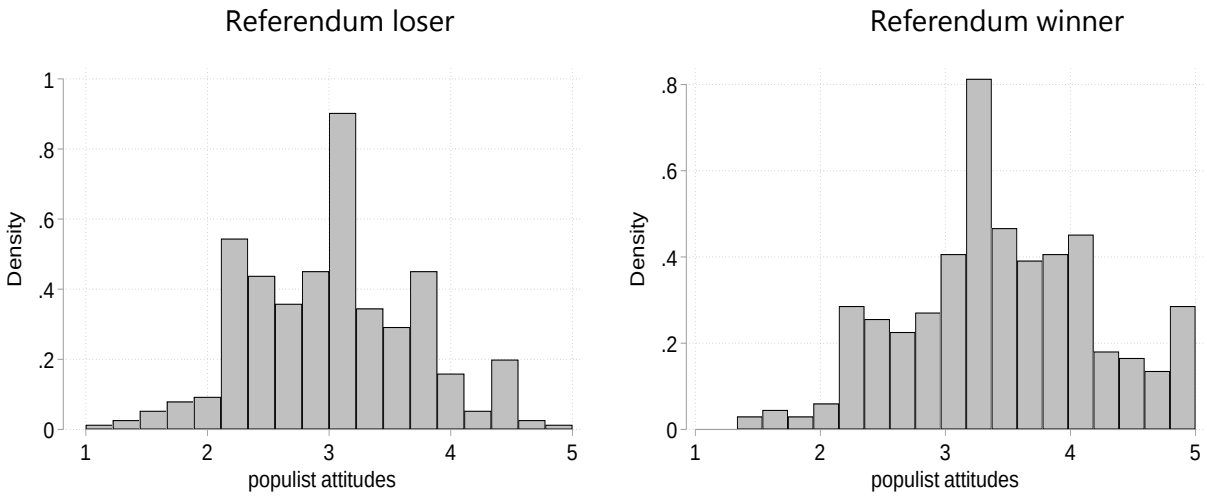
As discussed in Chapter 4, the Netherlands has some experience with national referendums (Qvortrup, 2014). In 2014 the Dutch political parties agreed on a referendum law that allowed citizens to collect signatures to force the government to organize a referendum on a bill or treaty that was recently approved by the parliament. In a first stage 10,000 signatures would need to be collected, after which another 300,000 were required. If a plurality of the voters voted 'No' and if a turnout quorum of 30% of the electorate was met, the referendum would force parliament to reconsider the bill or treaty. In this study we focus on the 2018 Intelligence services referendum.

The 2018 referendum is an ideal case to test our expectations because the issue, and therefore the favorability of the outcome of the referendum, does not align too much with populist attitudes (see Figure 5.1). There were roughly equally many citizens with populist attitudes that supported the law and that opposed it, hence generating similar proportions of decision winners and decision losers. Often it becomes difficult to distinguish the effects of populist attitudes and substantive policy opinions because they correlate highly with other attitudes and dispositions, such as Euroscepticism, authoritarianism or nativism, which plays out on

many policy issues such as migration or climate change. With the present referendum we are able to disentangle the interactions between populist attitudes and unfavorable policy outcomes.

In our dataset, the distribution of populist attitudes is similar among the referendum losers and the referendum winners, with slightly higher scores of populist attitudes in the winning camp. The average score on the populist attitudes scale is 3.26 (SD=.76), which is similar to other studies conducted in the Netherlands (Jacobs et al., 2018). In the conclusion we further reflect on the generalizability of our findings.

Figure 5.1 Distribution of populist attitudes among referendum losers and referendum winners.



Note. N_{loser}=339, N_{winner}=326.

THE REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN

The referendum was held on 21 March 2018. The referendum concerned the Intelligence and Security Services Act 2017, which was to replace the 2002 one. The referendum was organized alongside the municipal elections and was triggered by the efforts of a group of five students who got support from among others, *Amnesty International*, *Bits of Freedom* and the popular Dutch comedian *Arjen Lubach*. The 'Yes'-camp was mainly represented by the government and the head of the Dutch Intelligence Services, *Rob Bertholee*. The campaign pitted security concerns against privacy concerns. The 'Yes'-camp campaigned by stressing that the new law was necessary to prevent terrorist attacks, as the old law was outdated and did not allow for

adequate monitoring of information spread via new technologies. It also emphasized that the new law included enough safeguards to prevent misuse of the data collected by the Intelligence Services. The 'No'-camp agreed on the need for new legislation, but disagreed on the assessment that it included enough safeguards. The camp stressed that the new law violated privacy legislation. The 'No'-camp also argued that the current legislation already allowed the Intelligence Services to collect data spread via new technologies. In the final campaign week, the 'No'-camp was helped by the Cambridge Analytica and Facebook privacy breach scandals, the revelation that the Dutch bank ING handled sensitive data of its customers in a sloppy way and inconsistencies in the 'Yes'-campaign's main messages.[27]

In the end, and somewhat surprising given the consistent lead in the polls leading up to the referendum (Korteweg, 2018), the Yes-camp lost: 49.44% voted 'No' while only 46.53% voted 'Yes'. The voter turnout was 51.54%, thereby handsomely passing the turnout threshold of 30%. Earlier, the Electoral Management Body, *Kiesraad*, had clarified that a plurality was sufficient to constitute a win, and hence the 'No'-camp won the referendum. In the aftermath of the referendum and the data collection, the government announced that it would change the legislation.

DATA

The data were collected by the LISS panel, a high-quality probability sample survey panel run by CenterData at the University of Tilburg. We use data from 2 waves of the referendum study.[28] Data for the pre-wave was collected in the weeks prior to the referendum. Data for the post-wave was collected in the period after the referendum until the end of April. The sample of the third waves consists partly of respondents that were also invited to the previous waves and partly of "fresh" respondents. For the main analyses we construct an analytical sample including respondents that answered the questionnaire in the pre- and post-wave. This yields an analytical sample of 665 respondents. We also conduct a robustness check of our

[27] One of the government parties, D66, campaigned for the Yes-camp, but its campaign spokesman Kees Verhoeven previously was a vocal opponent of the law.

[28] The referendum study also included one additional wave which was rolled out before it was clear whether a referendum would be held or not.

post-wave analysis including the full sample (see Appendix, Table A4.4; N = 1319). The turnout was overestimated in the dataset – a classic problem for survey research about voter turnout. The vote choice distribution is slightly skewed towards decision losers in our analytical sample, yet not in the full post-wave sample with which we find substantially the same results (see Appendix, Table A5.4).

MEASURES

Dependent variable: support for referendums. We distinguish between support for the specific referendum on the information law (H1, H2a and H2b) and general support for the decision-making tool of the referendum (H4). Specific support is measured in the pre-wave by the question: *To what extent do you think it is good or bad that a referendum will be organized to decide on the information law?* General support for referendums was measured both in the pre and post-wave by asking: *Citizens should decide about the important issues in our country by voting directly in a referendum on a seven-point scale.* We create the change in support variable by subtracting support in the post-wave from support in the pre-wave.

Dependent variable: decision acceptance. In line with literature on the legitimacy perceptions of decision-making procedures we measure decision acceptance with the question: *On the 21st of March a majority of citizens voted against the information law. To what extent do you accept this decision?*

Table 5.1 Descriptive overview of variables

Variable	Wave	Mean/%	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
support for referendum	pre	4.87	1.96	1	7
decision acceptance	post	5.63	1.70	1	7
change in support for referendums in general	post-pre	-0.12	0.83	-3	3

Note. N=665

Independent variable: populist attitudes. We use the standard 6-item battery of populist attitudes devised by Akkerman and colleagues (2014).[29] It should be noted that one of the

[29] Other scales based on a different set of items exist. In a recent study Castanho Silva and colleagues (2019) examined and compared seven different scales to measure populist attitudes. Their conclusion

items in the scale resembles a preference for referendums. The item goes: "On the most important issues citizens should decide instead of politicians". Clearly, there is conceptual and potentially empirical overlap between this item and support for referendums. Therefore, we conduct our main analyses *without this particular item*. As a robustness check, additional analysis using the full scale can be found in the Appendix (Table A5.5-A5.7). The results are substantially the same.[30]

Independent variable: Policy preference. To tap into citizens instrumental preferences for referendum support, we asked respondents whether they are in favor or against the introduction of the information service law. This variable is measured in the pre-wave.

Independent variable: Winning expectation. We also asked respondents to predict the outcome of the referendum which is then matched to their policy preference. The resulting binary variable indicated whether respondents expected to win or lose the referendum. This variable is measured in the pre-wave.

Independent variable: Political trust. We use three items, building on the standard trust-in-institution scale that is employed in many cross-national datasets (e.g. ESS, 2016). They measure trust in parliament, trust in government and trust in the legal system on an 11-point scale. This variable is measured in the pre-wave.

Independent variable: Party preference. To assess individuals party identification, we ask them what party they have voted for in the past election. This variable is measured in the post-wave. In addition, we include demographic information on age, gender and education in our models. These data stem from the LISS panel database.

was that the Akkerman et al. (2014) is a high-quality scale that has an "acceptable or good performance on almost all tests" (Castanho Silva et al., 2019, p.12). Other scales that score highly are their own scale and the Schultz et al (2017) scale. The Castanho Silva et al. scale is to be preferred in cross-country studies, while the Akkerman et al. scale has a higher external validity. Given our single-country focus, the choice for the Akkerman et al. scale seems justifiable.

[30] Which is in line with the fact that the populist attitudes items show high correlations and load on one factor.

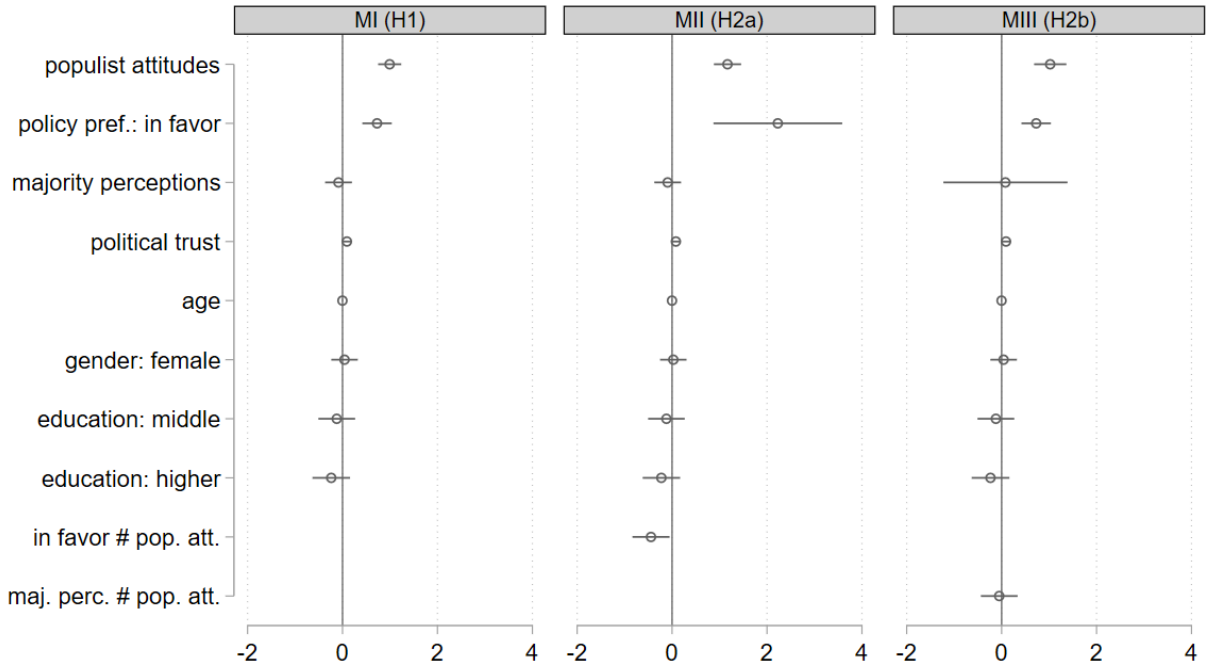
RESULTS

SUPPORT FOR REFERENDUMS

In the following we will test the outlined hypotheses. Turning to H1, we predicted that citizens with high levels of populist attitudes would be more supportive of the referendum on the information law than citizens with low levels of populist attitudes. To this end we use data from the pre-wave. As can be seen in Figure 5.2, Model I, this is indeed the case. Populist attitudes are positively and significantly related to support for the referendum on the information law. Similarly, those people who disapprove of the information law are also in favor of the referendum on that topic. In contrast to the findings of Chapter 3 we see no positive association between majority perceptions and support for the referendum.

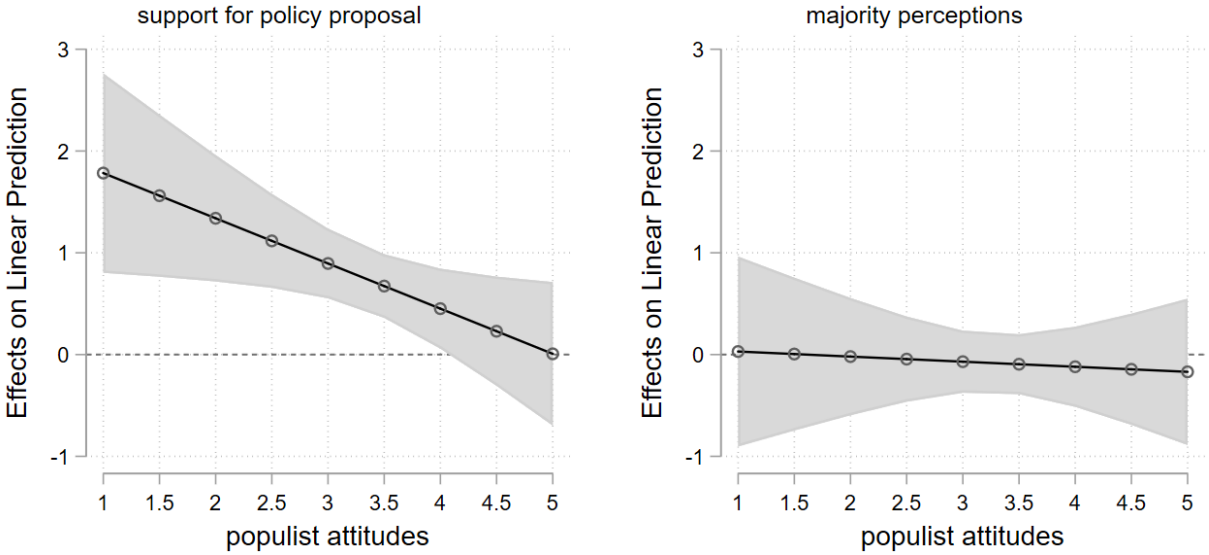
But are populists more instrumental in their support for the referendum? We predicted that populist attitudes would interact with the support for the policy proposal (H2a) and with the expectation to win the referendum (H2b), indicating that these instrumental considerations are especially prevalent among citizens with populist attitudes. We start with an investigation of the interaction with support for the policy proposal (H2a). As can be seen in Model II, there is indeed a significant interaction between populist attitudes and support for the policy proposal, but in the other direction than predicted. It turns out that populist citizens' support for the referendum is *less* associated with the desire to change the specific policy. This interaction is visualized in Figure 5.3. Turning to the interaction with expectation to win (H2b), we expected that populist citizens would be especially supportive of a referendum if they expect to win it. As Model III shows, this is not the case: we see no indications of an interaction between populist attitudes and majority perceptions (also visualized in Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.2 Regression of Support for Referendum (Pre-Wave)



Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients, N=665, R^2_{MI}=,23; R^2_{MII}=,23 R^2_{MIII}=,23, party preference was included in model but is removed for ease of readability, bars represent 95% confidence intervals, for corresponding table see Appendix, Table A5.1.

Figure 5.3 Marginal effects of support for the policy proposal and of majority perceptions on support for the referendum across populist attitudes



Note. N=665, graph presents the visualization of the interaction in Model II and Model III, Figure 5.2.

Our expectations about populist attitudes and support for referendums have only partly been confirmed. Replicating results from existing research, we find that citizens with populist

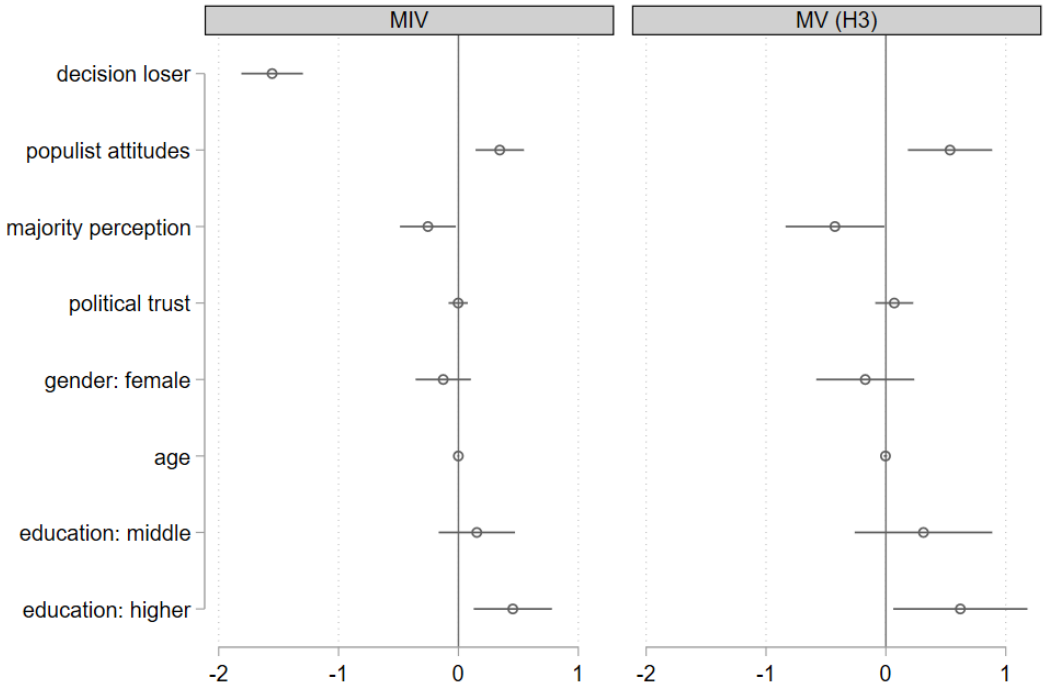
attitudes are more in favor of the referendum in question (H1). Furthermore, and contrary to our own expectations, we find that, compared to non-populist citizens, their support is either *less* associated with instrumental, policy specific concerns (H2a) or at least not more so in regards to their expectation to win (H2b).

DECISION ACCEPTANCE AFTER THE REFERENDUM RESULT IS KNOWN

In a next step we will turn to the post-wave to investigate how citizens with populist attitudes reacted to the outcomes of the referendum. In H3 we expected that citizens with populist attitudes will be less likely to consider the outcome of the referendum as legitimate if they did not get the desired policy outcome. In a first step we test how acceptance of the referendum result relates to outcome favorability and populist attitudes among the whole sample (Model IV). As expected, we see that those who lost exert lower willingness to accept the outcome of the referendum than those who won. Interestingly, populist attitudes are positively (and significantly) associated with acceptance of the outcome. However, this could be driven by populist decision winners (Marien & Kern, 2018). Turning to the subsample of decision losers in Model V, we expected a negative correlation between populist attitudes and acceptance of the unfavorable referendum result. However, we find the exact opposite. The higher a citizen's degree of populist attitudes, the higher her willingness to accept the unfavorable outcome. It therefore seems that citizens with high populist attitudes are more gracious losers in a referendum than citizens with low populist attitudes. It is important to note that in our models we also control for party choice. Accordingly, these findings are not driven by supporting any particular party (e.g. PVV voters).

Interestingly, we see that majority perceptions seem to be negatively associated with acceptance of the referendum outcome, especially for the decision losers (both estimates exert p-values just below .05, see Appendix, Table A5.2). Hence even though the expectation of winning the referendum did not correlate with support for the referendum, citizens that expected to win and then lost are less willing to accept their defeat.

Figure 5.4 Linear regression of acceptance of the referendum outcome (post-wave)



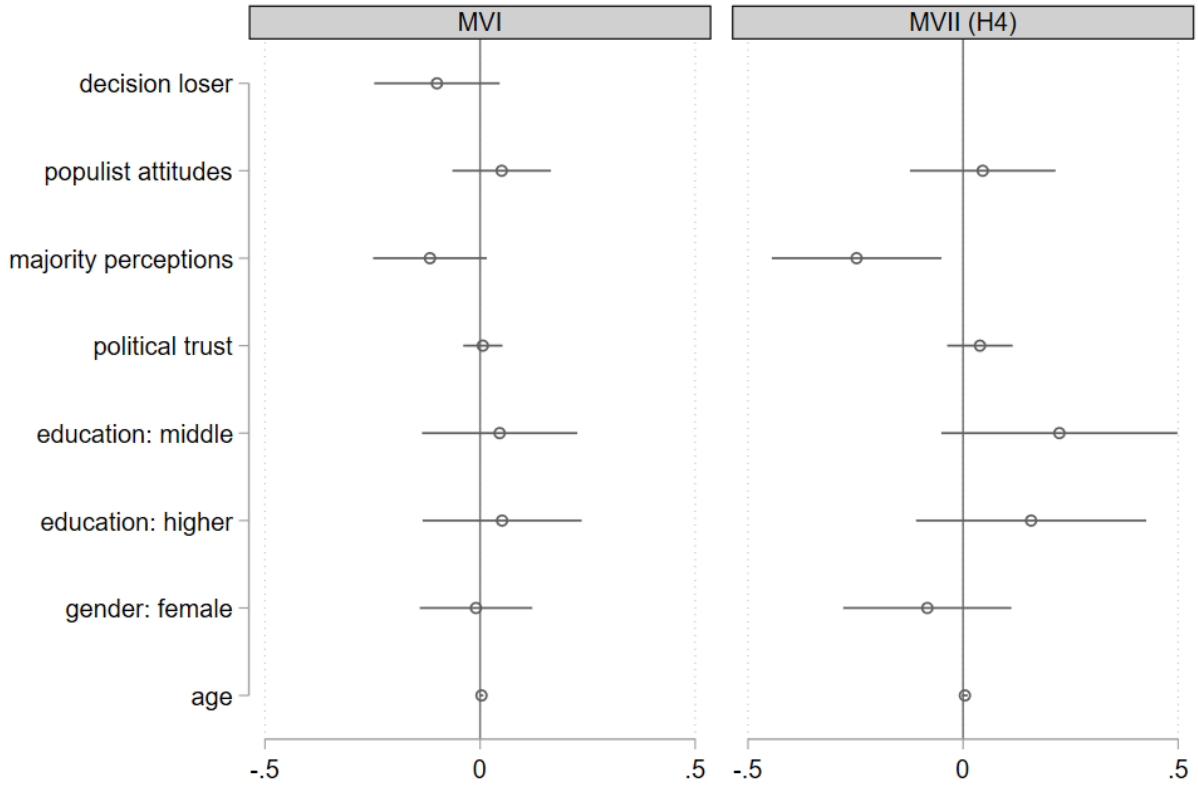
Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients, MV shows effects for the subgroup of decision losers, N_{MIV}=665, R^2_{MIV}=.29; N_{MV}=339, R^2_{MV}=.10, party preference was included in model but is removed for ease of readability, bars represent 95% confidence intervals, for corresponding table see Appendix, Table A5.2.

CHANGES IN GENERAL SUPPORT FOR REFERENDUMS

Lastly, we were interested in citizens' change in support for referendums in general after losing a referendum, particularly among citizens with populist attitudes. To this end we calculate the change in the general support for decision-making through referendums between the pre- and the post wave. Generally, we find that most people stick to their prior levels of support for referendums (55%) or shift one point up (15%) or down (23%). We see a slight downward trend from the pre-wave (M=3.29, SD=1.25) to the post-wave (M=3.40, SD=1.27; t(691)=-3.61, p<.000). In a next step we model this (small) change (Figure 5.5). In Model VI, we first show an analysis of this change in support for the whole sample. We see that neither losing by itself nor populist attitudes are significantly related to changes in support for referendums. Turning to the subgroup of decision losers in Model VII, we also find no significant relationship between populist attitudes and a change in general support for referendums. Accordingly, citizens with high populist attitudes that just lost the referendum did not change their general preference more than citizens with low populist attitudes. Interestingly, in Model VII we see a significant decrease in general support for referendums among losers who expected to win

and then did not. It seems that while losing itself initiates no change in citizens' general support for this decision-making tool, the unfulfilled expectation of being a winner does change one's opinion on referendums. With a change of .26 on a 7-point scale, this effect is however not large.

Figure 5.5. Linear regression of change in support for referendums in general (pre- & post-wave)



Note: Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients, MVII shows effects for the subgroup of decision losers, N_{MVI}=657, R^2_{MVI}=.05; N_{MV}=334, R^2_{MV}=.09, party preference was included in model but is removed for ease of readability, bars represent 95% confidence intervals, for corresponding table see Appendix, Table A5.3.

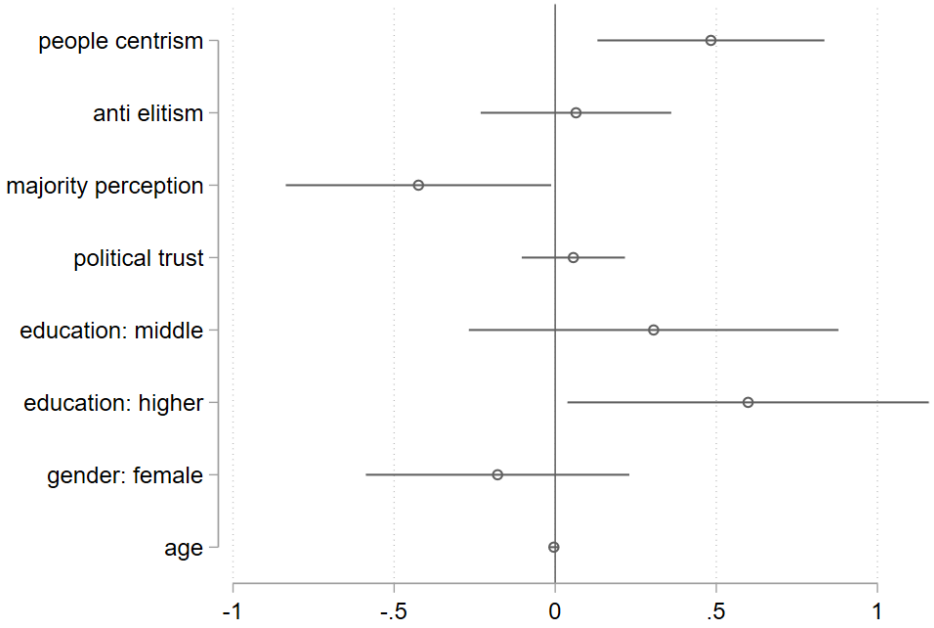
POST-HOC ANALYSES

We conduct two exploratory analyses to gain deeper insights into the data. First, inspired by a recent contribution by Mohrenberg et al. (2019)[31], we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between populist attitudes and the acceptance of the referendum outcome. As Mohrenberg et al. (2019) have argued and shown, different sub-dimensions of populism relate differently to attitudes towards direct decision making by citizens, namely people-

[31] This study was published after we collected data and formulated hypotheses, hence it can only be considered in post-hoc analyses.

centrism and anti-elitism. To explore whether this holds both for preferences for and reactions to the referendum in our study, we also split our populism scale in its people-centric and anti-elitist components and regress both support for the referendum and the willingness to accept the decision outcome on these sub-dimensions separately. However, it is important to note that the scale by Akkerman and colleagues (2014) that we are using in this chapter was not originally designed to tap into these different components of populism. Further, given the explorative nature of this analysis, p-values must be interpreted with caution.

Figure 5.6 Regression of decision acceptance on people-centrism and anti-elitism among losers



Note: Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients, bars represent 95% confidence intervals. N=339, R^2=.12. Party preference was included in model but is not included in the coefficient plot for ease of readability. For corresponding tables see Appendix, the second models in Table A5.10 and A5.11.

Regarding preferences for referendums, we find that both anti-elitism and people-centrism show positive associations. However, when we turn to the willingness to accept an unfavorable outcome, we find that this is especially driven by people-centrism, whereas anti-elitism is much weaker (and not significantly, but see above) associated with decision acceptance among referendum losers. This analysis is presented in Figure 5.6. The findings are in line with Mohrenberg et al. (2019) in that support among anti-elitists for referendums is more outcome focused whereas people-centric citizens hold more normative preferences for direct decision-

making by citizens. The results can be found in Tables A5.8-A5.9 (referendum support) and A5.10-A5.11 (decision acceptance) in the Appendix.

Second, we explore whether populists react differently to policy loss than winners (i.e. an interaction effect between populist attitudes and losing to gauge a difference in winner-loser gap). This is different from our Hypothesis 3, in which we address the differences in decision acceptance among losers between citizens with high and low populist attitudes (i.e. a sub-group analysis). We find this sub-group analysis more insightful because we are interested in whether, when facing an unfavorable outcome, populist citizens are still more accepting than non-populist citizens and that this effect is not driven by decision winners (not whether their winner-loser gap is different, see Chapter 8). This is to say, that the similarly sized winner-loser gaps can occur because in both the case of winning and that of losing, populists exert higher levels of acceptance. Nonetheless, it is a separate, interesting question whether populist citizens react differently to referendum loss than non-populist citizens. As can be seen in Table A5.13 in the Appendix, losing does not moderate populists' acceptance of the referendum outcome. This means that populist citizens are more accepting of the outcome *both* in cases of wins and losses, again indicating that contrary to our H3, compared to other citizens, populists are not more sore losers than non-populist citizens.

ROBUSTNESS CHECKS

We conduct some additional analyses to assess the robustness of the results and to deepen our understanding of the relationships under study. First, we run the analyses on decision acceptance using the full sample of wave 3 respondents (N= 1 319) instead of the overlap sample between the pre- and post-wave we present in the main analysis. We find substantially the same results. Citizens with populist attitudes are more willing to accept the outcome of the referendum even if they had lost it. The effect sizes are very similar to the main analysis presented earlier with similar p-values. The results can be found in Table A5.4 in the Appendix.

Second, we re-run all our analyses using the original populist attitudes scale. This scale includes the item "On the most important issues citizens should decide instead of politicians" that we removed for our main analysis because it related too closely to support for populist attitudes.

We find substantially the same results as in our main analysis, with slightly bigger effect sizes. The results can be found in Tables A5.5-A5.7 in the Appendix.

Third, we assess the conditionality of our findings on the policy issue of the referendum to gain insights into its generalizability. While there was substantial attention to the topic of data protection in the public debate, it is not the most salient and pressing policy issue for most citizens. To gain insights into the extent to which this affects our findings we interact the importance that respondents attributed to the policy issues with populist attitudes in our analysis of decision acceptance. We find no significant interaction effect, hence no indication that our findings depend on the importance of the issue. The results can be found in Table A5.13 in the Appendix.

In sum, we expected populist citizens to be sore losers when we compare them to non-populist ones. It turns out, this is not the case in our study. Citizens with populist attitudes are not less but rather more accepting of the referendum result, even when the outcomes are unfavorable. They are also not more likely to change their favorable opinion about referendums just because they lost one referendum. These results provide surprising insights into how legitimacy is derived from decision-making procedures among citizens with populist attitudes. The obtained results are robust across different analysis specifications.

DISCUSSION

In this study we examined how citizens with populist attitudes react to a referendum, particularly when they lose. To begin with, we join a growing literature showing that populist citizens are more supportive of referendums. Adding to this literature, we were the first to examine whether such citizens were more likely to have instrumental motivations to prefer holding a referendum on a certain topic – here the 2018 Law on the Information and Security Services. Our results indicated that this is not the case, and even suggest the opposite might be true. This result is congruent with recent research showing that such citizens seem to be driven by "people-centrism" and believe in the 'wisdom of the people' (Mohrenberg et al., 2019). We then made a second contribution to the literature by also examining to what extent populist citizens are sore losers. Do they take 'No' for an answer? We found that at least in

the 2018 Dutch referendum they did so more than their non-populist counterparts by being more willing to accept an unfavorable outcome. Both findings are in line with each other: if populist citizens prefer referendums more out of normative than out of instrumental considerations, one can indeed expect them to be more accepting of a disadvantageous outcome than those who did not believe in 'the wisdom of the people' to begin with. While we assumed that the aversion against the political elite and the glorification of the people as a homogenous group is connected to certain expectations of desirable policies once the people rule, our findings indicate that these beliefs are more principled.

Considering the general population in regards to the findings of Chapter 4, we found only partial support for the instrumental hypothesis which was advanced and tested in Chapter 4. While support for the policy proposal was positively associated with support for the referendum, majority perceptions were not. However, citizens that expected to win and then lost were both less willing to accept the outcome and decreased in their general support for referendums as a decision making tool.

These findings have a range of implications. First, this study holds important learnings on the potential of democratic reform, such as more participatory forms of decision-making, to strengthen popular legitimacy about an often discussed subgroup of citizens. The concern about growing dissatisfaction with the political system and resulting low levels of legitimacy is prevalent both in political science and among practitioners. While participatory processes are often suggested as a strategy to tackle low levels of perceived legitimacy(see Chapter 2, also Barber, 1984), many critics worry that they will only appeal to those citizens that are already politically privileged – the interested, knowledgeable, trusting, educated and affluent citizens and will cause even more frustration among those that feel excluded and neglected (G. Smith, 2009). Our results suggest that particularly referendums hold a normative appeal to citizens with populist attitudes and could build consent even in the light of unfavorable policy outcomes. It seems that populist citizens are not necessarily up to ignoring the rules of a game – they just think there should be different rules. However, a second implication opens up a problem for political practice. What should be done if different subgroups of the population consider different decision-making arrangements as legitimate? For instance, we know that particularly more knowledgeable citizens are skeptical of referendums (e.g. C. Anderson &

Goodyear-Grant, 2010). This causes a conflict between the normative democratic preferences of different societal groups, one that is not easily resolved and requires the consideration of other democratic goods.

As with every study, ours comes with some limitations. Since we use data from a single referendum, questions of generalizability arise. While the Dutch 2018 referendum is an excellent first testing ground to examine the relationship between populist attitudes and losing referendums because populist citizens were relatively evenly distributed in terms of winning and losing, it is important to test the findings in other settings as well. Though our study indicates that populist citizens' support for referendums is more normative and consequently can have positive effects on decision acceptance, it remains to be examined under which circumstances such effects materialize. The particular referendum under study addressed a moderately salient topic and was preceded by a relatively clean campaign period that focuses on the issue at hand (compared to another recent Dutch referendum on the EU-Ukraine treaty, Jacobs, 2018). Importantly, there were no publicly voiced doubts about the integrity of the referendums process which is also reflected in survey responses about the fairness of the referendum. We found no indication in our data that the findings are conditional on issue salience, yet additional cases with different levels of controversy and procedural quality of the campaign are required to understand when populist citizens accept unfavorable outcomes. Lastly, follow-up research should examine to what extent referendum experiences impact populist attitudes as such, as they might increase support for pluralism. In fact, some recent studies have shown that populist attitudes can change under certain circumstances, such as framing of news messages (e.g. Busby, Gubler, & Hawkins, 2019). While our data did not allow us to examine to what extent populist citizens became more pluralist and accepting of different opinions, this is clearly an interesting venue for future research.

Evidently, while a crucial one, our research constitutes only a first step. Indeed, it remains to be investigated further under which specific circumstances and to what extent referendums can help bring populists back in. Yet one thing is clear, as our study shows, and contrary to conventional wisdom, at least under some circumstances they can.

CHAPTER 6

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SMALL-SCALE PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES FOR CITIZENS?

AT A GLANCE

RESEARCH QUESTION

How do participants in a Small-Scale Participatory Process (SSPP) perceive the process and what are the benefits they see of SSPPs?

METHOD AND DATA

Qualitative interviews about a citizens' forum in the German-speaking community of Belgium (Bürgerdialog Kinderbetreuung 2017)

MAIN FINDINGS

1. Participants are predominantly dissatisfied with politics because they feel that politicians are detached from citizens

2. Participants see the value of SSPPs primarily in relational terms: they feel respected and listened to

3. While participants expect a political uptake of their recommendations, this is less motivated by specific policy concerns but more by the wish to be taken seriously by political authorities

INTRODUCTION

The last three chapters have focused on a relatively well-known type of participatory process, namely the referendum. Small-scale participatory processes (henceforth SSPPs), often referred to as deliberative mini-publics, present another popular category of participatory processes which are different in scope, nature and potential effects on citizens. These processes have gained in academic popularity throughout the past decades (Grönlund, Bächtiger, & Setälä, 2014) and are applied across the globe, initiated by national, regional or local governments, organizations or academic institutions (Fishkin, 2018; OECD, 2020; Ryan & Smith, 2014; Sintomer et al., 2012). Famous examples are the Irish Citizens' Assembly, participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, the French Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat, or the constitutional assembly in Iceland (e.g. Dryzek et al., 2019).

Especially in the European context, these SSPPs are often employed to explicitly address legitimacy deficits (Sintomer, Herzberg, & Röcke, 2008) and are considered one of the most promising innovations in governance to address the so-called democratic malaise (Fung, 2007). They are expected to foster acceptance of decisions, increase political interest and engagement and reduce dissatisfaction with politics (Mendelberg, 2002). But what are citizens' perspectives on these processes? What value do they see and experience in small-scale participatory processes? These questions have not received sufficient attention in the literature to date (Curato & Niemeyer, 2013; Jacquet, 2019). Since SSPPs are usually studied through the lens of deliberative democracy, the focus is often placed on the quality of the deliberation within the forums (M. Gerber, Bächtiger, Shikano, Reber, & Rohr, 2018), the processes of opinion formation and transformation (Muradova, 2020; Niemeyer, 2011) or dominance and power in the deliberative space (Mendelberg & Oleske, 2000). Yet, approaching these SSPPs from a perspective of perceived legitimacy is crucial to understand the potential of such processes to complement representative democracy and to test whether these procedures fulfill their often explicitly stated goal of addressing popular discontent with politics.

This chapter addresses this question, focusing specifically on those citizens that participate in SSPPs (non-participants are studied in Chapter 7). Particular attention is paid to unraveling the specific benefits that participants see in the process and whether they think it has affected

their legitimacy perceptions. In Chapter 2, I derived two potential mechanisms that can explain how participatory processes foster legitimacy: first, the instrumental mechanisms, which posit that citizens value participatory processes because it provides them with influence over the decision outcome and hence a higher likelihood of achieving the desired outcome (Thibaut & Walker, 1975); and second, the relational mechanism, which states that citizens value participatory processes because they function as an informational signal that politicians care about them and listen to them (Tyler & Lind, 1992). While the previous chapters provided some empirical evidence that both, and especially the instrumental mechanism, play a role for referendums, this study will provide some insights into whether these mechanisms also appear in how participants reflect on their experience with SSPPs.

To this end, I conduct qualitative interviews about a real case of an SSPP in 2017, in the German-speaking community of Belgium, on the topic of childcare. An abductive approach is used (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012), hence enabling me to both investigate the prevalence of the theoretically derived expectations and to be open for inductively derived themes that emerge from the data. I find that the participants see primarily relational benefits in the SSPP and in citizen involvement in general. Further, they describe the benefit of citizens' expertise, which they expect to result in a higher-quality debate and better-informed policy. While instrumental concerns are present to the extent that participants expect a political uptake of their recommendations, they are strongly intertwined with relational arguments of being taken seriously. As such, participants do not necessarily expect that their recommendations will be followed; they primarily demand serious engagement and justification in case of deviation. While no causal inference can be drawn from this approach and, as always with small-n research, generalizing from this study is difficult, it nonetheless provides important insights into citizens' reasoning about SSPPs and the potential entanglement of instrumental and relational considerations.

DEFINING SMALL-SCALE PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

To set out, I will first briefly define what I mean with the concept of Small-Scale Participatory Processes. Many different types of process designs can be subsumed under this umbrella term, but I will briefly describe their typical structure (Fung, 2007; Grönlund et al., 2014; Ryan &

Smith, 2014). In SSPPs, a sample of citizens, ranging from 20 to 40 in local citizens' forums to up to 700 in big events such as the G1000 in Belgium, is randomly selected and invited to attend several meetings, often spread out across several weekends. Most SSPPs address a particular policy issue, such as abortion (like in the Irish Citizens' Assembly) or climate change (like in the Convention Citoyenne in France). Occasionally, participants can select the topic themselves. Throughout the meetings, citizens deliberate on the issues and often have the opportunity to review information or existing policies, and to question experts. The last stage of the process typically comprises the development of recommendations for policy makers. While the formal influence of these processes varies wildly, they typically take on an advisory role. However, governments that initiate or support the SSPP tend to make some kind of prior commitment about the future engagement with the recommendations given by the citizens.

Most scholarship approaches SSPPs through the lens of deliberative democracy and calls them deliberative mini-publics (Grönlund et al., 2014). Whilst this research provides exciting insights into how citizens can engage with another, the focus of this thesis is not on the deliberation within the process but on its participatory component. I use the term SSPP instead of mini-publics to illustrate the focus on the characteristic of these processes to involve a small proportion of the population in the decision-making process.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SSPPS FOR CITIZENS?

The focus of this chapter is on the values of SSPPs from a citizen perspective. While there is little theorizing on SSPPs as such and their value for citizens, more general theories of participation in decision-making are useful. Procedural fairness theory offers two potential reasons for the legitimacy-generating potential of voice (for an extended discussion, see Chapter 2). First, early accounts in this tradition presumed an instrumental explanation, arguing that individuals hope to achieve more favorable decision outcomes when they can have a say in the process (Hildreth et al., 2014; Leventhal, 1980; Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Accordingly, one might expect citizens to value SSPPs because (and only if) they provide influence over the outcome and an increased likelihood of favorable decisions. As Chapters 4 and 5 show, there is evidence that instrumental considerations play a substantial role in how citizens think about

and react to referendums. The second explanation puts the relationship between individuals and authorities in the spotlight. The relational model of authority, advanced by Tyler and Lind (1992; see also Lind & Tyler, 1988) posits that individuals value voice in decision-making because it provides important information about the intentions of authorities and the individuals' status within the group. By being granting a voice, these individuals feel that the authority listens to them, takes them seriously and respects them.

To what extent do these two explanations also shape citizens' perspectives on SSPPs? There are some indications in the empirical literature. The influential work by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) presented a starting point into the study of citizens' preference and expectations of democratic decision making. While they find that citizens are indeed frustrated about politicians, they concluded that citizens saw little value in participatory processes. A plethora of research has since then tried to gain insights into the question of whether citizens genuinely desire more opportunities for involvement, and the debate is ongoing (Bowler et al., 2007; Schuck & de Vreese, 2015). Yet, most of the quantitative research has focused on referendums or, more abstractly, citizens as decision-makers, and not on small-scale participatory processes (e.g. Font et al., 2015). A prominent exception is the study by Neblo et al. (2010). They show that citizens (in this case, Americans) are motivated to engage in deliberative events when given the opportunity. They conclude that the observed political apathy stems rather from a deficit in meaningful opportunity to engage in dialogue with fellow citizens and politicians than a lack of interest. However, this study does not address the question of *why* citizens would value such events. Experimental work in the deliberative tradition has studied SSPPs but typically focuses on what happens in the deliberative space (Strandberg, Himmelroos, & Grönlund, 2019). Experiments that build more specifically on procedural fairness accounts find that the outcome of the process has a substantial influence on the perceived legitimacy of participatory processes (Arnesen, 2017; Arvai & Froschauer, 2010; Esaiasson et al., 2019; Terwel et al., 2010). This indicates the prevalence of instrumental considerations, yet these experiments often remain on a rather abstract level and are not specifically set up to test small-scale participatory processes.

There are only a few studies, all qualitative in nature, which address, albeit indirectly, the potential benefits of SSPPs from a citizens' perspective. In a recent contribution, Jacquet

(2019)[32] conducted in-depth interviews on the question of what motivates citizens to participate in deliberative mini-publics. Hence, he asked a similar yet slightly different question than posed in this chapter. He finds two types of incentives that attract citizens to participate in an SSPP. First, citizens value the opportunity to socialize, learn and exercise their civic duty. Second, he finds that citizens "aim to enrich the representative linkage between voters and politicians without forsaking the logic of electoral delegation" (p. 640). Similarly, in her study of SSPPs in Germany, Goldberg (2018) finds that citizens hope to have a say and be heard in the participatory process.. These are indications that relational concern might play a role in how citizens think about SSPPs. Regarding the prevalence of instrumental concerns, Curato and Niemeyer´s (2013) analysis of Australian SSPPs offers interesting observations. They find that most participants expect a political uptake of their recommendations at the beginning of the process and cite the expected influence of the process on policy as a core reason to join the SSPP in the first place. However, throughout the process these instrumental considerations become less and less important to the participants, and are replaced by appreciation for the deliberative process itself (see also Goldberg, 2018; Tyler, Huo, & Lind, 1999).

In sum, while the literature suggests both the prevalence of instrumental and relational value of SSPPs for citizens, more empirical evidence is needed. As Jacquet (2019) points out, we still know little about the value citizens see in SSPPs (see also Curato & Niemeyer, 2013). Are instrumental or relational considerations meaningful and salient to participants in SSPP processes? Or are the benefits that citizens see and concerns they have about SSPPs entirely different? In the following sections I will outline the empirical approach of this study and present the analysis.

DESIGN

In contrast to the otherwise quantitative nature of this thesis, this chapter employs a qualitative approach to the study of SSPPs. There are good reasons for this, starting with citizens' generally limited knowledge of SSPPs. As Jacquet (2019) observed, citizens find it hard to imagine what a SSPP is and what it would entail. Asking about citizens' opinions in quantitative surveys hence runs the risk of measuring non-opinions, including a potential bias towards

[32]Note that the studies of Jacquet (2019) and Goldberg (2018) were only published after the presented study was conducted. Hence they could not be used as input for the empirical investigation.

positive answers because terms like participation and citizen influence are generally positively associated in many societies (Dean, 2016). Second, the variety of SSPP designs and the range of possible foci on different aspects of SSPPs make it unclear what questions should be asked in a survey. For instance, Neblo et al. (2010) investigate citizens' preferences for deliberation, and focus on the type of communication between citizens and politicians and less on the kind of process in which this deliberative exchange would occur. Accordingly, as Jacquet (2019) argues, an in-depth method is required to obtain citizens' attitudes toward SSPPs (see also Dean, 2016; Talpin, 2019).

Therefore, this chapter employs a qualitative approach to study citizens' attitudes toward SSPPs and uncover the potential benefits they see. This also allows me to gain a deeper understanding of citizens' perspectives on SSPPs and of potential inconsistencies or contradictions between instrumental and relational considerations. Qualitative interviews were conducted about a real SSPP case. This has both advantages and disadvantages. It is useful to link the interviews to a real case so that citizens have a concrete idea of what they are talking and thinking about rather than having abstract scenarios described to them. Further, it enables the researcher to see individual differences in perspectives on the same process. In addition, through observation of the participants' behavior throughout the process, a deeper understanding of the participants' attitudes about SSPPs in general and this one in particular can be obtained. Yet at the same time, the choice of a concrete case naturally reduces claims of generalizability and requires a careful discussion of the scope of the findings. I will try to do this requirement justice in the discussion section of this chapter.

THE CASE

The German-speaking community of Belgium (Deutschprachige Gemeinschaft Belgiens, henceforth DG) organized a citizen dialogue on the topic of childcare in September and October 2017. The DG consists of a thinly populated area in the east of Belgium, close to the German border. While only 70 000 citizens live in the DG, the area has rather extensive political competences regarding budgets and regulations due to the special status of a language community in Belgium. As such they have autonomy over issue areas such as healthcare, education, culture and welfare (Wolff, 2000).

The DG also has its own parliament, similar to Wallonia and Flanders. In 2017, the government was formed by a coalition of the conservative and liberal parties. The citizen dialogue (*Bürgerdialog*) was initiated by the parliament following a cross-party consensus. Conversations with staff of the parliament and its president at the time, Alexander Miessen (liberal party), revealed that the goals driving the organization of the Bürgerdialog were to reduce the distance between citizens and politicians, and at the same time to gain new substantive insights into citizens' perspectives and ideas around childcare to improve policy in this domain, hence presenting a rather typical motivation for the installation of an SSPP (Sintomer et al., 2008). This Bürgerdialog was the first SSPP in the DG in this form. Following this first pilot project, the parliament has since installed a permanent SSPP in 2018, now known as the *Ostbelgien model* (Parliament der deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens, 2018). The Bürgerdialog had an advisory role, but members of parliament pledged to henceforth include citizens' recommendations in their future policy-making and to explain the next steps to the participants of the process.

The design of the Bürgerdialog was based on the Danish consensus conference model (Powell & Lee Kleinman, 2008) and was developed by staff members of the parliament and the facilitator of the process. In a first stage, participants were recruited by the University of Bamberg through landline phone calls to a random sample of registered households in the DG. The specific goal was to reach a diverse sample, representing different demographic groups in the DG. This recruitment process proved to be relatively difficult as many citizens do not have landline phones (especially the young). Further, people would often not pick up the phone or hang up immediately, which can be explained by the strong prevalence of phone advertising in the region and hence an aversion to unknown callers. This had consequences for the representativeness of the final sample: of the 26 citizens who participated in the first session, 18 were female, the average age was 55 with 18 participants being 50 or older. In regards to education, the process did manage to attract a diverse sample with 11 participants holding university degrees. The actual Bürgerdialog consisted of three full-day meetings, taking place every other Saturday (16.09.2017- 14.10.2017). The days were structured by discussions with the full group, working sessions in smaller groups on particular sub-topics, presentations and questioning of experts that were chosen by the participants. The

participants developed concrete policy proposals and prioritizations that were supposed to guide future policy-making. During the third session, the finalized report, the Bürgeragenda, was presented to members of parliament, and politicians and citizens discussed the proposals in smaller groups. At this last meeting, 22 participants were present. In December 2017, the parliament organized a follow-up event where politicians explained the uptake of the Bürgeragenda in childcare policy-making.

The design of the Bürgerdialog was typical for SSPPs in that it involved a random selection of 20 to 30 participants alongside experts, several meetings that include deliberation, and it had an advisory role (Fung, 2007; G. Smith, 2009). The parliament of the DG contacted Prof. Marc Hooghe, Dr. Anna Kern and myself to evaluate the citizen dialogue. Anna Kern and I attended and observed all sessions of the Bürgerdialog and had multiple conversations with the organizers, members of parliament, facilitators and the citizens throughout the process. We wrote an evaluation report that was handed over to the parliament in February 2018 (Kern & Werner, 2018). The researchers were not involved in the planning and design of the citizen dialogue and hence had no personal interest in the success of the project.

DATA

14 semi-structured interviews were conducted roughly two weeks after the Bürgerdialog was concluded. The participants were contacted both at the last session of the citizen forum and via email to invite them to an interview. The participants had the option to meet at their home or another public location in close proximity to their homes. All but one of the interviewees chose to have the interview at home. Even though not all participants of the Bürgerdialog could be interviewed, as some were not available during the time frame in which the interviews were conducted, all of them were generally willing and interested to talk about the process. Since I had observed the process throughout the different sessions, I am confident that the sample also includes the critical participants and not only the cheerleaders of the process. The broader problem of self-selection will be addressed in the discussion section.

Demographically, the sample deviates substantially from the population distribution, if not from the other participants in the SSPP. 12 out of 14 interviewees were female, and their ages

ranged from 37 to 72. An important question is whether an SSPP attracts only a particular type of person, namely those that are already engaged, interested and trusting. To address the extent to which this is the case, a short survey was conducted before the citizens' dialogue to measure citizens' prior political attitudes. The sample indeed scored slightly higher on both political interest as well as political trust than the average of the Liège province in which the German speaking community is located (ESS, 2018). Hence, special attention was paid to differences between citizens that were dissatisfied and citizens that were less dissatisfied in the process.

The interviews were of a semi-structured nature. This means that the interview guidelines were designed in advance and all questions on the guidelines were asked throughout the course of the interview. However, the interviewers also had the flexibility to add additional questions and to change the order of the questions to facilitate the flow of the conversation and to reveal deeper insights into the participants' reasoning. The guidelines included questions on citizens' general evaluation of the SSPP, the particular benefits that citizens saw in the process, and the extent to which the experience has changed their view of politics in the German-speaking community of Belgium and the political system generally. In addition, several practical evaluation questions were asked that were used for an evaluation report for the parliament of the DG (Kern & Werner, 2018). The full guidelines can be found in the Appendix A6. The interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. All interviews were conducted in German by two female native speakers in the same age range. All interviews were audio-recorded with the explicit consent of the respondents.

The interviews are analyzed using an abductive approach. This approach is situated between a purely inductive and a deductive method. As Timmermans and Tavory (2012) describe it, abduction takes into account that a researcher is a socialized subject, not only by their personal circumstances but also by their theoretical background. Abduction makes this theoretical lens explicit but still stimulates openness for new elements and connections between them. In the present case, this means while the theoretical ideas outlined by procedural fairness theory have guided the focus in coding and understanding the data, sufficient openness was maintained for new themes to emerge in the analysis. Participants were also never explicitly questioned about the instrumental or the relational explanation during the interviews.

The coding approach follows similar work in the field by using thematic analysis (e.g. Jacquet, 2017, 2019), a flexible method stemming from social psychology for identifying patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Special attention was given to what citizens identify as problems to which SSPPs could be potential solutions (see problem-based approach in Chapter 1, also see work on critical frame analysis (Verloo, 2016)).

Concretely, I predefined three guiding topics that served as structuring lenses for approaching the interview data:

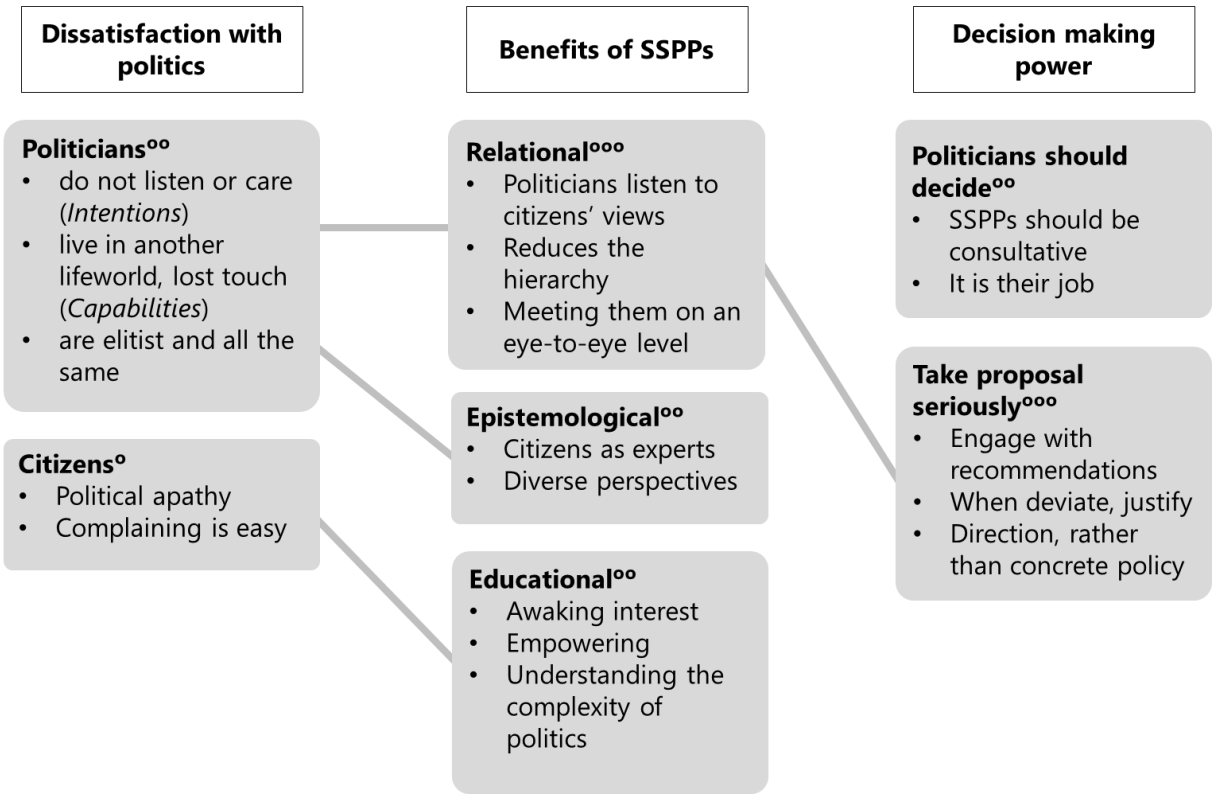
1. (Dis)satisfaction with current politics
2. The value participants see in a citizens' dialogue as experienced, and SSPPs in general
3. The preferred decision-making power of participatory processes

Three stages of coding were conducted. First, elements of the transcript were coded and clustered to the extent to which they related to any of these three guiding topics. Second, the essence of these elements was summarized to extract different sub-themes while still remaining on the semantic level. In the third stage, coding was conducted on a higher level of abstraction to arrive at the final themes and their connections. As Braun and Clarke (2006) describe it, "a thematic analysis at the latent level goes beyond the semantic content of the data, and starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations – and ideologies - that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data" (p. 84).

RESULTS

In the following section, I present the results of the thematic analysis. Figure 1 provides an overview of the key themes that emerged from the analysis along the three overarching questions. The °-sign symbolizes the prevalence of the individual themes in the interviews.

Figure 6.1 Overview of extracted themes



Note. °°°mentioned by >60% of participants, °°mentioned by 40-60% of participants, °mentioned by 20%-40% of participants

Below, the individual themes are discussed and illustrated using quotes from the interviews. The themes are presented in the order of frequency of their appearance across interviews as well as within interviews, thus the most important themes are always discussed first within the sections. The quotes are translated from German and are occasionally corrected grammatically to facilitate reading comprehension. To protect the anonymity of the respondents, no demographic information is provided next to the selected quotes.

DISSATISFACTION WITH POLITICS

Since we did not ask interviewees explicitly about whether and why they are dissatisfied with politics, not all participants brought up this topic themselves. While two interviewees explicitly stated that they were satisfied with the way politics worked in their municipality and the country, the majority of interviewees expressed some degree of frustration. They clearly linked their evaluation of and opinion on the Bürgerdialog to the problems they saw in contemporary politics. Two broad problems emerged.

First, most interviewees saw the root cause in the behavior and nature of *politicians*. They specifically complain about a lack of responsiveness in the sense that Esaiasson, Gilljam, and Persson (2017) described: politicians do not *listen* to citizens. They perceive a stark distance and hierarchy between them, the normal citizens, and politicians. The visual of politicians "up there" and us "down there" occurs repeatedly.

> *Honestly, one always has the impression that things are just decided above our heads.* (In7)

> *Like I said, they don't think about what might be our interests or what we would like to change or something like that. It's really like they are up there and we are down here.* (In10)

Two reasons were mentioned for this disconnect between citizens and politicians. On the one hand, some citizens feel that politicians do not care about the thoughts, experiences and opinions of citizens (*intentions*). On the other hand, interviewees think that politicians are simply not able to relate to citizens because of the structural differences between their lives (*capabilities*). Accordingly, politicians can almost by design not understand what life is like in less privileged segments of society.

> *I think by now they are in a position where they don't think about how the ordinary people are doing. I mean, they have all their incomes, their pensions are secured, they don't have to worry about the trips for their children, and so on. These are all things that have been taken away from them because they are in a political situation in which they don't have to think about these things anymore. You know that from your own experience, if you are doing fine you don't think about someone else who might be doing worse. And this is exactly what they lost up there*. (In8)

> *I think one of the biggest problems in politics nowadays is also that politicians – I mean I don't care, they can also earn millions – but that these people who don't experience everyday life like the people, they are… I would not say airy-fairy, but they cannot represent anymore.* (In14)

As these quotes illustrate, the interviewees perceived politicians as detached from the lifeworld of the average citizens, echoing a similar finding in Jacquet´s (2019) study. In this vein, some interviewees also mention that because politicians live these privileged lives they are all the same, which makes deciding who to vote for increasingly difficult. Therefore several interviewees mention that elections are not enough and other ways of voicing their opinions are required. A few interviewees also pointed out that because of this detachment they do not feel that they live in a functioning democracy and have become cynical about politics. In regards to the consequences of this dissatisfaction, one interviewee points out that he does not feel morally bound to political decisions anymore, and would refuse to comply if he felt the decision was wrong (In14), hence describing a decline in perceived legitimacy.

The second, if much less prominent, overarching problem that can be identified is dissatisfaction with *fellow citizens.* About a quarter of interviewees mention that society has become politically apathetic and unengaged. They remark that citizens complain too much without understanding the complexity of politics and without providing concrete solutions.

> *It's easy to complain if you are never interested, as then you don't know what is going on, content wise. Sometimes I have the impression that people are fast with their critique but have no idea about the content and especially don't think about what they could do to make it better. Criticism is easily voiced but in the second breath there should be a proposal for improvement.* (In6)

In sum, several interviewees are concerned about a lack of responsiveness by politicians. They do not feel heard and respected and perceive a large hierarchy between representatives and themselves. These findings are in line with arguments by Neblo et al. (2018) and Mansbridge (2018) that the representative relationship between citizens and politicians is broken. The dominance of this theme throughout the interviews is fascinating insofar as that the political community under study is small and several interviewees mentioned that they knew some politicians personally. Yet, despite the proximity to politicians, they perceived a large gap between them and ordinary citizens. To what extent do citizens consider SSPPs like the Bürgerdialog a solution to these problems?

BENEFITS OF SMALL-SCALE PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

The most prevalent benefit of the Bürgerdialog and SSPPs generally which was mentioned in virtually all the interviews is the experience of being listened to by politicians. This aligns with the relational mechanism explained in this chapter as well as in Chapter 2 (Tyler & Lind, 1992). Across the board, participants valued the process because it gave them a sense of being listened to, respected and taken seriously. Most interviewees explicitly mentioned the reduction of the hierarchy because they felt that through the process they could meet politicians on an *eye-to-eye level*. They also reported the positive experience that politicians are *also just people* with whom one can talk. Hence the process helped to bridge the gap between politicians and citizens.

> *First of all, I think usually you don´t get a say as a citizen and now you were taken seriously, or at least this was my impression. You could state your opinion and no one said: No, no, that's not how it is. Everyone had a say and you felt important.* (In8)

> *I think they are all people and they really make an effort with this; they are now saying "we want to be open towards the citizens". I think that is great.* (In9)

This is also the case even when citizens already knew the politician personally, as the following quote illustrates:

> *At the third meeting* [when the dialogue between politicians and citizens took place] *it was of course…how will it be with the politicians? But I was positively surprised! Of course you never know, are they just pretending or how much of it is true….But for instance, what is funny is that I have known the minister Antoniadis for some years now* [...describes where she met him]. *But since the Bürgerdialog, I think he has become much more open and he seemed really strongly interested in the whole thing!* (In7)

Apart from their own experiences, some of the interviewees clearly see the potential of participatory processes to address popular dissatisfaction with politics if such processes were applied more often.

> [Citizens will become] *more satisfied with politics and maybe just more satisfied overall, I don't know. I could imagine so. If you look at other countries with all the riots and protests, also here in Belgium; in Brussels it explodes sometimes as well. I don't know, maybe with referendums and citizens' dialogues one can say "hey, we are one society, let's stick together. We listen to what you have to say, we cannot implement everything, but we listen". Maybe this is how you can increase satisfaction a little bit in society*. (In10)

The second benefit that many interviewees see in SSPPs is the educative effects on citizens. Two types can be distinguished. First, interviewees emphasize the positive experience to learn about what it means to take political decisions. Through the process they have realized that political issues are more complex than they seem from the outside and that politicians have to carry a lot of responsibility for making difficult decisions. In some ways, this benefit is a counterpart to the previous theme of politicians finally engaging with the lifeworld of citizens. Here, citizens get a glimpse into the world of politicians.

> *I believe we have only now realized what kind of responsibilities politicians carry: what they have to consider when making decisions, what is behind all that and what kind of negative consequences all this can have. And you have to weigh both, the positive and the negative, before you can decide. I thought that was really impressive; I wouldn't want to do it all the time, as it's a big responsibility.* (In1)

Second, some participants described an awakened interest in politics and the realization that even ordinary citizens can understand political issues and make a meaningful contribution. Some of them felt empowered to participate in politics in the future, reflecting Pateman's (1970) argument that participation breeds an appetite for participation.

> *Most of all, I am more interested now. At the first meeting I said I was not politically interested. I do follow this stuff a bit, more so around election time, but I am just not the type. I have my opinions but I don't voice them in public and would never join a party or something like that. But I have to say that I became more open and more interested through the Bürgerdialog, because I always thought it would be much more complicated and I would not understand any of it.* (In9)

The third benefit that is brought up by the interviewees is the epistemological advantage of involving citizens in decision-making. Citizens should be considered as experts on the topics that concern them, and including their voices in the policy process will result in qualitatively better decisions. Here, interviewees emphasize the value of hearing diverse views, especially from people "on the ground":

> *Because I think we have another field of vision than politicians. We have children. Ok, they do too, but they look at it from a completely different perspective than us. And I think, because all classes were represented, so upper class, middle class, lower class, we can expand their horizon.* (In8)

The opportunity to shape policy in ways that is favorable for the participants was not explicitly mentioned as a benefit of SSPPs in any of the conducted interviews, hence lending no initial support for the instrumental thesis. However the question of the desired decision-making power of participatory processes yields important insights on this question.

THE PREFERRED DECISION-MAKING POWER OF PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

Most interviewees preferred participatory processes to be consultative instead of binding, which is in line with previous findings (Christensen, 2020; Jacquet, 2019). They pointed out that the final responsibility lies with the politicians because this is their job and they have a better oversight into the possibilities and externalities of specific policy proposals.

> *But to take decisions…I mean, that's what we elected those politicians for. Everyone voted for their party, because they somehow represent their interests. So I think*

> *everyone chose their official representative and then I would also leave it to them to make the decisions because they are more professional and know how far you can go, and what is possible. Hence, to have citizens decide…no, I don´t think so.* (In9)

But in regards to the specific recommendations that were formulated in the Bürgeragenda, the output of the Bürgerdialog, most interviewees did expect the parliament to follow up on these proposals, mentioning specific policies that were important to them.

> *Well, I do hope that some of our proposals make it, for instance the one with the citizen line and more childcare during holidays. Also, that they try to recruit more childcare providers but try to provide a safety net for those women*. (In14)

Many also indicated that their final evaluation of the process would depend on how the parliament implements the proposals in the end. They repeatedly stressed that they wanted to see *results.* This seems in line with instrumental approaches to participatory processes: the process is considered beneficial if it yields the desired policy outcomes. This seems like a contradiction at first sight. Citizens want politicians to take decisions but they also want their recommendations to be implemented. Yet a more detailed look at the interviews can resolve this apparent tension. A majority of interviewees do not expect the parliament to *fully* implement the recommendations and already signal understanding for deviations from the proposed Bürgeragenda. Two aspects emerge as important for the interviewees in regards to policy implementation. First, while they do not expect a one-to-one implementation of their recommendation, they expect to see change in the *broad direction* that was proposed – in this case the Bürgeragenda pushed for better pay, education and social security for childcare providers as well as a more centralized concept in organizing childcare.

> *In this regard I would of course wish that a part of it* (the Bürgeragenda) *will be taken into account. That they don't implement it exactly as we proposed is fine. In this regard they are the professionals and know what is possible in terms of finances and organization, but we gave [them] the input to do something in this direction.* (In9)

Second, it is of utmost importance to them that politicians engage seriously with the proposals, even if they eventually decide otherwise. Several interviewees mentioned that they would be very dissatisfied if they felt that the Bürgeragenda was disregarded, thrown in the bin or filed away. This includes that politicians are expected to justify if they deviate from the proposals and through that recognize citizens' right to an explanation.

> *I really do hope that we will get results in a year and that some of the things we proposed or recommended will be implemented. Or if it isn't implemented the way we thought about it, that it is justified why they did not implement it. We don't walk through the world with blinkers on our eyes.* (In7)

> *I think after one year one cannot expect that they already organized a centralized office, but just to see that it was not buried in a drawer. I would be disappointed if they would then say "oh yeah, there was something, what did they say again?". Then I would think that´s not the point. If they end up just implementing their own things you don´t have to organize something like that. I think after a year one can expect a small start. Yes, just so that you see they are working on it; that they took it to heart*. (In9)

Here the overlap between instrumental and relational considerations becomes visible. The interviewees consistently apply a relational perspective in how they think about politics and the values and dangers of the Bürgerdialog. The most important feature of the process is that politicians listen, care and engage genuinely with citizens' views and experiences. But interviewees' assessment of whether politicians are indeed genuinely interested in and respectful toward citizens depends on how they behave in regards to the proposed policy recommendations. Hence, these relational considerations do not stop once the dialogue phase of the process is terminated but continue to the implementation phase. If, hypothetically, the parliament of the German-speaking community had directly implemented the proposals, many interviewees would have considered this a strong signal that politicians had taken them seriously. This is even the case for interviewees who did not hold strong policy preferences themselves. The following interviewee, for instance, repeatedly pointed out that he joined the Bürgerdialog without strong opinions or policy preferences because he does not have children himself and did not think about the topic too much beforehand. Nonetheless, he stressed that

his final verdict on politicians´ intention would be closely affected by the extent to which they implemented the proposals.

> *There was also this fear here that we are abused. And so far this fear has not been confirmed or completely refuted, no. Until now, they have only "made promises" that they will consider these things, but it is very important that people do not feel abused*. (In14)

Several interviewees voiced a strong belief that the Bürgerdialog was simply for show and they explained how they entered the process with suspicion. Throughout the process most interviewees gained the impression that politicians were indeed genuinely interested but they made clear that the politicians were walking on *thin ice*. If they ultimately felt that this process was merely a *circus,* as one interviewee puts it, they would consider this as a signal in the exact opposite direction: they would feel disrespected, patronized and taken for fools, summarized illustratively by one interviewee as "*Volksverarschung*" (In6), which roughly translates to fooling of the people. These observations speak to Jacquet's (2019) study, which similarly documented that while citizens did not expect to have direct unfiltered policy influence, they were concerned that their message would be ignored (see also García-Espín & Ganuza, 2017).[33]

DISCUSSION

The analysis of the Bürgerdialog in the German-speaking community of Belgium provided important insights into citizens' reasoning about small-scale participatory processes. Linking back to the outlined mechanisms in the introduction and Chapter 2, we find overwhelming support for the relational explanation. Citizens are dissatisfied with unresponsive politicians and feel neglected by them. SSPPs are considered valuable because citizens feel that they are heard and taken seriously and met on an eye-to-eye level. The main suspicion that citizens held towards politicians was also that they were not genuine, while concerns about not achieving the desired policy change were much less prevalent. This could be an indication that for small-scale processes, instrumental considerations play much less of a role compared to referendums. Here the intersection between instrumental and relational concerns becomes

[33] One year after the Bürgerdialog took place, the parliament of the DG presented a report on the uptake of the Bürgeragenda. The majority of the recommendations were at least partially implemented.

clear. If politicians implement the recommended changes, this would not only fulfill instrumental policy preferences, but also provide a strong signal that politicians were genuinely open for citizen input. As such, implementing the proposals could function as a sufficient but not necessary condition for considering the process as legitimate. The fact that even interviewees who had no or weak policy preferences considered the political uptake important supports this argument.

However, this interpretation has to be qualified given the rather uncontroversial issue that was discussed in the Bürgerdialog. While most of the interviewees considered childcare an important topic, many of them did not hold fixed and strong policy preferences. Even though Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) argue that this is the case for most citizens and most issues, I cannot rule out that instrumental arguments would have featured more prominently on a different, more controversial issue. Further, one could argue that participants of such an SSPP, who voluntarily spent three Saturdays to debate local politics, represent a rather particular set of people with higher altruistic dispositions than the average population and hence are in general less driven by instrumental considerations. Existing research rather points toward the opposite, namely that participants in SSPPs tend to be disproportionally opinionated about the issue at hand compared to the general population, but this explanation cannot be ruled out for the present case. Last, since at the time of interviewing it was not yet clear to what extent the proposals from the Bürgeragenda would be implemented, there could also be frustration if the proposals are ultimately not followed through (Delli Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs, 2004). Here more research is required that looks at controversial policy issues where citizens have strong preferences.

A second qualification for the prevalence of relational considerations is linked to the timing of the interviews. We conducted the interviews after the process had ended. There are some indications that citizens' perspectives on SSPPs change over time and through the experience of participating. Jacquet (2019) documents shifting preferences and expectations toward SSPPs, echoing the argument made in Chapter 4 on the stability of process preferences. Interestingly, Curato and Niemeyer (2013) find that while citizens often enter the process with a rather policy-focused attitude, they shift their focus on the quality of the process throughout. Hence it is possible that citizens enter the process with instrumental considerations and leave

it with relational considerations, an argument also made by Tyler, Huo, and Lind (1999). Further research is needed to address whether citizens generally approach SSPPs with more relational considerations or this is only the case once they have been through the process of participation.

TO WHAT EXTENT CAN WE GENERALIZE FROM THIS CASE?

The Bürgerdialog can be considered a success story in a particular political setting, which demands caution in generalizing from it (Font, Smith, Galais, & Alarcon, 2018). First, the polity is relatively small, resulting in higher levels of familiarity between politicians and citizens. This makes the DG rather a less-likely case to find dissatisfaction with politicians and effects of a citizen dialogue on the perceived legitimacy. It is surprising that citizens still perceived such a large distance between "the politicians" and "the citizens" that they considered it democratically problematic.. The fact that we found such instances even in a place where conversations with politicians on an eye-to-eye level are much more likely to occur in everyday life indicated that this might be equally or even more prevalent in larger polities.

Another important question regarding generalizability concerns the sample itself. The participants were predominantly female and older than the average population. While we did not find indications for systematic differences in our interviews between gender and age groups, we cannot rule out that, for instance, younger people would have different views on SSPPs and their potential benefits, due to among other things generational value shifts (Inglehart, 2008). Further, our sample was slightly more interested in politics and trusting in political institutions than the average population in this region. Again, we did not see systematic differences between dissatisfied and satisfied citizens in how they evaluated the Bürgerdialog. Even more pressing is the question to what extent people that participate in such processes are substantially different than the general population, independent of their gender or age. While citizens were contacted at random to be recruited, only a small proportion of contacted citizens accepted the invitation, making this a somewhat self-selecting process. This is a problem that concerns both research on real life SSPPs as well as SSPPs that are set up as experiments by researchers due to the inherently high time demands of the later

process. Therefore the scope of the present study is limited to participants of SSPPs, while the potential effects on non-participants are investigated in Chapter 7.

To conclude, this study provided important insights into the value citizens see in SSPPs. Even though the design of this study does not allow us to draw causal inferences on the effects on legitimacy, it does provide the first indications of what kinds of mechanisms are at play. Citizens that are dissatisfied with politicians' lack of responsiveness appreciate SSPPs as instruments where politicians can signal respect, genuine interest and care and subsequently reduce the perceived distance between citizens and politicians. While instrumental concerns are prevalent, they are closely tied to relational concerns of not being disregarded by politicians rather than an actual demand of getting one's preferred policies through. Some pressing questions arise from these findings. Importantly, it is not clear what element produced the relational signal. Was it the more abstract fact that the SSPP was organized, which accorded space for citizens to voice their views and be heard by politicians, or was it instead the actual experience of participating, as the findings by Curato and Niemeyer (2013) would suggest? And can SSPPs also foster legitimacy when the policy issue under discussion is controversial and citizens do not receive the desired outcomes? These questions will be addressed in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 7

HOW INVOLVING THE FEW CAN AFFECT LEGITIMACY PERCEPTIONS AMONG THE MANY[34]

[34] Title idea curtesy of Peter Esaiasson

AT A GLANCE

RESEARCH QUESTION

Can small-scale participatory processes haven an effect of the legitimacy perceptions of the wider public?

METHOD AND DATA

Analysis of three original survey experiments conducted in the Netherlands (N = 2 464)

MAIN FINDINGS

1. Hearing about participatory processes can increase fairness perceptions and decision acceptance

2. These findings hold also when the decision outcome is unfavorable and when the issue is highly controversial

CHAPTER BASED ON

Werner, H. & Marien, S. (2020). Overcoming the limits of small-scale participatory processes: how involving the few can affect legitimacy perceptions among the many. *Under Review*

INTRODUCTION

In efforts to foster the perceived legitimacy of political decision-making, researchers have experimented extensively with participatory procedures, such as participatory budgeting processes or deliberative citizen forums (Fung, 2015). Notably, small-scale participatory processes in which deliberation and discussion figure centrally are gaining popularity. Chapter 7 has focused on these SSPPs and investigated the experiences of the participants of such a process. However, the relevance of these processes has been increasingly questioned given the small number of participants involved (Achen & Bartels, 2016; Fishkin, 2018; Lafont, 2017; Warren & Gastil, 2015).

To address perceived legitimacy deficits, the effect of these small-scale processes must extend beyond the small fraction of citizens who participated (see Gastil, 2018). Both proponents and sceptics of participatory and deliberative democracy have debated whether and how small-scale deliberative forums could be scaled up to play roles in larger democratic systems (e.g. Curato & Böker, 2016; Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Lafont, 2017; Niemeyer & Jennstal, 2018; Warren & Gastil, 2015). In this context, Gastil, Rosenzweig, Knobloch and Brinker (2016) admonished that, "It is imperative that research clarify the relationship between mini-publics and the larger publics they aim to serve." (p. 175). However, so far we know little about the effects of small-scale participatory processes on perceptions of legitimacy among the wider public.

Drawing on insights from prior research addressing the effects on participants in these processes (e.g. Esaiasson, Gilljam, & Persson, 2012), we[35] test the effects of participatory procedures on legitimacy perceptions held by the population at large. Drawing on the relational mechanism described in Chapter 2 and Chapter 6, we posit that allowing some citizens to participate in decision-making sends a powerful relational signal to all members of the collective (Tyler & Lind, 1992). It offers them an informational cue that their government cares about them, which can increase legitimacy perceptions among the population. This

[35] This chapter is based on joint work with Sofie Marien. I will therefore use the pronoun "we" throughout the chapter.

relational explanation can explain why the involvement of some may have positive legitimacy implications for the perceptions of all.

We designed three survey experiments (N_{total} = 2,464) to gain insight into the causal effect of hearing that a deliberative process took place on perceptions of legitimacy among those who did not participate in the process. Modelling the procedure on real-world participatory procedures in the Netherlands, we vary the issues under consideration across experiments to increase generalizability. The treatment variables include the use of a participatory procedure and the favorability of the decision resulting from this process.

We show that hearing about the participatory nature of a decision-making process leads to an increase in perceptions of legitimacy—even among individuals who disagree with the decision. By distributing information about the participatory process to non-participants, the involvement of a fraction of the population in the political decision-making process can have effects on the wider public. This focus on the potential to scale up deliberative processes represents a new frontier of research that has the potential to improve the perceived legitimacy of political decisions.

The Netherlands offer an interesting case because there has been substantive experimentation with these tools, particularly at the local level. Thus, participatory processes are not merely an abstract notion but are a realistic political possibility (e.g. Michels 2011).

SMALL-SCALE PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES AND MASS DEMOCRACIES

As explained in Chapter 6, many of today's experiences with participatory processes include a small group of non-elected citizens who do not hold political offices or represent interest groups. The participants are selected either through random or stratified sampling and come together to deliberate on a policy issue. These participatory events are often organized or mandated by governments and, as such, they are formally linked to political institutions that

process their input into the policy-making process (Warren, 2009) Specific procedural models include citizen assemblies, planning cells, and consensus conferences.[36]

Recent critics see two problems with these processes. First, they are irrelevant (Achen & Bartels, 2016) or even democratically problematic (Lafont, 2015, 2017) because they only involve a handful of people. As Lafont (2015) argues, selecting a small set of citizens by lottery without any possibility to keep them accountable might decrease rather than increase the system's legitimacy. Second, even if these processes occurred so frequently that many people could participate, not everyone necessarily would want to commit to this kind of engagement (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002; Neblo et al., 2018). In this chapter we suggest that there can be a way for small-scale participatory processes to foster legitimacy perceptions in the wider public while addressing both problems.

Can these small-scale involvement processes deliver on their promise to increase the population's legitimacy perceptions? There is a vast amount of empirical work showing that a process that gives people a voice in decision making increases fairness perceptions and consent among participants (Curato & Niemeyer, 2013; Esaiasson et al., 2012; Grönlund et al., 2010; Herian et al., 2012; Persson, Esaiasson, & Gilljam, 2012). But does this effect travel beyond its participants?

Some previous studies offer indications that participatory processes can generate legitimacy within the larger population. Cross-sectional studies on the American states and Finnish municipalities show that the use of more participatory processes is correlated with aggregate levels of legitimacy perceptions, especially when awareness is high (Bowler & Donovan, 2002; Jäske, 2018; D. A. Smith & Tolbert, 2004). Boulianne (2018) conducted survey experiments in the context of two deliberative forums in Canada and found that respondents who were informed about these participatory procedures had higher levels of external efficacy. Political trust was higher among those who heard about it in one out of the two cases (Boulianne, 2018). Similarly, Knobloch, Barthel, and Gastil (2019) studied citizens' efficacy levels after the

[36] We acknowledge that within this definition there is still room for variation on important procedural features (such as decision-making power or size of the participating body). However, it covers the broad features relevant to our theoretical argument while at the same time it relates to many existing processes in political practice.

Citizen Initiative Review, a participatory process in Oregon. They found that awareness of the process was correlated with an increase in external efficacy.

These pioneering studies suggest that small-scale processes might affect public opinion toward the functioning of democracy through knowledge about deliberative processes. The laudable effort to study real cases provides important insights yet somewhat constrains the ability to draw causal inferences as well as the possibility to generalize to different decision-making issues. We contribute to this emerging line of literature by providing a causal test of the effect of hearing about participatory processes on perceptions of legitimacy.

Building on these empirical findings, we theorize that small-scale participatory procedures can generate perceptions of legitimacy among the broader population if they are aware of those procedures. As suggested by procedural fairness models (especially the relational model of authority, Tyler & Lind, 1992, see Chapter 2), allowing members of the collective to participate in decision making *signals* important information to people about their relationship with the authority. It signals that the authority is interested in their views and experiences, respects and values them, and takes them seriously. Individuals are attentive to such signals (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). This model predicts that procedures with citizen participation are perceived as fairer compared to procedures without. Perceptions of fairness lead to higher levels of decision acceptance, trust in authorities, cooperation, and compliance (e.g. Esaiasson, Persson, Gilljam, & Lindholm, 2016; Marien & Werner, 2018; Tyler, 2011).

We predict that hearing about political participatory processes signals to citizens that politicians care about them, listen to them, respect them, and take them seriously. As a result, hearing about a participatory process can generate legitimacy even if people did not participate in the process.

This approach resonates with recently formulated theoretical arguments about the relationship between citizens and representatives. Neblo et al. (2018) make a strong case that the core task of representative democracies is to reconnect citizens to their elected representatives because citizens no longer trust that their voices are heard and respected. Mansbridge (2018) makes a similar argument when calling for recursive representation, where listening to citizens'

demands is made central. We argue that small-scale participatory processes can play a part in sending a signal of trust and respect to citizens.

Communicating sincere interest to citizens can be even more effective in establishing good relationships between representatives and the represented than following the majority opinion, as the interviewees in Chapter 6 indicated. Feeling listened to increases citizens' acceptance of representatives' decisions (Esaiasson et al., 2017). Participatory procedures can be a means of communication between representatives and citizens where authorities can show a sincere interest in the views and experiences of citizens. Grimes (2006) for instance, showed that the willingness of political authorities to engage in dialogue with the public, explicate and justify their own decisions, and address the concerns of citizens is critical to enhancing legitimacy perceptions among the citizens affected by a contested political decision.

We expect such a signaling effect on the wider public even when citizens themselves are not involved and the decisions are not favorable. As such, the potential implications of these signaling effects are large. Scaling up small-scale participatory processes is challenging. Yet, deciding on policies everyone favors is even more challenging. We could design participatory processes that signal to all citizens that their politicians care about them and value their voices. If these signaling effects play out empirically, participatory processes could have enormous potential to address current democratic deficits.

Importantly, to fulfill such a potential, participatory processes also must increase the legitimacy of citizens who are unsatisfied with the policy decision. Consent with unfavorable decisions is crucial for the stable functioning of a democratic system (C. J. Anderson et al., 2005). Yet, past research has shown that this is difficult to attain. For instance, Marien and Kern (2018) document that the boost in political support observed after a local referendum in Belgium can be primarily attributed to the winners of the decision. Similarly, Arnesen (2017); Doherty and Wolak (2012); and most comprehensively, Esaiasson and colleagues (2019) show that perceptions of the fairness of the process and the willingness to accept the decision differ

strongly depending on the favorability of the decision.[37] If a procedural participatory arrangement can generate a boost in the case of favorable decisions at the expense of lower legitimacy perceptions among those receiving unfavorable decisions, it poses a democratic problem. It renders the desirability of such procedures clearly debatable. Therefore, to study the effects of participatory processes on perceptions of legitimacy it is critical to take the favorability of the decision into account and to focus particularly on decision losers.

While focusing on the signaling function of participatory procedures we do not disregard that such procedures can produce an array of other desirable democratic outcomes, such as educating citizens, stimulating public discussion, and empowering underrepresented voices in public and parliamentary discourse (Delli Carpini et al., 2004; Ingham & Levin, 2018; Neblo et al., 2018; Pateman, 2012). We do not test the signaling mechanism itself but use it to explain why we should expect that participatory procedures generate legitimacy perceptions for society at large. We do not aim to investigate which content people specifically derived from the information cues on the process. Rather, this study aims to contribute to this emerging research agenda by assessing whether information cues about the use of participatory processes can affect legitimacy perceptions held by the wider public.

Based on the previous theoretical arguments, we derive four hypotheses about the effects of hearing about participatory processes on perceptions of legitimacy. We conceptualize legitimacy perceptions as a psychological construct connected to an authority, institution, or social arrangement that is considered to exercise its authority via fair procedures that encourage voluntary deference (Tyler, 2006). This includes an evaluation of the process by which decisions are made (here: fairness perceptions) and the acceptance of the policy decisions made by this arrangement (decision acceptance). For both dimensions we formulate separate hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: *Hearing about the use of a participatory procedure in political decision making generates higher fairness perceptions than purely representative decision making.*

[37] Most of this literature refers to the 'favorability of the outcome.' In this chapter we use the wording 'favorability of the decision' to avoid confusion with the outcome variable of our study.

Hypothesis 2: *For individuals who receive an unfavorable decision*, *hearing about the use of a participatory procedure in political decision making generates higher fairness perceptions than purely representative decision making.*

Hypothesis 3: *Hearing about the use of a participatory procedure in political decision making generates higher decision acceptance than purely representative decision making.*

Hypothesis 4: *For individuals who receive an unfavorable decision*, *hearing about the use of a participatory procedure in political decision making generates higher decision acceptance than purely representative decision making.*

METHOD

We conducted 3 experiments employing a 2 (procedure: participatory/no participatory process) by 2 (decision: favorable/unfavorable) between-subjects design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. We place particular importance on designing realistic experimental stimuli. To this end, vignette experiments are well-suited as we are interested in the effect of an information cue rather than actual participation. Hearing about and watching a scenario about a specific political decision-making process comes close to the mediated presentations of such processes in the real world. To increase engagement with the stimulus, we produced short, animated videos. In these videos, a political decision-making procedure at the municipal level is described, explaining realistic policy issues and decision-making processes for a local Dutch audience. We used the same experimental protocol and decision-making process but varied the issue across the three experiments. This allowed us to test the robustness of the findings and its generalizability across different policy contexts.

For Experiment 2 and Experiment 3, the hypotheses, measures and analyses were preregistered at aspredicted.org. More information about the preregistration and deviations from it can be found in the Appendix A7.

SAMPLE

All respondents were recruited via an online panel database (PanelClix) in the Netherlands to obtain heterogeneous samples with sufficient statistical power. The final sample included 760 respondents for Experiment 1,913 respondents for Experiment 2, and 791 respondents for Experiment 3. A stratified sampling approach was used to reach a sample similar to the adult Dutch population in terms of age, sex, place of residence (postcode), and education. This was achieved for all three studies (compared to Dutch census data, Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 2018). Demographic information on the three samples can be found in the Appendix, Table A7.1).

PROCEDURE

The online survey began with a question about the respondent's place of residence, which was automatically inserted throughout the survey to increase realism. Next, respondents watched a short, animated video. In the video, respondents were asked to imagine a particular decision-making process in their municipality and, subsequently, were asked to state their preferred policy option. In a second movie, the decision-making processes were described; Depending on the condition, either a process involving a citizen assembly or the status quo—decision making by the city council. The description of the assembly was based on previous participatory events in the Netherlands (Fournier, van der Kolk, Carty, Blais, & Rose, 2011) and included the random selection of 40 citizens in the same municipality who came together to deliberate on the respective issues. Depending on the condition, respondents were shown that the decision was either made by the city council (*no participatory process*) or with the input from a citizen forum (*representative process*).[38] Subsequently, the decision from the process was shown. A matching decision result was assigned based on the previously measured policy preference of the respondent and the condition to which he/she was randomly assigned (*decision winner/decision loser*). The full text of the vignettes as well as links to the videos can be found in Appendix A7. The survey ended with questions on fairness perceptions and

[38] Respondents received no information about the quality of the deliberation or the demographic characteristics of the citizens in the citizen forum.

decision acceptance, manipulation checks, and demographics (information about age, gender, postcode, and education was provided by the survey company).[39]

The issue varied across experiments. In the first experiment a choice had to be made between additional policemen on the streets (safety plan) or additional social workers in schools (education equality plan). In general, both policy areas are equally and moderately important to people living in the Netherlands (European Commission, 2017). A pretest showed that both issues were equally emotional, realistic, and that people had strong opinions about whether to favor one over the other; all of which can increase engagement with the vignette. In the second experiment**,** the same two options were shown but presented as a budget cut resulting in either fewer policemen or fewer social workers. The third experiment focused on the potential opening of an asylum center for Syrian refugees in the municipality. As a consequence of the increased influx of Syrian and Iraqi refugees since 2015, this is a particularly salient and controversial issue in the Netherlands (and most other Western democracies, e.g. European Commission, 2017).

MEASUREMENTS

Dependent variable. We employ two commonly used legitimacy perceptions proxies: fairness perceptions and decision acceptance[40] (e.g. Arnesen, 2017; Doherty & Wolak, 2012; Esaiasson et al., 2017). These concepts also relate strongly to other legitimacy proxies such as trust in authorities, cooperation, and compliance (e.g. Esaiasson et al., 2016; Marien & Werner, 2018; Tyler, 2011).

Fairness perceptions: Across all three experiments, we asked respondents whether they thought the procedure was fair. In Experiments 2 and 3 we included, in addition to the overall fairness assessment, three items on three related attributes (good/just/appropriate; cronbach's

[39] The speaker was a female native Dutch person without identifiable accent. The stimulus material was pre-tested in cognition tests at local supermarkets in the Netherlands where the movies were evaluated as easy to follow.

[40] We did not pre-register decision acceptance as an outcome variable and measured it for post-hoc analyses. After receiving feedback from colleagues, we decided to include it in the main analysis. Note that we have the same expectations for fairness perceptions and decision acceptance (see also Appendix A7).

alpha$_{E2}$=.95). We present the analysis for the single fairness item in the text and show the analysis for the full scales for Experiment 2 and 3 in the Appendix (Table A7.15 and A7.16).[41]

Decision Acceptance: We measure the willingness to accept the decision with a 4-item scale in the three experiments. Items include: 'I accept the decision' and 'I would be willing to defend the decision against friends and family.' (Answer options ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), cronbachs alpha$_{E2}$=.67.)

Manipulation check. The participatory nature of the process was evaluated on a 7-point scale. Across the three experiments, participants evaluated the procedure as significantly more participatory in the participatory condition compared to the representative condition (see Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 Manipulation check: To what extent were citizens involved in the decision-making process?

	Experiment 1		**Experiment 2**		**Experiment 3**	
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
no participatory process	3.02	1.65	2.97	1.42	2.89	1.55
participatory process	4.98	1.38	5.01	1.52	4.97	1.57
t-statistic	t(827) = -18.25, p <.001		*t*(741)=-18.89, *p*<.001		*t*(657)=-17.01, *p*<.001)	
N	687		743		659	

Note. E1: Additional policemen or social workers, E2: Less policemen or social workers, E3: opening a center for asylum seekers.

Credibility and compliance check: We assessed the credibility of the scenarios with a single item question, asking how likely the described scenario is to occur in the participants' municipality (scores can be found in the Appendix A7). Compliance was measured by time recordings on the pages where the movies were shown. Non-compliance was defined as not spending enough time on the page to be able to watch the full movie (minus 5 seconds).

[41] In Experiment 1, we also included three additional items. However, since these items were conceptually close to the manipulation itself (e.g. "people like me could voice their opinion"), we decided to exclude them from the analysis. The fairness item was always asked first, so there was no risk of priming respondents. Including these items results in substantially the same, if slightly stronger effects.

Compliance rates of the sample were 92% in Experiment 1, 86% in Experiment 2, and 89% in Experiment 3. As these criteria were set in advance with the survey company, demographic information was only provided for the sample of compliers.

RESULTS

In the following section, we present intent-to-treat (ITT) estimates. This means we run our analysis on the full sample, including non-compliers (A. S. Gerber & Green, 2012). We provide complier-average causal effect (CACE) estimates that exclude non-compliers in the Appendix (Tables A7.8 –A7.11). The results are presented in the form of mean graphs, the corresponding regression estimates can be found in the Appendix (Figures A7.1-A7.4).

We first investigate whether hearing about a participatory process affects fairness perceptions in general (H1) and for those who receive unfavorable decisions (H2). Afterwards, we investigate these effects for decision acceptance both in general (H3) and for the subgroup who received unfavorable decisions (H4).

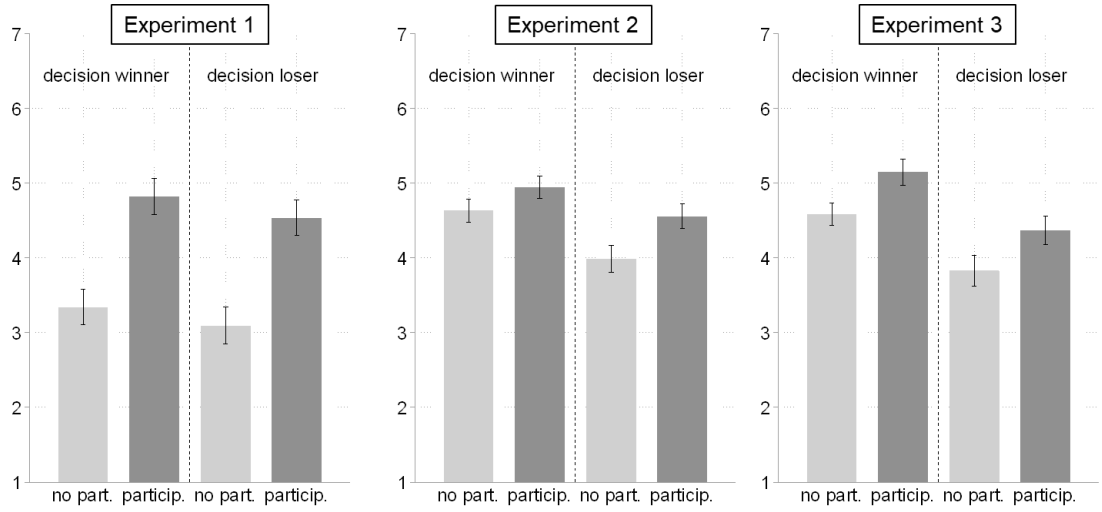
CAN HEARING ABOUT A PARTICIPATORY PROCESS INCREASE FAIRNESS PERCEPTIONS? (H1)

In Figure 7.1 we plot the mean scores of fairness perceptions in the respective treatment groups across the three experiments including 95% confidence intervals. In all three experiments, we see higher mean scores for the observation of a participatory process than for a standard, non-participatory process. Accordingly, across decision-making issues, hearing about a participatory process leads to a more positive evaluation of the process. The effect seems to be slightly larger in Experiment 1, with a mean difference of a whole point on a 7-point scale. An OLS regression on the two treatments confirms a positive and significant effect across all three studies (Appendix, Figure A7.1). Accordingly, the first hypothesis receives support. Simply knowing about a participatory process in one's municipality fosters average fairness perceptions.

DOES THIS HOLD IN THE CASE OF UNFAVORABLE DECISIONS? (H2)

But can participatory processes increase fairness perceptions among the most critical group, decision losers? The positive effect could be driven by decision winners—who are already satisfied with the decision—at the expense of decision losers.

Figure 7.1 Mean scores of fairness perceptions across studies and conditions.



Note. Fairness perceptions range from 1-7. Error bars present 95% confidence intervals, N_{E1}=760, N_{E2}=913, N_{E3}=790.

As Figure 7.1 clearly shows, this is not the case. As expected, we do see a substantial effect of decision favorability on the perception of fairness, with winners showing higher scores than losers. However, we also see that for the subgroup of decision losers, the participatory process is perceived as substantially and significantly fairer than the representative process. This effect is similar in size for winners and losers, if even slightly stronger for decision losers. An interaction between treatment shows that there is no significant difference in the process effect for decision winners and losers (see Appendix, Table A7.12).[42] Again, the effect seems to be strongest in Experiment 1, indicating that it is easier to satisfy decision losers if the substantial losses are less painful. Yet they also hold in Experiments 2 and 3, which involve stronger losses and the highly contested issue of asylum reception centers in one's municipality. An OLS regression confirms the significance of these differences (Appendix, Figure A7.2). This finding supports the second hypothesis. It shows that even the presumably

[42] This interaction does not test H2 because even if winners would experience a significantly bigger boost than losers (resulting in a significant interaction), there could still be a positive effect for losers.

most critical group—decision losers—perceives participatory processes as more fair than representative processes.

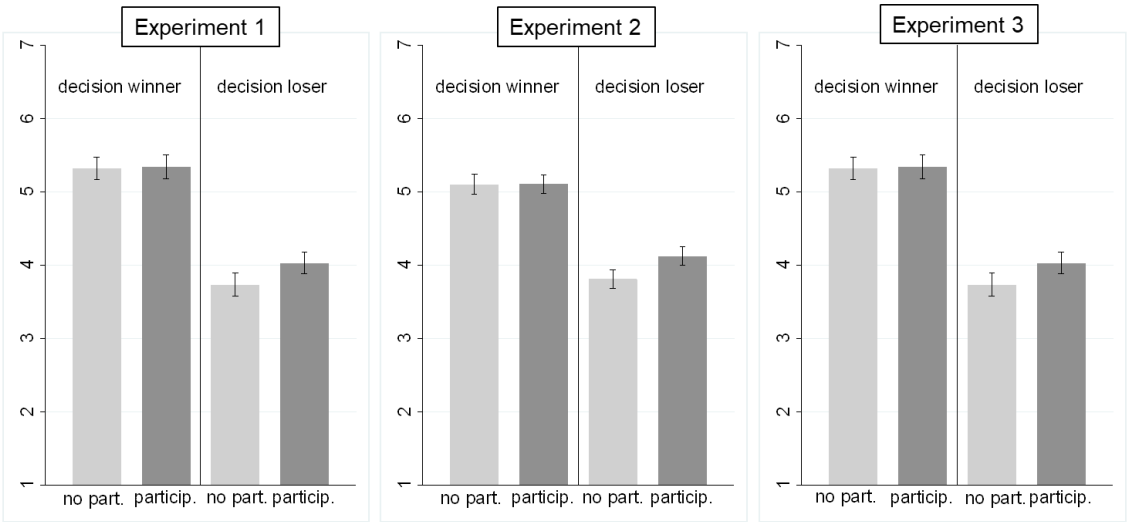
CAN HEARING ABOUT PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES INCREASE THE WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT THE DECISION? (H3)

We plot the mean scores with the 95% confidence intervals in Figure 7.2. Compared to fairness perceptions, decision acceptance has been found to be influenced more strongly by the favorability of the decision than the qualities of the process (e.g. Esaiasson et al. 2019). In line with these previous findings, we see much larger differences between winners and losers for decision acceptance. For the comparison between representative and participatory decision making, we see much smaller differences than for fairness perceptions. Running OLS regressions reveals that the average treatment effect of hearing about a participatory process is significant at the .05 level in Experiment 2 and Experiment 3, yet not in Experiment 1. Hence, H3 is partly confirmed by the data: In two out of three experiments, hearing about a participatory process can increase decision acceptance.

DOES THIS HOLD IN LIGHT OF UNFAVORABLE DECISIONS (H4)?

Increasing the legitimacy perceptions of decision losers is the toughest, yet at the same time, most crucial test for the potential of participatory processes to tackle widespread legitimacy deficits.

Figure 7.2 Mean scores of decision acceptance across treatment groups and studies



Note. Decision acceptance ranges from 1-7. Error bars present 95% confidence intervals, N_{E1}=760, N_{E2}=913, N_{E3}=790.

As Figure 7.2 shows, the overall effect of observing a participatory process seems to be driven primarily by decision losers. Across all three studies, we see higher mean scores among losers in the participatory condition than in the non-participatory condition. The OLS regression also reveals that they are all significant; however, for Experiment 1 the p-value is just below the common .05 threshold (.046). Interactions between the treatments reveal that the effect of observing a participatory process is significantly stronger for losers than winners in Experiment 2, yet this is not the case in Experiment 1 and Experiment 3 (Appendix, Table A7.13).

Accordingly, H4 receives support from our data. Across the three experiments we find that participatory processes can significantly and positively create higher levels of decision acceptance than the status quo of representative decision making when the decision is unfavorable. Hence, we can document a boost in both fairness perceptions and decision acceptance among the most critical and, at the same time, least likely group of decision losers.

ROBUSTNESS CHECKS

We conduct several additional checks to address the robustness of the findings. First, we pay particular attention to Experiment 3, which described the potential installation of a reception center for refugees in one's municipality. Compared to the other two studies, this one did not include a choice between two gains or two losses. Depending on the individual's preference, decision losers were faced with the installation of a center for asylum seekers in their municipality that they opposed, or the absence of such a center that they supported. One might argue that loss is quite different for the different groups and that, particularly, the first would be resentful of such a decision because of its high perceived impact. It could be the case that our finding is simply driven by those decision losers who favored the asylum seeker center, whereas for those who opposed it, frustration was too high for them to be appreciative of the participatory process. Conducting a test for the separate groups shows that this is not case, neither for fairness perceptions nor for decision acceptance (see Appendix, Table A7.14). Also, for participants who experience loss on a highly topical and polarizing issue—such as the

undesired installation of a reception center for asylum seekers—the use of a participatory process exerts a substantial and significant effect on their perceptions of fairness and willingness to accept the decision.

Second, to account for the variation in the measures for fairness perceptions, we also conduct our analyses using the 4-item scales of fairness perceptions for Experiment 2 and Experiment 3. The estimates align substantially with the presented findings and yield slightly weaker effects across all studies (see Appendix, Table A7.15 and A7.16).

Lastly, we conduct CACE analysis for all three experiments. This approach aims to extract the average treatment effect among the compliers, hence non-compliers are excluded from this analysis.[43] As expected, all estimates gain in size and significance in the CACE analysis, except for the decision losers in Experiment 1, whose p-value increases to .07. These analyses can be found in the Appendix (Tables A7.8-A7.11).

Overall, the results of the main analyses remain rather robust across different specifications of samples and variables. Effects on fairness perceptions turn out to be larger and more robust than effects on decision acceptance.

DISCUSSION

The potential of participatory procedures to address deficits in perceived legitimacy depends on their ability to influence the broader public. We accept the challenge from political theorists to study the ways in which small-scale participatory procedures can be successfully embedded in mass democracies (e.g. Curato & Böker, 2016; Fishkin, 2011; Lafont, 2017). We designed three survey experiments in which we manipulate the information cue on the process. We show that knowledge about the use of a participatory process increases fairness perceptions and decision acceptance. This effect also holds for the least likely scenarios where citizens receive unfavorable decisions on an issue that is highly salient and contested. We, therefore,

[43] Since compliance is known for both the placebo group (non-participatory decision making) and the treatment group (participatory decision making), no instrumental variable regression is required to estimate the CACE (A. S. Gerber & Green, 2012).

enrich the literature on the broader effects of small-scale participatory events with causal evidence from highly controlled settings.

As with every study, ours has some limitations. We used survey experiments to study our relationship of interest and cannot exclude the possibility that these results differ when people are confronted with real cases. By designing the vignettes as close to the political realities as possible and by including different issues, we tried to increase experimental realism while maintaining a high level of control. Nevertheless, additional empirical evidence from panel designs on real cases of participatory decision making is warranted (e.g. Knobloch, Barthel, and Gastil 2019). Second, we used fairness perceptions and decision acceptance as a proxy for perceived legitimacy, which are certainly not the only relevant indicators. Previous research repeatedly has shown a strong link between fairness perceptions and trust, compliance, and cooperation (e.g. Tyler, 1990, 2011). It seems plausible that the use of participatory processes can trigger more behavioral aspects of consent, yet this requires additional empirical investigation. Lastly, we suggested that a signaling mechanism based on the relational model of procedural fairness underlies the effect between knowledge of participatory processes and legitimacy perceptions. Of course there are also alternative explanations for how these information cues can affect citizens' legitimacy perceptions, such as the expectation that fellow citizens will represent one better than elected officials (see Warren, 2008) or that the epistemic quality will be higher because of the deliberation (Gastil et al., 2016). In this study we did not provide any information to the respondents about the characteristics of the citizens participating in the forum nor did we suggest that the discussion in the citizen forum was of higher quality than in the city council. Nonetheless, with our present study, we could not tease out the functioning of the mechanism at play. Further research is required to dig deeper into this causal mechanism. Does hearing about the use of participatory procedures indeed signal to citizens the goodwill, interest, trust, and respect that authorities hold for their opinions and experiences? If so, what procedural characteristics can provide the desired signals? Experimental research that manipulates different aspects of procedures and contexts is required to uncover the mechanism behind the effects of participatory processes on the larger public.

Despite its limitations, we believe this study has important implications for research and political practice. First, the results of this study deliver good news for the proposal that participatory processes can address deficits in perceived legitimacy. By providing only a minimal information cue—a brief and neutral description of a decision-making process—legitimacy perceptions among observers were strengthened. These results provide an empirical counterargument to the criticism that, for example, mini-publics are irrelevant to the working of society at large (Achen & Bartels, 2016). These findings also offer counterevidence to recent pessimism about the potential of procedural features to overcome dissatisfaction with decisions (Esaiasson et al., 2019). Additionally, we find that the favorability of the decision affects legitimacy perceptions. But more importantly, decision losers appreciate participatory processes to at least the same extent as decision winners. These findings also speak to an often voiced claim that participatory procedures are only beneficial if the individual had substantial influence over the decision (Grimes, 2006; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2008; Ulbig, 2008). The findings imply that citizens do not necessarily need personal control over the decision to find a procedure more legitimate (see also Niemeyer & Jennstal, 2018).

These findings also hold important implications for policy makers. In addition to creating genuine participation opportunities, these results make clear that the diffusion of knowledge about participatory processes should also become a core goal for authorities. So far, this is often a missed opportunity to fully exploit the potential benefits. This includes a stronger focus on collaboration with news media and campaigns, although we recognize the limitations of mainstream media in drawing attention to these processes (see Parkinson, 2005). The discussions in the Irish citizens' assembly on the legalization of abortion in 2018 were, for instance, broadcast online and repeatedly reported by news media. Approximately 65% of the voters in the referendum on the legalization of abortion knew about the assembly (RTE poll 2018).

On a more critical note, concerns may arise about the possibilities for manipulation of citizens' legitimacy beliefs while depriving them of substantial policy changes (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; MacCoun, 2005). Based on the relational model, giving voice to citizens primarily fulfills a symbolic function. Does this downgrade participatory procedures to a mere opium of the masses? Does it provide a waiver for authorities to ignore citizens' wishes and conduct

participatory procedures for show? We cannot neglect this serious concern. The extant use of participatory tools, (also in autocracies, for instance) must be assessed in regard to this risk. However, in established democracies there are indications that the causes of legitimacy deficits are not only policy-based but also relational (Neblo et al., 2018). Influential books, for instance Hibbing and Theiss-Morse's (2002) "Stealth Democracy", documented increasing criticism and suspicion toward political elites and their intentions. The parallel improvement of standards of living and low levels of institutional trust speak in support of the relational problem. This is not to dismiss that certain groups have lost socio-economic status and that resource inequalities persist or sometimes even grow. Rather, it justifies exploration of solutions that also focus on procedures instead of policy decisions alone. The risk of "false consciousness" can also be somewhat qualified precisely because citizens have become so suspicious of political elites. Citizens must perceive participatory procedures as genuine. Any notion of alibi-participation is likely to be detected and punished immediately by the citizenry (Neblo et al., 2018). This concern is discussed in depth in Chapter 9.

This study provides an important contribution to our understanding of the potential that small-scale participatory processes can have in mass democracies to address recent challenges to democratic legitimacy. At the same time, it reveals a range of exciting avenues for future research to fully comprehend the empirical effects of such procedures and their normative implications for contemporary democracies.

CHAPTER 8

PROCESS VS. OUTCOME
THOUGHTS ON HOW TO EVALUATE THE EFFECTS OF PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES ON LEGITIMACY PERCEPTIONS

AT A GLANCE

RESEARCH QUESTION

How should we compare outcome and process effects when evaluating participatory processes?

METHOD AND DATA

Secondary analysis of 12 experiments from the Netherlands (Chapter 7) and Sweden (Esaiasson et al., 2019)

MAIN FINDINGS

1. How we compare process and outcome effects matters substantially for our interpretation of the potential of participatory processes to foster legitimacy

2. Across 12 experiments participatory processes have a consistent positive effect on fairness perceptions among decision losers

CHAPTER BASED ON

Werner, H. & Marien, S. (forthcoming). Process vs. Outcome. Thoughts on how to evaluate the effects of participatory processes on legitimacy perceptions. *British Journal of Political Science*

INTRODUCTION

Can deficits in perceived legitimacy be tackled by increasing participation of citizens in democratic decision-making? Some scholars have argued that by engaging citizens in decision-making, they will feel trusted and respected and consider the process to be fairer (e.g. Barber 1984; Pateman 1970; Smith 2009; Sintomer et al. 2008; Tyler 1990). Others have debated the merits of participatory decision-making to foster perceived legitimacy (e.g. Hibbing & Theiss-Morse 2008). To date, the empirical evidence provides us with an ambiguous picture (Herian et al. 2012; Olken 2010; Persson, Esaiasson, and Gilljam 2012; Ulbig 2008; Arvai and Froschauer 2010; Boulianne 2018; Jäske 2018; Terwel et al. 2010). The previous chapters have shown that, in line with past research, the favorability of the outcome has a substantial effect on citizens preferences for and their perceived legitimacy of participatory processes. In this chapter, we[44] take a step back and assess whether this is a reason to reject proposals to increase participatory decision-making. More specifically, we ask: What is the yardstick against the effects of participatory processes on perceived legitimacy should be compared? Today, this yardstick too often remains implicit. In early theoretical works by proponents of participatory democracy, rosy ideals of how citizens could and will behave under a participatory democracy were described: Citizens will conceive of themselves as community rather than self-interested individuals (Barber, 1984), they will continuously educate themselves in democratic skills and values (Pateman, 1970), and they will strive to be rational truth-seekers (Habermas, 1996), to name but a few. These influential works have set, perhaps unintentionally, the bar to evaluate participatory processes in empirical research very high.

The amounting empirical evidence shows citizens do not live up to these ideals in participatory processes (e.g. Esaiasson et al. 2019, Chapter 5 and Chapter 7), but also not in representative settings (as prominently discussed by Achen & Bartels 2016). More insightful than asking whether participatory procedures live up to these high standards, is asking: Do they perform better than the status-quo processes? More specifically, can participatory processes generate additional legitimacy in comparison to the representative practices of today? Our argument builds on Warren's (2017) problem-based approach which considers participatory processes

[44] This chapter is based on joint work with Sofie Marien. Therefore I use the pronoun "we" throughout the chapter.

as potentially complementary to representative democracy rather than as a replacement (see also Beauvais & Warren, 2018). A framework that allows to compare the effects of participatory decision-making arrangements to existing procedures allows to shed light on the implications of adding participatory practices to representative democracy. The approach we outline is in line with recent discussions in democratic theory that demand more realistic approaches to the study of popular vote processes that move beyond thinking in competing models of democracy (El-Wakil & Mckay, 2019; Hug, 2009). For instance, El-Wakil (2018) argues that there is no reason why we should demand voters to be more competent when voting in referendums than when voting in elections.

We illustrate the importance of evaluation frameworks by focusing on the outcome favorability effect in evaluations of the fairness of the process. We consider fairness perceptions as one element of the broader concept of legitimacy perceptions, as is common in psychology, legal research and political science research on decision-making and legitimacy (Blader & Tyler, 2003; De Cremer et al., 2008; Esaiasson et al., 2012; Grimes, 2006; Tyler, 1990). Past research has repeatedly documented the link between fairness perceptions and other concepts such as decision acceptance, trust in authorities, cooperation and compliance (Esaiasson et al., 2019; Leung et al., 2007; Marien & Werner, 2018; Tyler, 2011).

One recent reason for skepticism about the participatory processes is the observation that the favorability of the outcome shapes the evaluation of these processes, potentially even more so than the procedural characteristics (Arvai & Froschauer, 2010; Esaiasson et al., 2019; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2008). Winner-loser gaps in perceptions of fairness and related concepts have been found across experimental (Arnesen, 2017; Doherty & Wolak, 2012; Esaiasson et al., 2019; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2008; see also Chapter 7) and observational studies (Marien & Kern, 2018, also Chapter 5). From an ideal-world perspective, this would indeed be troubling evidence against the appeal of participatory practices because citizens do not behave like gracious losers. But, as has been documented repeatedly, citizens also do not live up to this ideal in representative settings. Electoral losers exert lower evaluations of the fairness of the electoral system, lower levels of trust in government and lower levels of support for democratic principles than election winners (C. J. Anderson et al., 2005; Banducci & Karp,

2003; Daniller, 2016; Esaiasson, 2011; Moehler, 2009). The existence of an outcome favorability effect as such is therefore not a convincing argument against participatory processes.

But then how should we compare participatory and representative processes? Should we compare the *size* of the winner-loser gaps resulting from processes with and without participation? It is possible that both losers and winners perceive a decision-making process with participation as more fair than without participation. Accordingly, the fairness perceptions of both winners and losers could increase which would result in similarly sized winner-loser gaps in both procedures, and hide the boost in fairness perceptions. Recent empirical evidence points towards such an independence of process and outcome effects (Strebel, Kübler, & Marcinkowski, 2018). It would be unwarranted to dismiss the potential of participatory procedures in such a scenario just because winners also experienced a boost. To evaluate the effects of participatory procedures, we need to move beyond the study of winner-loser gaps (see also Esaiasson 2011).

We argue that there are two necessary requirements for a participatory process to prove useful in terms of legitimacy generation. First, independent of the decision outcome, processes with a participatory element should result in higher fairness perceptions than processes without such a participatory element, e.g. purely representative processes. Second, a crucial (and more conservative) test in determining whether participation can foster perceptions of fairness is assessing decision losers' reactions to procedures with and without participatory processes. Since winners already received a favorable outcome, they have little reason to show dissatisfaction with the process or to not comply with the taken decision. Several scholars have argued that the demand for legitimacy arises especially when collective decisions are unfavorable for the individual to avoid disobedience and hence state coercion (Sabl, 2015). In this vain, losers' consent presents a core challenge to democratic decision-making and finding strategies that can foster such consent is a, if not the most, important undertaking (C. J. Anderson et al., 2005; Esaiasson, 2011; Sabl, 2015).

This results in the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. *Decision-making with a participatory process leads to higher fairness perceptions compared to decision-making without a participatory process.*

Hypothesis 2. *Among decision losers, decision-making with a participatory process leads to higher fairness perceptions compared to decision-making without a participatory process.*

DESIGN

We draw on data from 12 experimental studies from the Netherlands (original data, also used in Chapter 7) and Sweden (data collected by Esaiasson et al, 2019). The experiments are similar in that they all contain a decision-making scenario and a 2 (procedure: participatory process vs. no participatory process) by 2 (outcome favorability: loser vs. winner) design. The general experimental protocol was identical in all studies. Participants were exposed to a policy issue and questioned about their policy preference on this issue. Subsequently, participants were randomly allocated to one of four conditions. Depending on condition, a decision-making process was presented that did or did not include a participatory process. Afterwards, the decision was announced, either in line with respondents' preferences or not, depending on condition. Subsequently, respondents answered survey questions on their legitimacy perceptions.

As can be seen in Table 8.1, the experiments differ in various methodological aspects. We consider this an asset of this set of studies, as it increases confidence in the robustness and generalizability of the findings. First, participatory processes (PP) are operationalized differently across studies. In the vignette studies 1-3, the PP treatment described decision-making by citizens in a deliberative forum with random selection of the participating citizens. In the vignette studies 4-9 as well as 12, PP was manipulated as decision-making by citizens in a referendum (vs. decision-making by elected representatives or experts). Lastly, in the field experiments 10 and 11, respondents, in this case students, in the PP condition could vote directly, compared to decision-making by a teacher or the student council. Further differences were the policy issue at hand, ranging from regulatory to redistributive issues and from

political issues (such as the opening of an asylum centre) to group decision-making issues (such as the use of money for charity or a school trip).

Table 8.1 Overview of experimental studies

	Type	Decision-making conditions	Issue	Participants	N	country
1	Vignette	Deliberative forum vs. representation	Regulatory: opening of an asylum seeker center	population	796	NL
2	Vignette	Deliberative forum vs. representation	Redistributive: more policemen or more social workers	population	765	NL
3	Vignette	Deliberative forum vs. representation	Redistributive: less policemen or less social workers	population	915	NL
4	Vignette	Direct vote vs. representation and experts	Regulatory: Ban of religious symbols	Adults	456	SE
5	Vignette	Direct vote vs. representation and experts	Regulatory: Ban of religious symbols	Teachers	288	SE
6	Vignette	Direct vote vs. representation and experts	Regulatory: Ban of religious symbols	Students	399	SE
7	Vignette	Direct vote vs. representation and experts	Regulatory: Ban of religious symbols	Political science students	139	SE
8	Vignette	Direct vote vs. representation and experts	Regulatory: Teachers' right to seize cell phones	Students	274	SE
9	Vignette	Direct vote vs. representation and experts	Redistributive: The use of money for charity or celebration	Students	200	SE
10	Field	Direct vote vs. representation and experts	Redistributive: The use of money for charity or celebration	High school Students	603	SE
11	Field	Direct vote vs. representation and experts	Redistributive: The use of money for charity or celebration	High school Students	214	SE
12	Vignette	Direct vote vs. representation	Regulatory: ban of begging	population	1001	SE

The presentation of the stimulus also differed, ranging from watching animated movies (studies 1-3) or reading a text about a decision-making process (studies 4-9 and 12) to participation in the process themselves (studies 10 and 11). The method of data collection varied from field experiments in schools to online-survey experiments on the general

population. The Swedish data was collected by Peter Esaiasson and colleagues (2019) who generously provided access to the data.

SAMPLES

Different sampling techniques were applied for the different studies. Participants for the vignette studies were recruited by survey companies, at train stations, during seminars for teachers, at Swedish universities and in high schools. For the field experiments, participants were recruited in high schools. For further information on the recruitment methods of the samples, stimulus material as well as demographic information, see Appendix A8.

MEASURES

Fairness perceptions were measured in line with previous research on procedural fairness (Doherty & Wolak, 2012; Esaiasson et al., 2019; Herian et al., 2012; Ulbig, 2008). In all experiments, the question wording was: "How fair do you think the process was that led to the decision?" or a slight variation of it (see Appendix A8). Answers were measured on a 7-point scale (very unfair, very fair) across all studies, which are recoded for ease of interpretation to range from 0-1. In experiments 2 and 3, three additional items were included, such as: "How appropriate was the decision-making procedure?". Conducting the analysis with the index variables results in substantially the same results (see Chapter 7).

For further information on the design and the original analysis of the Swedish data (4-12) see Esaiasson et al (2019). For further information on the exact protocol of the Dutch studies (1-3), please see Chapter 7 and Appendix A7.

RESULTS

The analysis is conducted in two parts. First, we use Study 1 as an example to show differences in analysis and interpretation between the ideal-world approach and the approach we propose. Second, we conduct the main analysis – effects of participatory processes for decision losers – across all 12 studies.

Turning first to Study 1, we analyze the intend-to-treat effects on fairness perceptions. As can be seen in Model I in Table 8.2, we see a positive significant effect of the participatory process on fairness perceptions. Accordingly, giving voice to citizens does lead to a more positive evaluation of the process. Further, there is a substantial effect of outcome favorability on fairness perceptions, such that losers evaluate the procedure as less fair than winners. Judging from the unstandardized coefficients, the effect of the outcome favorability treatment is bigger than the effect of the participatory treatment. This approach and these results have led scholars to conclude that outcomes matter more than processes and therefore the suggestion to implement participatory processes is flawed. However, as we argued earlier, this interpretation could be considered as throwing out the child with the bathwater. After all, it is plausible that outcomes also matter in standard processes without participation and we find the same winner-loser gaps.

Table 8.2. Explaining fairness perceptions across treatment groups for Study 1

	Model I			**Model II**			**Model III**		
	coef	*p*	*SE*	*coef*	*p*	*SE*	*coef*	*p*	*SE*
treatment: participatory process	.09	.000	.02	.09	.000	.02	.09	.000	.02
treatment: winning	.13	.000	.02	.13	.000	.02			
interaction: pp x winning				.00	.890	.03			
R^2	.11			.11			.03		
N	796			796			402		

Note. non-standardized coefficients are presented,. Study issue: opening an asylum seeker center

As Model II shows, this is indeed the case as the interaction between the participatory treatment and the outcome treatment is not significant. Hence, participatory processes generate the same gap in fairness perceptions between decision winners and losers than representative processes. Critics may conclude that procedural reform is at the very least ineffective because it cannot narrow the winner-loser gap. Yet as we argued before, the mere size of this outcome favorability gap is not informative. Winners and losers can both gain from a participatory process. A similarly sized gap between winners and losers does not exclude the possibility of change in the overall levels of fairness perceptions.

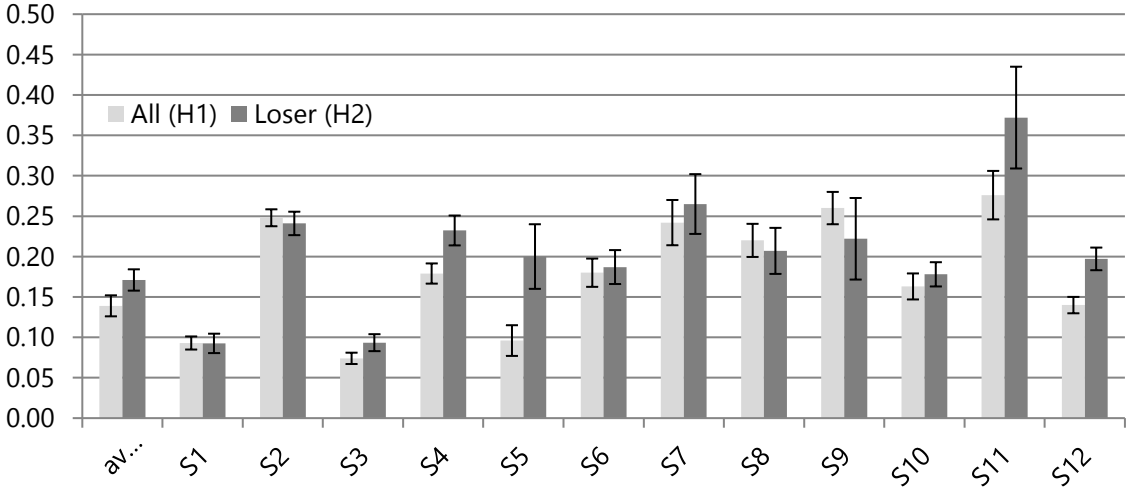
The insightful comparison is a) between people who experienced a participatory process and those who did not, independent of the outcome and b) between people who lost and experienced a participatory process compared to people who lost and experienced a standard process without participation.

Table 8.2, Model I shows a positive and highly significant main effect of participatory process on respondents fairness perceptions. Since the treatment variables are orthogonal to each other by design, this effect is independent of outcome favorability. Hence, it seems that participatory processes generate an overall boost. Turning towards the critical group of decision losers, Model III reveals a positive and highly significant effect. Decision losers have higher perceptions of fairness if the decision was made in a process that allowed for participation than decision losers in a purely representative procedure. It might seem contradictory that the winner-loser gap did not change while losers gained in fairness perceptions, but this stable gap can be explained by the fact that the evaluation of the process increased relatively similarly among *both* winners and losers. It shows that what we identify as the critical group – losers – do consider participatory processes to be fairer than processes without participation.

In the second part we apply this alternative approach to all 12 experiments. Do fairness perceptions consistently and significantly increase when a decision-making process is more participatory compared to purely representative or expert based? Does this also hold for losers? The unstandardized effects are shown graphically in Figure 8.1. The first column plots the effect across all studies, estimated using regression with clustered robust standard errors to account for the nested nature of the data (clustered by study). All other columns present the estimates per individual study. As can be seen, in each of the 12 studies we find positive and significant effects of the participatory process both for losers as well as for the full samples (winners and losers combined). The effect sizes range from .07 in study 3 to .37 in study 11. On average, decision-making with a participatory process led to an increase in the fairness

perception of losers of .16 and for all respondents of .13 on a scale from 0-1, which we consider rather substantial effects.[45]

Figure 8.1 Overview of effects of participatory process on fairness perceptions across studies



Note. Coefficients for the column "average" are the results of an OLS regression with clustered robust standard errors (clustered on studies); OLS with Clustered Robust Standard Errors for S7 and S8 (clustered in classes); OLS regressions for all other studies. Unstandardized coefficients are presented, fairness perceptions range from 0-1, error bars present 95% confidence intervals. See Appendix, Table A8.2 for an overview of the main effects across studies.

DISCUSSION

In line with recent criticism of standard approaches to the study of participatory processes, we have argued that such processes should not be compared to normatively desirable ideal-type citizens but instead to political behavior in existing representative procedures, focusing particularly on decision losers.

We advocate to shift the focus away from plotting outcome and process effects against each other when evaluating the potential of participatory processes to foster legitimacy perceptions. Even though individuals can care strongly about outcomes, they can still at the

[45] In several of the 12 studies presented here we find slightly, yet not significantly (except for study 12), larger effects of participatory processes on decision losers than on decision winners (see Appendix, table A8.3). While not the focus of this chapter, it is an interesting question whether decision losers are more sensitive to process information than decision winners that warrants future investigation.

same time care strongly about processes – or care little about both. In short, we should test if different procedural settings can create better losers – and if they also create happier winners, this is not problematic either[46].

A limitation of the presented empirical evidence in this letter is that it stems from experimental research that uses more or less hypothetical scenarios. Therefore we lack confidence whether the effects would play out similarly in the real world, especially when we account for how the processes are framed in the public debate. Yet, strong conclusions have been drawn that oppose the legitimacy fostering capacity of participatory processes using similar designs.

To gain more insights into the potential of these participatory processes, a number of questions remain, such as: are these effects large enough to justify the additional costs of changing procedural arrangements? What level of legitimacy beliefs is sufficient to guarantee compliance and cooperation of decision losers? These, we believe, are exciting avenues for both democratic theory and empirical research and they will be discussed in the following, final chapter of this dissertation.

[46] Of course, the principal idea of losers' consent is that everyone wins and loses some of the time. Accordingly, we do not claim that citizens who are repeatedly disadvantaged through policy decisions should simply accept their lot. But given the inherent quality of political issues that every decision leaves behind winners and losers, losers' consent remains an important capacity of a democratic system (see also Chapter 9).

CHAPTER 9

DISCUSSION

Can participatory processes address deficits in democratic legitimacy? This dissertation investigated the factors that influence citizens' preferences for participatory processes, as well as how these processes impact citizens' perceptions of democratic legitimacy. To do so, I focused on both large-scale participatory processes, such as referendums, and small-scale participatory processes, such as citizen forums. I employed a variety of study designs, in particular large-scale surveys, survey-embedded experiments and in-depth interviews, to address the question from multiple perspectives. In this final chapter, I will summarize the main findings and discuss how they contribute to answering the two overarching research questions guiding this dissertation, followed by two main conclusions. Then, I will discuss the limitations of this thesis and sketch some avenues for further research. Finally, I conclude by discussing the political, societal and normative implications of my findings.

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

RQ 1: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT PROCESS PREFERENCES?

The first empirical chapters of this dissertation (Chapters 3, 4, and 5) focused on the question of why citizens are supportive of participatory processes, especially referendums. This question was addressed from two different, but complementary, perspectives. On the one hand, crucial drivers of process preferences were examined—most notably a general dissatisfaction with politics (in Chapter 3) and more specific instrumental considerations (in Chapters 4 and 5). On the other hand, the dynamic nature of such processes was assessed by demonstrating the importance of both the issues at hand (in Chapter 4), and the larger sociopolitical context in which referendums on these issues take place (in Chapter 3). Focusing on a wider range of drivers and adopting a dynamic perspective on for the topic at hand complements previous work that has mainly focused on demographic correlates of process preferences. In what follows, I substantiate the empirical insights gained on these matters by, first, focusing on the specific drivers and, second, on their dynamic nature.

First, I investigated the question of why citizens are supportive of participatory processes, especially referendums. Previous research in this field has so far concentrated on stealth democratic attitudes and cognitive mobilization as the two most prominent explanations for citizens to desire such processes. As a consequence, we have obtained knowledge on the role

of demographic and attitudinal factors in shaping support for referendums. Empirically, most of these factors were found not to be systematically related to support for referendums; at least not in a robust manner. Dissatisfaction with politics is the exception as it is the only factor that consistently exerts positive associations, yet how to interpret this phenomenon is debated.

Chapter 3 focused on unraveling this dissatisfaction effect. It showed that dissatisfaction with politics does not uniformly relate to support for decision-making through referendums. The argument was put forward that citizens do not prefer referendums simply out of defiance for the political system as such, but that they pragmatically consider referendums as a tool that can solve some, but clearly not all, problems they see in a democracy. Hence, the expectation was that not all types of dissatisfaction relate to support for referendums. The findings of multilevel analysis of survey data from 26 European countries revealed that particularly dissatisfaction with the government *not listening* to citizens was positively associated with support for referendums, whereas dissatisfaction with government *not leading well* was associated with less support for referendums. In addition, the relationship between dissatisfaction with government not listening and support for referendums differed between countries. Especially in those countries where referendums are applied more frequently, citizens seem less convinced that referendums are a solution to a deficit in responsiveness, potentially because they are disillusioned by empirical practice. In sum, this first empirical chapter showed that the link between dissatisfaction and support for referendums depends on the type of dissatisfaction, might be more of an indication of pragmatic rather than defiant referendum supporters, and differs between countries.

Next, Chapters 4 and 5 focused on a rather neglected driver of support for referendums, namely instrumental considerations. In Chapter 4, it was hypothesized that citizens approach different decision-making processes not purely from a normative and abstract perspective, but that they equally think pragmatically about which process would result in the desired policy outcomes. Accordingly, citizens might be especially supportive of referendums when they expect this to increase the likelihood of resulting in their desired policy outcomes. This argument was put to the test by means of a survey collecting citizens' preferences for and attitudes toward referendums across several policy issues on different levels of governance in the Netherlands. The findings showed that people who support the respective policy proposal,

or who think that the majority of Dutch citizens share their opinion on the respective policy, are more supportive of decision-making through referendums. Hence, people who would like to see policy change or who expect to win are more in favor of referendums. In addition, even the same person is more supportive of referendums on those topics where she would expect a favorable policy outcome compared to other topics where she considers a favorable outcome as less likely. In sum, these findings indicate that instrumental considerations play a substantial role in shaping support for referendums.

Chapter 5 continued to unravel instrumental considerations in driving support for referendums. More specifically, it investigated whether a particular subgroup, namely populist citizens, have a more instrumental perspective on referendums. Even though some studies have documented higher support for referendums among populist citizens (Bjånesøy & Ivarsflaten, 2016; Jacobs et al., 2018), it remained unclear whether this preference is motivated by a principled desire for more popular control or by instrumental considerations. To investigate this question, panel data from the 2018 Dutch Information Law referendum was used to analyze populist citizens' preferences for and reactions to the referendum at hand. Interestingly, the findings indicate that populist citizens base their support for referendums less on instrumental considerations than non-populist citizens. These results suggest that populist citizens hold more principled attitudes toward direct decision-making than non-populist citizens.

Second, several chapters provided insights into the dynamic nature of these process preferences. Whereas previous literature for the most part considered citizens' preferences about democratic decision-making as rather stable attitudes that are driven by normative ideas about democracy, the findings of this thesis offer new empirical insights on this matter. First, process preferences vary across issues. As Chapter 4 shows, citizens' preferences for decision-making through referendums vary substantially within the same individual across different issues. However, these findings do not imply that process preferences are entirely unstable without any baseline component. In fact, I find that both the general preference as well as policy-specific considerations has independent effects on support for a particular referendum. Second, process preferences depend on the socio-political context. More specifically, Chapter 3 shows that the association between dissatisfaction with the listening function of government

and support for referendums differs between countries, which in turn is partly explained by the level of experience with referendums in these countries. Accordingly, for people in countries where referendums are less prevalent, a closer connection between dissatisfaction with responsiveness and support for referendums exists. While this is not a direct test of whether this relationship would change over time within a country that conducts referendums more frequently, it does indicate that the reasons to support referendums can change depending on contextual factors.

RQ 2: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES ON LEGITIMACY?

The second part of the thesis focused on the effects of participatory processes on citizens' perceptions of legitimacy. Previous research has shown that these effects are often conditional on outcome favorability, meaning that decision losers exert lower levels of perceived legitimacy than decision winners (Arnesen, 2017; Christensen, 2020; Doherty & Wolak, 2012; Esaiasson et al., 2019). The empirical chapters of this thesis have contributed more insights, nuance, and evidence to this research line by studying both referendums and small-scale participatory processes.

A study of the Dutch Information Law referendum in Chapter 5 provided important insights into the effects of referendums on legitimacy perceptions. In line with previous research, decision losers expressed a lower willingness to accept the referendum result than decision winners. Particularly, citizens who expected to win the referendum, but then lost it, seemed less inclined to accept the outcome of the referendum and decreased their support for referendums as a decision-making tool in general. This finding indicated that instrumental expectations regarding referendums not only shape the preferences for referendums, but also the legitimacy judgments in the aftermath of the process. Furthermore, this study shed light on the subgroup of populist citizens, and their preferences and reactions to referendums. It turned out that populist citizens were *more* willing to accept the outcome in the referendum compared to non-populist citizens, even when they lost. The observation that populist citizens proved to be more gracious losers than non-populist citizens suggests that they consider

referendums in principal a more legitimate way to take democratic decisions, which has recently been suggested by Mohrenberg et al. (2019).

Turning to small-scale participatory processes (SSPPs), the 12 experiments in Chapter 7 and 8 again confirmed the described outcome favorability effect. However, the evidence from both chapters also showed that SSPPs have a positive effect on legitimacy perceptions across a range of experimental designs. Even when the outcome is unfavorable and the topic highly controversial, such as the opening of a refugee shelter, participatory processes exerted higher legitimacy perceptions than the status quo of representative decision-making. Importantly, this was also the case when citizens did not participate personally in such a process but merely heard about it, like in Chapter 7. At least in an experimental context, the positive impact of participatory processes on legitimacy perceptions can transcend beyond people who are directly involved.

The study of the *Bürgerdialog* in Belgium in Chapter 6 added more qualitative insights into why citizens might value small-scale participatory processes and what role the outcomes of such processes play in citizens' perceptions and evaluations. The interviewees predominantly appreciated the relational aspects of the SSPP. They felt heard and respected through the process of the SSPP, and considered respect and recognition by politicians as the most important elements and a condition for a positive evaluation of the process. Further, this case shed light on the potential entanglement between instrumental and relational considerations. While participants expected a political uptake of their recommendations, they prioritized serious engagement with the proposal and accepted deviations or even rejections as long as they were justified (Curato & Niemeyer, 2013; Goldberg, 2018; Jacquet, 2019).

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

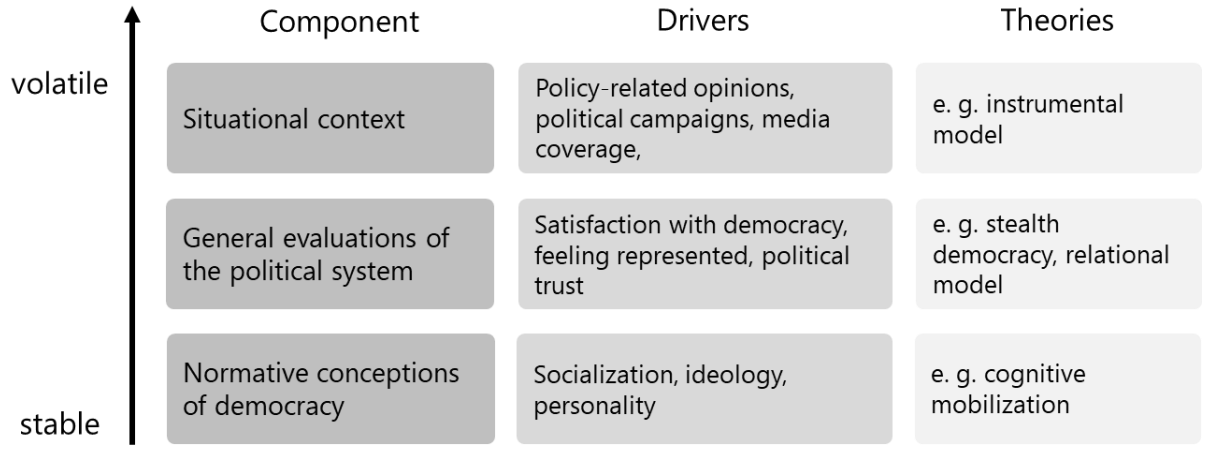
What main theoretical conclusions can be drawn from these findings? In what follows, I will take a step back from the empirical findings to show how they collectively highlight the need to, first, study process preferences as a composite attitude and, second, study the mechanisms connecting participatory processes and citizens' perceptions of legitimacy.

STUDYING PROCESS PREFERENCES AS A COMPOSITE ATTITUDE

Previous literature has considered process preferences as rather stable attitudes that are either driven by normative conceptions about democracy (cognitive mobilization, Dalton & Welzel, 2014; Inglehart, 2008; Norris, 2011), or are just a symptom of a general frustration with politics (stealth democracy thesis, Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002). However, as shown in the empirical summary of this dissertation above, the findings here indicate that an individual's preference for referendums fluctuates across issues and contexts (see also Schuck & De Vreese, 2011; Wojcieszak, 2014). Further, I have shown that other factors beyond cognitive mobilization and frustration with politics play a role, namely instrumental considerations (Chapter 4 and 5), dissatisfaction with specific representative behaviors (Chapter 3), and populist, especially people-centric, attitudes (Chapter 5).

Importantly, I do not conclude that we should disregard the cognitive mobilization and stealth democracy models, or assume that process preferences are entirely volatile. Previous research has indicated that citizens have some norm-driven, general attitude about how decisions ought to be made and what role citizens should play in it (Font et al., 2015; Webb, 2013). I contend, however, that this general attitude comprises only one component of process preferences and that it is crucial to account for the more volatile components as well. Moreover, it seems inaccurate to conceive of these process preferences as being *just* stable or dynamic, or driven *just* by normative or by pragmatic considerations. Instead, I would like to suggest a different way of thinking about process preferences which integrates findings from past research and this dissertation, and gives credit to the complex structure of these preferences. I propose a new model which considers process preference as a *composite attitude* which consist of several layers, as visualized in Figure 9.1.

Figure 9.1 Process preferences as a composite attitude



The bottom layer consists of a general normative preference for more or less participatory reforms which is relatively stable. Stable does not mean that no change is possible throughout the lifecycle, but that it is a more fundamental preference that is relatively independent of current political events. For instance, the cognitive mobilization hypothesis is located on this level. Proponents of this approach have argued that increases in education, shifts toward post-material and emancipative values, and a critical mindset toward political authorities have resulted in greater demands for inclusivity of the political system (Dalton & Welzel, 2014; Klingemann, 2014; Norris, 1999). Importantly, they argue that this change is intergenerational, and hence rather stable within an individual lifecycle (Inglehart, 2000). Accordingly, these stable process preferences are formed by factors such as socialization, education, personality characteristics, political ideology or other dispositions.

The second layer encompasses evaluations of the political system, dissatisfaction with the system or particular problems that people identify with how democracy works in their country. For instance, a change in electoral processes or power shifts could then also change citizens' preferences for participatory decision-making, e.g. previous research has shown that electoral losers are more supportive of referendums than election winners (D. A. Smith et al., 2010). The stealth democracy hypothesis is located on this level, as it considers citizens´ expressed preferences for involvement as an expression of frustration with political elites. Further, the relational model should be situated here as well, as on this level participatory processes are

considered a response to the general feeling of not being heard and respected by politicians.[47] The findings of Chapter 3 also align with this level, as they showed that dissatisfaction with government not listening to people exerted a positive association with support for referendums, but the strength of this relationship depended on the national context.

Lastly, there is a third layer, which is also the most volatile. It depends on the situational context and can therefore change from case to case or even over time within a case, such as during a referendum campaign (Schuck & De Vreese, 2011). This level includes policy preferences, concerns about the current political debate, the positions that representatives take in the debate, and considerations of reaching a desired outcome. The instrumental hypothesis thesis advanced in this thesis is located on this third level, as it presumes citizens to decide on a case-to-case basis whether participatory processes are desirable. As Chapter 4 revealed, citizens can change their preferences for referendums simply by varying the policy issue at a given moment in time[48] (see also Wojcieszak, 2014).

Figure 9.1 illustrates that the instrumental model does not contradict alternative explanations. Further, it shows that the classic debate between stealth democracy and cognitive mobilization may operate on different analytical levels. Moreover, this model makes visible how dissatisfaction can be a factor on each level independently, for instance as dissatisfaction with democratic structures (lowest level), with elitist politicians (middle level), or with the public debate surrounding a participatory process (highest level). This again emphasizes the need for specific and nuanced investigations of the relationship between dissatisfaction and support for participatory processes.

[47] It is important to point out that while the stealth democracy approach and the relational approach share some similarities in regards to the problem analysis (dissatisfaction with politicians), they arrive at different judgements on whether citizens desire participatory processes. Stealth democracy assumes that citizens only express support for such processes because they are given the choice between two evils, yet they do not actually want more opportunities for involvement. The relational model assumes that participatory processes can be a solution to the problem of deficits in responsiveness.

[48] It is also possible that citizens think that a particular process would generally deliver more favorable outcomes, for instance if they feel that, overall, the opinions of fellow citizens align well with their own opinions. This illustrates that both the different levels in the suggested model as well as the different theories of why citizens would desire participatory processes are not completely distinct.

STUDYING THE MECHANISMS THAT CONNECT PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES AND PERCEIVED LEGITIMACY

In a related vein, the empirical findings of this dissertation equally lead to the overall conclusion that it is not only important to look at process *preferences* from a more nuanced perspective, but also at process *effects*. More specifically, at the outset of this thesis, I made the case for theorizing and studying *why* participatory processes would lead to an increase in perceived legitimacy, hence explicating the implicit assumptions of much scholarly work on this topic. Pairing the perspective of citizens with a problem-based approach has helped to look beyond the existing theories of cognitive mobilization or stealth democracy. I proposed that two mechanisms, instrumental and relational, would affect citizens' perspectives on participatory processes. I based these two mechanisms on procedural fairness theories and argued that they are equally visible, at least implicitly, in normative democratic theory (specifically Pateman, 1970). The findings of this thesis indicate that participatory processes could generate legitimacy through both routes: by providing citizens more control and, at least in the long run, more desirable outcomes, and by signaling respect and recognition of citizens' needs.

Above all, this shows that there are multiple ways through which participatory processes can foster perceived legitimacy - a fact that is seldom explicitly acknowledged or studied in this field. Moreover, focusing on these reason why citizens could perceive participatory processes as more legitimate enriches our understanding in several ways, two of which I will explain here.

First, understanding what benefits citizens see in participatory processes delivers important clues as to what role these processes should play in representative democracies, a topic that features prominently in the democratic innovation literature. An important discussion centers around the idea of whether participatory processes should be binding or advisory. This debate is primarily located on a normative level, with arguments focusing on representativeness and accountability (Lafont, 2015, 2017; Maija Setälä, 2017; Warren, 2017) but can be enriched empirically as well if we look at citizens' expectations toward these processes. For instance, the instrumental mechanism would suggest that such processes need to be binding to not disappoint the expectations of favorable policy outcomes as a result of participation. Other scholars, pointing to the importance of effective influence, also warn of potential frustration

effects when recommendations are not implemented (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2008; Ulbig, 2008).

In contrast, the relational mechanism would suggest that processes are primarily important in the input phase and deliver another function, namely improving the relationship between representatives and citizens. Chapter 7 has shown that interviewees did not prefer these processes to be binding (see also Christensen, 2020; Jacquet, 2019). As Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) state, "people do not necessarily want certain policy outputs, they want decision makers to care" (p. 152). Importantly, we have seen in Chapter 7 how both motivations can interact. While citizens might indeed be frustrated when their recommendations are not implemented, this could be both because they did not receive the desired policy output, and because they consider this as a symbol of lacking respect and genuine interest on the side of the political authorities. Conversely, implementing the outcomes of a participatory process can generate legitimacy because it both delivers favorable policy change (at least to some), and it can be read as a sign that politicians engaged with the recommendations and considered citizens' views as important.

Second, focusing on the reasons why citizen would consider participatory processes as more legitimate provides important guidelines for what elements of participatory processes are worth studying. Too often, present research on participatory processes focuses on the nitty-gritty of procedural design, for instance on the role of experts in these processes, the facilitator or the exact number of participants (e.g. Christensen, 2020, for a similar argument, see Dean, 2016). I doubt that these approaches will deliver decisive insights on the bigger question of whether participatory processes can address legitimacy deficits. The interviews with participants of a small-scale participatory process in eastern Belgium indicated that citizens indeed had no strong opinions on how such processes should be designed (see also Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002). In line with this argument, Pow (2019) has shown that different design features of how citizens' assemblies are set up matter very little to citizens. Based on these arguments and the evidence collected in this dissertation, I suggest that citizens primarily care about aspects of the procedure that have symbolic value beyond the design feature itself. What does matter is whether political authorities engage with these processes genuinely and how the final policy is derived, and more precisely, what signals these procedures send to

citizens in regards to the benevolence of authorities and the opportunities for real policy change (Curato & Böker, 2016; Jacquet, 2019).

LIMITATIONS AND AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Having completed this study, and taken stock of the insights it provides, it becomes obvious that there are various remaining questions. In this section I will discuss some avenues for future research. In doing so, I will also reflect on some of the limitations of this thesis.

First, even though two real-life cases were studied, most empirical studies remained on a rather hypothetical level and addressed only ideal types of participatory processes. In reality, this label comprises a heterogeneous set of processes that vary in structure, size, scope, linkage to government and so forth. In regards to SSPPs, a plethora of different models has been designed and employed, such as participatory budgeting, consensus conferences, planning cells or deliberative polls to name but a few. The types studied in this dissertation primarily included citizen forums, organized by or at least in collaboration with the political authority. Similarly, only particular types of referendums were studied in this thesis. As El-Wakil and Cheneval (2018) have pointed out, referendums can take on various forms that are connected differently to the representative system. Both in Chapters 4 and 5, initiative referendums were studied, while the ESS data used in Chapter 3 does not specify the type of referendum. This means that the findings may be different for other types of referendums, for instance top-down initiated plebiscites. While these are important limitations, I still think they do not challenge the basic findings of this dissertation, especially because the vast majority of citizens only have limited knowledge of the different procedural designs of participatory processes (Bengtsson, 2012). As argued earlier, I expect these design factors to primarily play a role when they hold symbolic meaning beyond the procedural characteristic itself (for empirical evidence, see Pow, 2019). Future research should then investigate what these aspects could be that actually matter for citizens' reactions to participatory processes. Based on the findings of this thesis, I would consider factors such as politicians' communicative responses and the uptake of the process to play a role.

Second, given that I found the instrumental considerations primarily in studies of referendums, and the relational considerations in the study of an SSPP, the question arises whether different processes cater to different expectations and can hence impact legitimacy through different mechanisms. In this thesis, I have not collected data on this particular question because I never studied referendums and SSPPs simultaneously or using the same design. It seems plausible that referendums activate more instrumental motivations than SSPPs. First, this is because referendums are by design more decisive than SSPPs in that they reduce complex policy questions into a binary question. Often referendums are also more formally linked to political decision-making than is the case with SSPPs. Second, referendums more often operate on higher levels of governance than SSPPs (Qvortrup, 2014; G. Smith, 2009), tackling issues which tend to be more salient and important to citizens. The findings of Chapters 4 and 5 give some indication that the salience of the issue indeed matters for the prevalence of instrumental considerations.

Conversely, there are reasons to believe that relational considerations play a bigger role for SSPPs. First, the interviewees in Chapter 6 especially valued the experience of engaging with politicians and seeing their genuine interest. Certainly, the format of an SSPP facilitates the delivery of relational cues, which could also work in a mediated fashion for non-participants like in Chapter 7. Second, previous qualitative research by Curato and Niemeyer (2013; see also Goldberg, 2018) has shown that participants in SSPPs become less instrumentally oriented throughout the process and care more about the social and relational aspects (see also Tyler, Huo, & Lind, 1999). If this is true, however, we would expect it to work purely for the small number of participants that were personally involved. Future research is required that directly compares the prevalence of these and other mechanisms for different kinds of participatory processes.

Third, my study does not provide causal evidence for the prevalence of the relational mechanism in fostering legitimacy. Arguments about the relational model featured prominently in my qualitative case study of the Bürgerdialog, yet the applied method only generates insights into citizens' reasoning about the relationship of interest and does not allow for causal inference. Conversely, the macro-effects that were investigated with the use of experiments in Chapter 7 were explained with the relational mechanism, yet not directly tested.

Here, additional research is needed that includes measures of relational cues and studies their influence on citizens' evaluations of the process. Anna Kern and I are currently designing such a follow-up experiment.

Fourth, in this thesis, citizens' preferences for SSPPs were only studied in the context of the qualitative interviews in Chapter 6 but not in large-n surveys as was the case for referendums (in Chapters 3, 4 and 5). However, large-n surveys on this topic are difficult because of the limited knowledge citizens have of these processes and the danger of measuring non-opinions. For instance, Pow (2019) found that a simple description of such a process results in low recall rates of the most basic procedural features. However, this problem could be overcome in future research with the design of engaging audio-visual descriptions of the process as was done in Chapter 8 or with the use of infographics (Pow, 2019).

Fifth, the recent advances in political science on the topic of open science were only modestly applied in this thesis. Only the two experiments in Chapter 7 were pre-registered. This is mostly due to the fact that at the time of data collection I was not aware of the possibility and the importance of pre-registering non-experimental studies such as surveys or interviews, and had a lack of expertise in adopting open science practices. However, I commend the recent push toward open science, primarily in the field of political psychology, and hope that future research on participatory processes engages with the discourse and employs practices to increase the transparency and validity of research findings.

Finally, there are other potential mechanisms that could explain the effects of participatory processes on legitimacy than the ones studied in this dissertation. To name but a few, one alternative mechanism is that citizens have higher levels of trust in fellow citizens compared to politicians, resulting in a belief that the decisions will be of a higher quality (see also Chapter 6; MacKenzie & Warren, 2012). Further, citizens could appreciate the improvement in descriptive representation because they expect citizens to be more similar to them than politicians (see indications for this belief in Chapter 6; (Warren, 2008). Sofie Marien, Anna Kern, Lala Muradova and I are currently investigating the question of whether citizens consider fellow citizens as better representatives with the use of conjoint survey experiments (see also Pow, Van Dijk, & Marien, in press).

IMPLICATIONS

Despite the previously outlined limitations, this thesis has provided important insights into citizens' perspectives on participatory processes. In the following section I will discuss some implications for how we should evaluate these findings from a normative perspective, and what lessons can be drawn for political practitioners.

NORMATIVE IMPLICATIONS

IS THE INSTRUMENTAL MECHANISM PROBLEMATIC?

One core finding of this thesis is that citizens' preferences for participatory processes are, at least partially, driven by instrumental considerations. This begs the question, is this normatively problematic? For instance, Landwehr and Harms (2019) warn that instrumentally driven process preferences can be dangerous for democracies, especially given the current prevalence of demands for referendums among the populist radical right. They imply that policy could be shifted in undesirable directions, for instance on the topic of migration. First, one might consider this argument in and of itself an expression of instrumental reasoning about procedural reform in that it is only desirable if it moves policy in a certain direction (or rather *not*). Second, while I agree that the instrumental motives of (radical right wing) political parties to push for participatory processes should be exposed, most studies on citizens do not actually find any relationship between ideology and the preference for referendums (see Chapter 2). Importantly, Chapter 5 has shown that populist citizens are less instrumentally driven than non-populist citizens when it comes to support for referendums.

More generally, I would argue that it is not egoistic or undesirable if citizens strive to realize their policy preferences. Our entire political system is built on the premise that every voter does exactly that. Building on the arguments outlined in Chapter 8, it is not helpful (and maybe not even desirable) if we expect citizens to become angelic, altruistic creatures when it comes to participatory processes.

This closely relates to a risk that political science research within the procedural fairness framework might potentially run into. Since this theory is applied and developed in social

psychology, particularly organizational and legal psychology, the basic assumption is that legitimacy and the associated benefits are desirable (e.g. for the company) and hence every tool that can contribute is positively evaluated (MacCoun, 2005). The implications are however different in the context of political decision-making, and scholars working within the procedural fairness framework should be careful to not take a position that upholds the status quo. They should not assume that democratic outcomes are good as they are, and hence the task is simply to make citizens appreciate the beauty of the democratic process (Tyler, 2006). Accordingly, we should not consider citizens' preferences for certain processes as misguided just because they are driven by instrumental concerns.

This is especially true in a context where citizens' policy preferences are not channeled equally well through the present mechanisms of representation. Research on unequal representation has shown that especially affluent and higher educated citizens (and voters) are represented at the expense of less affluent and less educated citizens (e.g. Schakel, 2019). Accordingly, citizens may rightly assume that participatory processes will, at least in the long run, move policy toward public opinion. Research on the effects of referendums has shown that they can indeed shift policy more toward the median voter, especially in contexts with low levels of policy congruence between citizens and political elites (Leemann & Wasserfallen, 2016). This is also true for some instances of SSPPs, most famously the participatory budgeting projects in Brazil where redistribution toward disadvantaged neighborhoods and a subsequent increase in life standards could be observed (Gonçalves, 2014; Touchton & Wampler, 2013). However, as many authors have pointed out, this requires willing political elites when such processes are not binding, which they rarely are (Sintomer et al., 2008).

So while I see no normative problem as such in preferring one decision-making process to the other because it can potentially yield desirable policy outcomes, this does not mean that we should not worry about instrumental effects on legitimacy. Even if participatory processes can shift policy toward public opinion, there will always be a substantial proportion of decision losers. As I have argued here and in Chapter 8, we should not measure outcome and process effects against each other but rather compare the legitimacy of both processes in the context of undesirable outcomes. This means that when the outcome is equally unfavorable in both

types of process, lower levels of legitimacy in the participatory process would certainly be an argument against the implementation of such processes.

IS THE RELATIONAL MECHANISM PROBLEMATIC?

Turning to the relational mechanism, one could equally wonder whether it is normatively problematic if participatory processes create legitimacy simply because they make citizens feel heard and valued. As briefly described in Chapter 7, one could worry that if participation is just a symbolic tool to foster satisfaction, these processes can be used as a propaganda instrument to cement existing hegemonies, sometimes referred to as false consciousness (MacCoun, 2005). This concern is also discussed, albeit infrequently, in the literature on both participatory democracy and procedural fairness. As MacCoun (2005) puts it pointedly in describing the 'dark side of procedural fairness', "The concern is that authorities can use the appearance of fair procedure (dignity, respect, voice) as an inexpensive way to coopt citizens and distract them from outcomes that by normative criteria might be considered substantively unfair or biased." (p. 189, see also Tyler & McGraw, 1986).

Democratic theorists are equally alert about the dangers of 'alibi-participation'. For instance, Young posits: "If inclusive deliberative forums are used primarily by local governments to induce acceptance of the structural status quo, then they are a conservative tool, even when the government officials are liberal and well-intentioned" (Fung, 2004, p. 51). This observation is at odds with the central premises of participatory democracy theory which self-identified as a theory of social change, critical of existing power structures (this tension is explicitly discussed in Pateman, 2012). Scholars working in the so-called democratic innovation field or within the procedural fairness framework should take these concerns very seriously. Hence, I mainly conclude from these arguments that we should maintain a critical perspective on participatory processes and who they are serving (e.g. Dean, 2017; Font, Smith, Galais, & Alarcon, 2018; Michels, 2011).

However, I would also argue there is some reason for optimism which speaks against the likelihood of participatory processes fostering "false consciousness". As Smith et al. (2007) put it, "people are difficult to fool. They are quite adept at identifying individuals, especially

decision makers, who are self-interested and ambitious" (p. 297). Similarly, Neblo et al. (2018) argue that citizens would easily detect attempts of manipulation in participatory contexts. In line with this argument, the qualitative interviews in Chapter 7 indicated that citizens enter participatory processes with a healthy dose of skepticism and suspicion about politicians' motives. Especially in times of popular discontent with politicians and a widespread notion of a self-interested elite (e.g. Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002), it seems unlikely that citizens are easily lulled into blind enthusiasm. An important aspect of the relational model is that citizens are sensitive to information cues about authorities' intentions and their respect for and genuine interest in citizens. Hence, they are also likely to be sensitive to violations of these principles (Tyler & Lind, 1992).

Mansbridge (2018) makes a related argument about the role of low-key, non-conflictual types of participatory processes. She acknowledges that top-down organized processes such as the Bürgerdialog may be less radical in their policy demands and influences, but especially this characteristic may make them more attractive to many people that do not feel attracted by protests, sit-ins or other types of activism. Further, participation in one or the other is not mutually exclusive but can instead breed more spillover participation, as Pateman (1970) famously argued (see also Christensen, Himmelroos, & Grönlund, 2016). Hence, "engagement even in these mainstream, nonradical deliberative forums may help overcome the defeatist apathy that is a major enemy of social change" (Mansbridge, 2018, p. 52).

ARE LEGITIMACY GAPS PROBLEMATIC?

How should we evaluate the persistence of outcome favorability effects in the study of participatory processes? It has been shown consistently, both in this thesis and in previous research, that losers of participatory decisions consider the process as less legitimate than decision winners, resulting in winner-loser gaps.

However, in Chapter 8 the argument was advanced that we should not measure participatory processes against rosy ideals of how citizens should behave under a participatory system, since we know that winner-loser gaps exist consistently in representative processes as well. Citizens will most likely never fulfill the ideal of entirely gracious losers who are equally satisfied with

the process and the authorities, independent of whether they won or lost. Instead, we should take a more pragmatic approach and compare legitimacy perceptions of participatory processes to those of representative processes, accepting that there will always be a gap between winners and losers.

While Chapter 8 made this argument in regards to participatory processes, I propose it also transcends to the study of legitimacy gaps more generally (e.g., after elections). The point boils down to whether inequality in legitimacy perceptions is per se problematic. Generally, the intuitive answer is that inequality is always a problem. While I share this position for goods like income, political power, education, health and so on, it is at least not obvious why this should be true for perceived legitimacy. I argue that most arguments about the importance of legitimacy and the problems of legitimacy gaps actually concern the desirable *levels* of legitimacy rather than the *gap* between different groups in society. For instance, if winners and losers of an election show differences in their acceptance of the election but both are still situated on the higher ends of the scale, this is not democratically problematic as both groups accept the election. Subsequently, it might be more useful to examine desirable lower and upper bounds for legitimacy perceptions, focusing on their predicted behavioral consequences. Starting with the lower bound, most arguments for the importance of perceived legitimacy refer to voluntary compliance with the law and cooperation with civil servants and the state more generally (e.g. Tyler, 1990, 2011). Hence, the crucial question would be, what is the minimum level of perceived legitimacy to ensure these behavioral outcomes, e.g. the payment of taxes (Feld & Frey, 2002)? Also in regards to electoral or policy losers, what is the tipping point below which citizens will reject the institutional order and disobey? Even though it is incredibly difficult to translate scores on survey measures into tipping points in individuals´ behavior, I believe that this is a crucial next step in research on perceived legitimacy.

Similarly, but in my view less of a problem in democratic practice, is the question of whether legitimacy perceptions can ever be too high. The arguments concerning dangerous maximums of perceived legitimacy mostly refer (sometimes implicitly) to political support. Especially in the context of high levels of political support for authoritarian regimes, the argument is often made that too much support is dangerous because it reflects an uncritical, submissive and passive citizenry (Lelkes, 2016). Again, it is unclear what the desirable `maximal level of

legitimacy´ would be and whether this would ever be an empirical concern in *democratic* systems. One could at least imagine troublesome levels of support for parties or politicians due to partisan allegiance in polarized societies like the U.S. (Reeves & Rogowski, 2019).

As these examples show, it is the *levels* of legitimacy that matter. Within these bounds, I argue that differences between, say, winners and losers of elections or policy decisions, are not per se problematic. We would still hold on to the premise that higher legitimacy perceptions are in principle better, but the standard deviation, so to speak, would be less relevant. Again, this is not to say that legitimacy gaps as a result of other types of inequalities, for instance racial inequalities, are no reason for concern. Yet in this case, the concern should be the racial inequality itself whereas the fact that it translates into different levels of legitimacy is actually a positive sign of accurate evaluations of the functioning of the political system.

SOCIETAL IMPLICATIONS

Last, but definitely not least, the findings of this dissertation also hold important implications for practitioners that are considering organizing or advocating for participatory processes. First of all, they should keep in mind that seemingly unambiguous numbers of support for participatory processes represent a complex package of preferences and attitudes toward political decision-making. These preferences are most likely driven by a combination of democratic values, dissatisfaction with the political system and grievances about not being heard, instrumental considerations and so on. Often process preferences are also connected to certain expectations of what these processes will deliver, for instance an increase in both symbolic and substantive responsiveness. As we saw in Chapter 5, citizens that expected to win a referendum but then lost were especially frustrated about the outcome. Hence, the first take-away message is to be cautious when interpreting survey measures as support for long-lasting participatory reform.

Second, practitioners should think about the explicit goals they pursue with participatory processes. For many citizens they might be a means to an end, rather than a normatively desirable goal as such. Accordingly, practitioners should be aware of the desired outcomes of these processes and ensure that the conditions are met to achieve them. Importantly, this

means that if practitioners want to foster legitimacy through SSPPs, they should then also be genuinely open to input, and engage with citizens' views respectfully. As Chapter 6 indicated, citizens are suspicious of the intentions of politicians and rejecting proposals without justification is certainly considered as a clear signal of disrespect. This also concerns the role of politicians in the process. So far, researchers rarely make a distinction between processes that are initiated by scholars or organizations and governments themselves. This distinction as well as the political uptake of these processes can however play a crucial role, following the relational model.

Further, especially when it comes to small-scale participatory processes, practitioners should think about the target group they want to reach. If the goal is to achieve positive impacts in the wider public, resources should be allocated to making the process widely known, for instance through press releases, livestreams and media coverage. While authors like Parkinson (2019) explicitly discuss media coverage of SSPPS in depth, the focus lies on the deliberations as such, and on the arguments made in the debate, and much less on the signal that political authorities might be able to transmit (see also Fishkin, 1996).[49]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

To conclude, I return to the "eierlegende Wollmilchsau" that introduced the topic of this dissertation and question whether participatory processes can be a magical cure for deficits in perceived legitimacy. So, are participatory processes an egg-laying, milk-yielding woolly pig?

Certainly not. If this thesis has shown anything, it is that citizens' perspectives on participatory processes are complex, composed of different motivations and demands. Importantly, citizens think more pragmatically about the benefits of these processes than the previous literature implied. But I also found that generally they can contribute to increases in perceived legitimacy. Instrumental concerns play an important role in shaping citizens' expectations, preferences and reactions to decision-making processes, but by including citizens in the process, legitimacy can be improved even among decision losers and among populist citizens. This

[49] Yet, his analysis exposes the potential challenges in relying on another institution to scale up these participatory processes.

seems to be especially the case when political authorities can convincingly signal to citizens that the process is not for show but based on genuine interest, respect and willingness to take citizens' perspectives into account. Hence participatory processes might be more of a standard pig that can, occasionally, lay an egg.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX CHAPTER 3

Table A3.1 Democratic norms across representative ideals

	importance of democracy	importance of fair and free elections	importance of impartial courts	importance of free media	importance of free opposition
listening	8.43	8.97	9.28	8.30	8.32
leading	8.53	8.89	9.09	8.00	8.14
depends	8.47	9.04	9.17	8.31	8.39
don't know	7.71	8.58	8.84	7.86	7.94
Total	8.42	8.95	9.21	8.23	8.29

Note. question on importance of democracy used the wording: How important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically? The other questions on democratic norms used the wording: Using this card, please tell me how important you think it is for democracy in general that…All questions were measured on 0-10 scales. Source: ESS 2016.

Table A3.2 Correlation between representative ideals and democratic norms

	importance of democracy	importance of fair and free elections	importance of impartial courts	importance of free media	importance of free opposition
representative ideal (0= leading, 1=listening)	-0.02***	0.02***	0.05***	0.06***	0.03***

Note. N=43 289, Pearson's correlation, p***<.001

Table A3.3 Multilevel regression explaining support for referendums with representation ideals

	coef	p	robust SE
representation ideal (0=leader, 1=listening)	.79	.000	.06
satisfaction with democracy	-.01	.376	.01
voted for incumbent	-.04	.301	.04
generalized trust	-.02	.082	.01
political interest	.09	.000	.02
left-right placement	.00	.811	.01
gender (male)	-.08	.007	.03
education (ref: primary)			
lower secondary	.23	.001	.07
upper secondary	.35	.000	.06
advanced vocational	.34	.000	.07
university degree	.08	.391	.10
age	.00	.015	.00
constant	7.38	.000	.15
variance (intercept)	.18	.000	.04
Wald Chi2	473.95	.000	
N	38.047		

Note. Non-standardized coefficients are presented, coefficients relating to hypotheses are printed in bold. Post-stratification weights are applied. Data: 2012 European Social Survey, 29 countries.

Table A3.4 Multilevel regression explaining support for referendums by interaction between experience with referendums and dissatisfaction with the listening function (across different operationalizations of experience with referendums)

	Incl. CH, log transformation			Incl. CH, score cap at 100			including Switzerland		
	coef	p	robust SE	coef	p	robust SE	coef	p	robust SE
country level									
experience with referendums	.19	.000	.05	.01	.000	.00	.00	.000	.00
individual level									
dissatisfaction listening function	.10	.000	.02	.07	.000	.01	.05	.000	.01
interaction: dissatisfaction listening x experience with ref.	-.02	.006	.01	.00	.000	.00	.00	.000	.00
satisfaction with democracy	.00	.973	.02	.00	.863	.01	.00	.855	.01
voted for incumbent	-.06	.077	.03	-.07	.040	.03	-.07	.042	.03
generalized trust	-.01	.455	.01	-.01	.413	.01	-.01	.416	.01
political interest	.11	.000	.02	.11	.000	.02	.11	.000	.02
left-right placement	.00	.753	.01	.00	.823	.01	.00	.810	.01
gender (male)	-.04	.215	.03	-.03	.264	.03	-.03	.266	.03
education (ref: primary)									
lower secondary	.22	.004	.08	.24	.002	.08	.24	.002	.08
upper secondary	.35	.000	.07	.37	.000	.07	.37	.000	.07
advanced vocational	.35	.000	.06	.36	.000	.06	.36	.000	.06
university degree	.20	.008	.08	.22	.003	.08	.22	.003	.08
age	.00	.162	.00	.00	.242	.00	.00	.236	.00
constant	7.35	.000	.20	7.62	.000	.16	7.75	.000	.15
variance (intercept)	.15	.000	.04	.14	.000	.04	.15	.000	.04
variance (slope)	.00	.000	.00	.00	.000	.00	.00	.000	.00
Wald Chi2	246.96	.000		269.74	.000		636.47	.000	
N	25614			26921			26921		

Note. Estimates are the result of a multilevel regression. Non-standardized coefficients are presented. Post-stratification weights are applied. Data: 2012 European Social Survey, 29 countries.

Table A3.5 Multilevel regression explaining support for referendums with experience with referendums (across different operationalizations)

	excluding CH			incl. CH, log transformation			incl. CH, score cap at 100			including CH		
	coef	p	rob. SE	coef	p	rob. SE	coef	p	rob. SE	coef	p	rob. SE
country level												
experience with referendums	.01	.071	.00	.12	.011	.05	.00	.007	.00	.00	.001	.00
individual level												
dissatisfaction listening function	.05	.000	.01	.07	.000	.01	.05	.000	.01	.05	.000	.01
satisfaction w. democracy	.00	.741	.01	-.04	.011	.02	.00	.782	.01	.00	.781	.01
voted for incumbent	-.08	.013	.03	-.01	.686	.03	-.07	.032	.03	-.07	.033	.03
generalized trust	-.01	.488	.01	.01	.486	.01	-.01	.456	.01	-.01	.458	.01
political interest	.10	.000	.02	.15	.000	.02	.11	.000	.02	.11	.000	.02
left-right placement	-.01	.510	.01	.00	.870	.03	.00	.635	.01	.00	.631	.01
gender (male)	-.04	.254	.03	.01	.806	.04	-.03	.285	.03	-.03	.284	.03
education (ref: primary)												
lower secondary	.24	.002	.08	.42	.000	.08	.24	.001	.08	.24	.001	.08
upper secondary	.37	.000	.07	.51	.000	.11	.37	.000	.07	.37	.000	.07
advanced vocational	.37	.000	.06	.39	.000	.10	.37	.000	.06	.37	.000	.06
university degree	.23	.002	.08	.32	.000	.08	.23	.002	.08	.23	.002	.08
age	.00	.235	.00	.01	.000	.00	.00	.207	.00	.00	.207	.00
constant	7.72	.000	.16	7.03	.000	.27	7.72	.000	51.14	7.78	.000	.14
variance (intercept)	.13	.000		.11	.000	.04	.12	.000	.03	.13	.000	.03
Wald Chi2	215.09	.000	.03	167.09	.000		188.74	.000		195.27	.000	
N	25881			25614			26921			26921		

Note. Estimates are the result of a multilevel regression. Non-standardized coefficients are presented. Post-stratification weights are applied. Data: 2012 European Social Survey, 29 countries.

Table A3.6 Multilevel regression explaining support for referendums with different types of dissatisfaction

	dissatisfaction with impartiality of courts			dissatisfaction with protection against poverty			dissatisfaction with freedom of media		
	coef	p	rob. SE	coef	p	rob. SE	coef	p	rob. SE
dissatisfaction with impartiality of courts	.01	.555	.01						
dissatisfaction with protection against poverty				.02	.159	.01			
dissatisfaction with freedom of media							-.08	.000	.01
satisfaction with democracy	-.02	.143	.01	-.01	.251	.01	-.04	.001	.01
voted for incumbent	-.06	.114	.04	-.06	.137	.04	-.06	.140	.04
generalized trust	-.02	.013	.01	-.02	.021	.01	-.02	.006	.01
political interest	.08	.000	.02	.08	.000	.02	.08	.000	.02
left-right placement	.00	.839	.01	.00	.933	.01	.00	.833	.01
gender (male)	-.12	.000	.03	-.11	.000	.03	-.12	.000	.03
education (ref: primary)									
lower secondary	.26	.000	.07	.25	.000	.07	.25	.000	.07
upper secondary	.38	.000	.07	.37	.000	.06	.38	.000	.06
advanced vocational	.39	.000	.08	.37	.000	.07	.39	.000	.07
university degree	.08	.435	.10	.07	.497	.10	.10	.337	.10
age	.00	.218	.00	.00	.359	.00	.00	.457	.00
constant	8.09	.000	.17	8.02	.000	.18	8.61	.000	.14
variance (intercept)	.17	.000	.45	.18	.000	.46	.19	.000	.05
Wald Chi2	255.65	.000		255.97	.000		348.85	.000	
N	43241			43833			43577		

Note. Estimates are the result of a multilevel regression. Non-standardized coefficients are presented. Post-stratification weights are applied. Data: 2012 European Social Survey, 29 countries.

Table A3.7 Multilevel regression explaining support for referendums with interactions between dissatisfaction and model

	Model I			Model II			Model III		
	coef	p	rob. SE	coef	p	rob. SE	coef	p	rob. SE
dissatisfaction listening function	.05	.000	.01						
dissatisfaction leading function				-.09	.000	.02			
dissatisfaction (combined)							-.07	.000	.02
representation ideal							.22	.030	.10
interaction: dissatisfaction x representation model							.13	.000	.02
voted for incumbent	-.06	.094	.03	.00	.981	.07	-.04	.250	.04
generalized trust	-.01	.439	.01	-.04	.060	.02	-.01	.144	.01
political interest	.12	.000	.02	.02	.696	.05	.09	.000	.02
left-right placement	.00	.865	.01	.02	.130	.01	.00	.641	.01
gender	-.04	.194	.03	-.25	.000	.07	-.09	.004	.03
education									
lower secondary	.25	.001	.08	.09	.540	.14	.22	.003	.07
upper secondary	.39	.000	.06	.17	.213	.14	.34	.000	.06
advanced vocational	.40	.000	.06	.09	.624	.19	.33	.000	.07
university degree	.27	.000	.07	-.48	.014	.20	.08	.426	.09
age	.00	.088	.00	.00	.143	.00	.00	.027	.00
constant	7.67	.000	.16	8.18	.000	.28	7.60	.000	.14
variance (intercept)	.14	.000	.03	.36	.000	.09	.17	.000	.04
Wald Chi2	205.52	.000		142.21	.000		434.78	.000	
N	29123			8222			37392		

Note. Non-standardized coefficients are presented, coefficients relating to hypotheses are printed in bold. Post-stratification weights are applied. Data: 2012 European Social Survey, 29 countries.

APPENDIX CHAPTER 4

SCALES

Note. The questionnaire was administered in Dutch. The original questionnaire is available upon request from the author
Note. [municipality] means that the name of the participants municipality was shown here (using qualtrics piped text)

SUPPORT FOR THE USE OF REFERENDUMS

Introduction text:
"In the Netherlands, political decisions are usually taken by elected representatives. But in many countries and also in the Netherlands, there is a debate about whether more decisions should be made by citizens directly, for instance via binding referendums. In a referendum all citizens can vote on a specific issue. Binding means that the government has to follow the result of the referendum. The outcome of a referendum is only valid if a critical mass of people take part, typically 30 %."

Table A4.1 General support for referendums

Item	Wording	Answer options	Mean	SD	Min	Max
General support for referendums national	On the national level, are you generally in favor or against taking important decisions with binding referendums	– 1 Definitely against – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 Definitely in favor	4.71	1.74	1	7
General support for referendums local	On the local level, are you generally in favor or against taking important decisions with binding referendums in [municipality]		4.97	1.68	1	7

Note. N= 1289

Introduction text:
Below you can see a list of often-discussed issues on the national level. Do you think it should be elected representatives or citizens by means of a binding referendum that make the decision if…

Table A4.2 Proposal-specific support for referendums

Item	Wording	Answer options	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Taxes	people with high incomes should pay more taxes	– 1 definitely representatives – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 definitely citizens in a binding referendum	3.85	1.95	1	7
Health care	we should drop the "own risk" in health care payments		4.59	2.10	1	7
Migration	more migrants should be allowed to come to the Netherlands		4.37	2.06	1	7
Abortion	abortion should be allowed after the third month		3.80	1.95	1	7
Welfare homeless	unemployed people should receive more financial support		3.61	1.89	1	7
Pension	pension payments should be increased		4.17	1.03	1	7

Note. N= 1289

Below you can see a list of often-discussed issues on the local level. Do you think it should be elected representatives or citizens by means of a binding referendum that make the decision if…

Table A4.3. Proposal-specific support for referendums on the local level

Item	Wording	Answer options	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Cars in center	cars should be banned from the center in [municipality]	– 1 definitely representatives – 2	4.33	2.02	1	7
More police	more police officers should be employed in [municipality]	– 3 – 4	3.94	2.07	1	7
Social housing	more houses in [municipality] should be reserved for social housing	– 5 – 6	4.09	2.01	1	7
Home care	home care should be publicly regulated in [municipality] instead of by private companies	– 7 definitely citizens in a binding referendum	4.29	1.96	1	7

Note. N= 1289

PREFERENCE FOR SPECIFIC POLICY CHANGES

Introduction text:
What is your personal opinion on these issues? To what extent do your agree or disagree with the following statements?

Table A4.4 Opinion on proposals

Item	Wording	Answer options	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
Taxes	people with high incomes should pay more taxes	– 1 completely disagree	5.35	1.67	1	7	1269
Health care	we should drop the "own risk" in health care payments	– 2 – 3	5.52	1.79	1	7	1262
Migration	more migrants should be allowed to come to the Netherlands	– 4 – 5	2.98	1.77	1	7	1264
Abortion	abortion should be allowed after the third month	– 6 – 7 completely agree	3.67	1.93	1	7	1199
Welfare homeless	unemployed people should receive more financial support	– Don't know	4.13	1.73	1	7	1251
Pension	pension payments should be increased		5.24	1.62	1	7	1236
Cars in center	cars should be banned from the center in [municipality]		3.80	2.15	1	7	1263
More police	more police officers should be employed in [municipality]		5.12	1.53	1	7	1222
Social housing	more houses in [municipality] should be reserved for social housing		4.95	1.69	1	7	1219
Home care	home care should be publicly regulated in [municipality] instead of by private companies		5.43	1.40	1	7	1197

Note. N=1289, don't knows are excluded from descriptive statistics

MAJORITY PERCEPTIONS

Introduction text:
If you think of other citizens in the Netherlands/ in [municipality], to what extent do you agree with the following statement?

Table A4.5 General majority perceptions

Item	Wording	Answer options	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Majority perceptions national	Most people in the Netherlands share my opinions	– 1 Completely disagree – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 Completely agree – Don't know	4.76	1.32	1	7
Majority perceptions local	Most people in [municipality] share my opinions		4.87	1.33	1	7

Note. N= 1289

Introduction text
Do you think most people in the Netherlands share your opinion about the question if…

Table A4.6. Proposal specific majority perceptions on the national level

Item	Wording	Answer options	Percent Minority	Percent Majority	Percent Don't know
Taxes	…people with high incomes should pay more taxes	– most people in the Netherlands do not share my opinion	21.02	60.90	18.08
Health care	…we should drop the "own risk" in health care payments		14.04	73.62	12.34
Migration	…more migrants should be allowed to come to the Netherlands	– most people in the Netherlands share my opinion	36.54	44.30	19.60
Abortion	…abortion should be allowed after the third month		26.22	30.26	43.52
Welfare homeless	…unemployed people should receive more financial support	– don't know	26.45	41.58	31.96
Pension	…pension payments should be increased		15.05	67.42	17.53

Note. N= 1289

Do you think most people in [municipality] share your opinion about the question if…

Table A4.7. Proposal specific majority perceptions on the local level

Item	Wording	Answer options	Percent Minority	Percent Majority	Percent Don't know
Cars in center	…cars should be banned from the center in [municipality]	– most people in [municipality] do not share my opinion)	19.47	52.13	28.30
More police	…more policemen should be employed in [municipality]	– most people in [municipality] share my opinion	9.08	63.93	27.00
Social housing	…more houses in [municipality] should be reserved for social housing	– don't know	14.58	55.70	29.71
Home care	…home care should be publicly regulated in [municipality] instead of by private companies		9.70	60.82	29.48

Note. N= 1289

CONTROL VARIABLES

Introduction text: How much trust do you personally have in each of the following institutions?

Table A4.8 Trust in political institutions national

Variable	Wording	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Parliament	[country]'s parliament	4.45	1.48	1 (no trust at all)	7 (complete trust)
Parties	Political Parties	4.72	1.40	1 (no trust at all)	7 (complete trust)
Politicians	Politicians	3.54	1.42	1 (no trust at all)	7 (complete trust)
Legal system	Legal system	3.63	1.53	1 (no trust at all)	7 (complete trust)
Police	The police	3.32	1.50	1 (no trust at all)	7 (complete trust)

Note. N= 1289

Introduction text: How much trust do you personally have in each of the following institutions?

Table A4.9 Trust in political institutions local

Variable	Wording	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Municipal council	The municipality council in [municipality]	4.27	1.33	1 (no trust at all)	7 (complete trust)
Municipal government	The local government in [municipality]	4.29	1.35	1 (no trust at all)	7 (complete trust)

Note. N= 1289

Table A4.10 Political interest

Variable	Wording	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Political interest	To what extent are you generally interested in politics?	4.55	1.50	1 (not interested at all)	7 (very interested)

Note. N= 1289

Table A4.11 Generalized trust

Variable	Wording	Mean	SD	Min	Max
General trust	Do you think generally most people can be trusted or you can never be too careful?	4.13	1.51	1 (you can never be too careful)	7 (most people can be trusted)

Note. N= 1289

Below we will describe some people. Please indicate to what extent you are similar or dissimilar to this person.

Table A4.12 Emancipative values (using PVQ measure for Universalism and Self-direction)

Variable	Wording	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Universalism 1	He thinks it is important that every person in the world be treated equally. He wants justice for everybody, even for people he doesn't know.	5.26	1.38	1(not at all like me)	7(very similar to me)
Universalism 2	It is important to him to listen to people who are different from him. Even when he disagrees with them, he still wants to understand them.	5.43	1.39	1(not at all like me)	7(very similar to me)
Universalism 3	He strongly believes that people should care for nature. Looking after the environment is important to him.	5.29	1.28	1(not at all like me)	7(very similar to me)
Self direction 1	Thinking up new ideas and being creative is important to him. He likes to do things in his own original way.	4.67	1.44	1(not at all like me)	7(very similar to me)
Self direction 2	It is important to him to make his own decisions about what he does. He likes to be free to plan and to choose his activities for himself.	5.30	1.28	1(not at all like me)	7(very similar to me)

Note. N= 1289

Table A4.13 Risk aversion

Variable	Wording	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Risk aversion	How do you see yourself: are you generally a person who is fully prepared to take risks or do you try to avoid taking risks?	3.94	1.39	1 (try to avoid risks)	7 (fully prepared to take risks)

Note. N= 1289

Table A4.14 Education

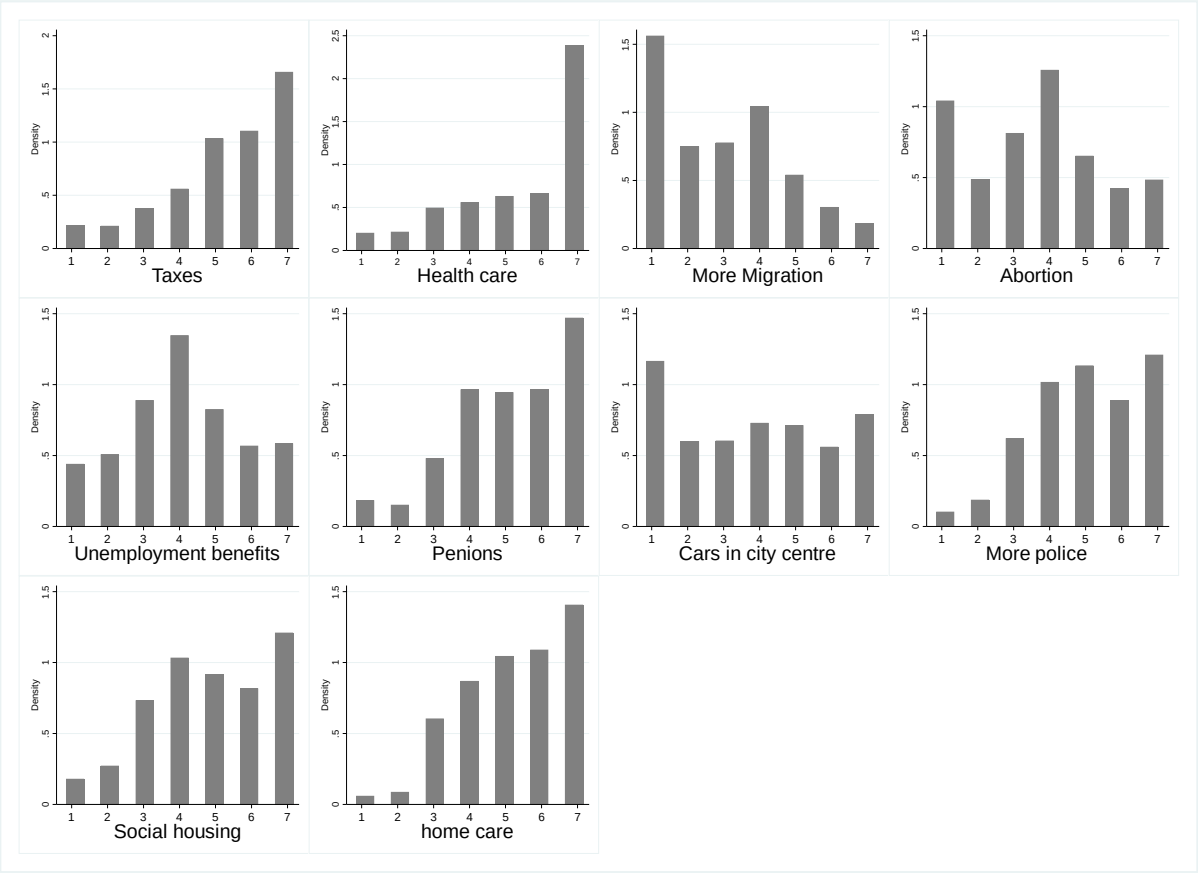
Variable	Wording	Answer options	percent
Education	What is your highest level of education?	– Basisonderwijs (lower)	1.33
		– Lager beroepsonderwijs (lower)	5.73
		– Lager voortgezet onderwijs (VMBO, VBO, Mavo) (lower)	12.39
		– Middelbaar beroepsonderwijs (MBO) (middle)	30.35
		– Hoger voortgezet onderwijs (Havo, VWO) (middle)	15.14
		– Hoger beroepsonderwijs (HBO) (higher)	25.49
		– Wetenschappelijk onderwijs (WO) (higher)	9.57

Note. N= 1289

Table A14: Stealth Democracy Index

Variable	Wording	Mean	SD	Min	Max
SD_1	Politicians would help the country more if they would stop talking and just take action on important problems.	5.53	1.45	1(completely disagree)	7(completely agree)
SD_2	What people call 'compromise' in politics is really just selling out one's principles	3.94	1.71	1(completely disagree)	7(completely agree)
SD_3	Government would run better if decisions were left up to non-elected independent experts.	3.28	1.64	1(completely disagree)	7(completely agree)
SD_4	Government would run better if decisions were left up to successful business people.	4.43	1.62	1(completely disagree)	7(completely agree)

Table A4.15 Distribution of preferences across policy proposals



CORRESPONDING TABLES TO FIGURES SHOWN IN MAIN TEXT

Table A4.16 Explaining support for the use of referendums between and within respondents

	coef	p	robust SE
within level:			
majority perception within (ref: no)	.50	.000	.05
sup. for policy proposal within	.13	.000	.01
between level:			
majority perception between (ref: no)	1.02	.000	.17
sup. for policy proposal between	.43	.000	.05
Political trust	-.33	.000	.04
Stealth Democracy	.30	.000	.04
Political Interest	-.06	.023	.03

General trust	-.06	.014	.03
Risk aversion (reversed)	.06	.018	.03
Universal values	.09	.035	.04
Age	.00	.157	.00
Gender (ref. male)	.10	.170	.07
Education (ref. low)			
middle	-.03	.758	.10
high	-.31	.002	.10
Proposals (dummy, ref: home care)			
cars in center	-.68	.000	.07
more police	-.42	.000	.07
social housing	-.28	.000	.08
taxes	-.80	.000	.08
own risk	-.12	.147	.08
migrants	.16	.042	.08
abortion	-.51	.000	.09
welfare homeless	-.83	.000	.08
pension	-.52	.000	.08
R2 between	.40		
R2 within	.08		
R2 total	.25		
N	8847		

Note. non-standardized coefficients are presented, estimates with a p-value below .05 are printed in bold. "don't know"s are exlcuded from analysis, estimates are the results of an ols regression with clustered robust standard errors (observations nested within individuals).

ADDITIONAL ANALYSES

Table A4.17 Explaining support for the use of referendums between and within respondents including racers

	coef	p	robust SE
within level:			
majority perception within (ref: no)	.48	.000	.04
sup. for policy proposal within	.13	.000	.01
between level:			
majority perception between (ref: no)	1.07	.000	.15
sup. for policy proposal between	.45	.000	.04
Political trust	-.29	.000	.03
Stealth Democracy	.35	.000	.03
Political Interest	-.08	.001	.02
General trust	-.07	.003	.02
Risk aversion (reversed)	.06	.010	.02
Universal values	.09	.014	.04
Proposals (dummy, ref: home care)			
cars in center	-.58	.000	.06
more police	-.35	.000	.06
social housing	-.23	.001	.07
taxes	-.72	.000	.07
own risk	-.08	.243	.07
migrants	.18	.012	.07
abortion	-.46	.000	.08
welfare homeless	-.74	.000	.07
pension	-.46	.000	.07
R2 between	.40		
R2 within	.08		
R2 total	.25		
N	10445		

Note. non-standardized coefficients are presented, estimates with a p-value below .05 are printed in bold. "don't know"s are excluded from analysis, estimates are the results of an ols regression with clustered robust standard errors (observations nested within individuals).

Table A4.18 Explaining support for the use of referendums between and within respondents using multilevel regression

	coef	p	robust SE
within level:			
majority perception within (ref: no)	.51	.000	.04
sup. for policy proposal within	.09	.000	.01
between level:	1.04	.000	.16
majority perception between (ref: no)	.43	.000	.05
sup. for policy proposal between	-.33	.000	.03
Political trust	.30	.000	.04
Stealth Democracy	-.06	.014	.02
Political Interest	-.06	.013	.03
General trust	.06	.017	.03
Risk aversion (reversed)	.09	.020	.04
Universal values	.00	.130	.00
Age	.11	.126	.07
Gender (ref. male)			
Education (ref. low)			
middle	-.03	.777	.10
high	-.31	.002	.10
Wald Chi2 (14)	1055.60	.000	
N	8847		

Note. non-standardized coefficients are presented, estimates with a p-value below .05 are printed in bold. "don't know"s are exlcuded from analysis, estimates are the results of a multilevel regression with proposals nested within individuals

Table A4.19 Characteristics of types of referendum supporters (mean scores)

	Full opponents	Switchers	Full supporters
Political trust	4.72	3.88	3.47
General trust	4.67	4.11	3.75
Education (higher)	.68	.51	.38
Emancipative values	5.07	5.20	5.28
Age	48.83	50.51	52.96
Political interest	4.73	4.54	4.46
gender (1=female)	.39	.44	.45
N	200	832	257

Note. Full opponents include individuals that are neutral or against referendums across all policy proposals, Full supporters include individuals that are neutral or in favor of referendums on all policy proposals. Switchers include all others. N=1289

Table A4.20 Explaining support for the use of referendums between and within respondents (bivariate analysis)

	Model I		Model II		Model III		Model IV	
	coef	p	coef	p	coef	p	coef	p
within level:								
majority perception within (ref: no)	.56	.000						
sup. for policy proposal within			1.47	.000				
between level:								
majority perception between (ref: no)					1.95	.000		
sup. for policy proposal between							.61	.000
Proposals (dummy, ref: home care)								
cars in center	-.43	.000	-.39	.000	-.41	.000	-.41	.000
more police	-.21	.002	-.24	.000	-.21	.004	-.22	.003
social housing	-.01	.920	-.02	.691	.02	.766	.02	.820
taxes	-.56	.000	-.49	.000	-.58	.000	-.59	.000

own risk	.15	.048	.28	.000	.18	.024	.18	.026
migrants	.06	.457	.04	.574	-.05	.552	-.05	.532
abortion	-.54	.000	-.54	.000	-.65	.000	-.66	.000
welfare homeless	-.74	.000	-.74	.000	-.84	.000	-.85	.000
pension	-.27	.000	-.17	.010	-.28	.000	-.28	.000
R2 between	.01		.01		.10		.12	
R2 within	.06		.07		.05		.05	
R2 total	.04		.04		.07		.09	
N	8847		8847		8847		8847	

Note. non-standardized coefficients are presented, estimates with a p-value below .05 are printed in bold. "don't know"s are excluded from analysis, estimates are the results of an ols regression with clustered robust standard errors (observations nested within individuals).

Table A4.21 Fixed effects model explaining support for referendums across proposals within respondents

	coef	p	robust SE
majority perceptions (within)	.50	.000	.05
sup. for policy proposal (within)	.13	.000	.01
Proposals (dummy, ref: home care)			
taxes	-.67	.000	.07
own risk	-.42	.000	.07
migrants	-.28	.000	.08
abortion	-.79	.000	.08
welfare homeless	-.11	.159	.08
pension	.17	.033	.08
cars in center	-.51	.000	.09
more police	-.82	.000	.08
social housing	-.52	.000	.08
R2	.10		
N	8847		

Note. non-standardized coefficients are presented, estimates with a p-value below .05 are printed in bold. Don't knows are excluded from analysis. Estimates are the results of an ols regression with fixed effects and clustered robust standard errors (observations nested within individuals).

Table A4.22 Interaction between support for policy proposal and majority perceptions

	Model I			Model II		
	coef	robust SE	p	coef	robust SE	p
within level:						
majority perception within (ref: no)	.52	.05	.000	.50	.05	.000
sup. for policy proposal within	.13	.01	.000	.13	.01	.000
Interaction: mp within x sup. policy proposal within	.04	.03	.153			
between level:						
majority perception between (ref: no)	1.03	.17	.000	.12	.94	.902
sup. for policy proposal between	.43	.05	.000	.08	.38	.827
Interaction: mp between x sup. policy proposal between				.20	.22	.351
Political trust	-.33	.04	.000	-.33	.04	.000
Stealth Democracy	0.3	.04	.000	.30	.04	.000
Political Interest	-.06	.03	.029	-.06	.03	.023
General trust	-.10	.03	.000	-.06	.03	.013
Risk aversion (reversed)	.09	.03	.001	.06	.03	.020
Universal values	.10	.04	.022	.09	.04	.035
Age	.00	.00	.502	.00	.00	.162
Gender (ref. male)	.10	.07	.162	.10	.07	.165
Education (ref. low)						
middle	-.06	.10	.548	-.03	.10	.785
high	-.43	.10	.000	-.31	.10	.00
Proposals (dummy, ref: cars in center						
taxes	-.81	.08	.000	-.80	.08	.000
own risk	-.13	.08	.095	-.12	.08	.145
migrants	.16	.08	.047	.16	.08	.042
abortion	-.52	.09	.000	-.51	.09	.000
welfare homeless	-.83	.08	.000	-.83	.08	.000

pension	-.53	.08	.000	-.52	.08	.000
more police	-.69	.07	.000	-.68	.07	.000
social housing	-.43	.07	.000	-.42	.07	.000
home care	-.29	.08	.000	-.29	.08	.000
R between	.41			.41		
R2 within	.08			.08		
R2 total	.25			.25		
N	8847			8847		

Note. non-standardized coefficients are presented, estimates with a p-value below .05 are printed in bold. "don't know"s are excluded from analysis, estimates are the results of an ols regression with clustered robust standard errors issues nested within individuals).

Table A4.23 Moderation of majority perceptions and societal issue salience

	coef	robust SE	p	coef	robust SE	p
		Model I			Model II	
within level:						
majority perception within (ref: no)	.53	.06	.000	.21	.10	.038
sup. for policy proposal within	.14	.02	.000	.15	.02	.000
issue salience (ref: low)						
middle	-.61	.31	.050	.12	.07	.084
high	-.04	.37	.908	1.09	.08	.000
Interaction: mp within x salience						
middle				.20	.12	.106
high				.74	.15	.000
between level:						
majority perception between (ref: no)	.73	.21	.001	1.10	.17	.000
Interaction: mp between x salience						
middle	.42	.18	.018			
high	.60	.21	.004			
sup. for policy proposal between	.46	.05	.000	.47	.05	.000
Political trust	-.35	.04	.000	-.34	.04	.000
Stealth Democracy	.32	.04	.000	.32	.04	.000
Political Interest	-.06	.03	.016	-.06	.03	.016
General trust	-.06	.03	.022	-.06	.03	.024
Risk aversion (reversed)	.06	.03	.021	.06	.03	.023
Universal values	.07	.05	.106	.07	.05	.119
Age	.00	.00	.235	.00	.00	.216
Gender (ref. male)	.07	.08	.362	.07	.08	.371
Education (ref. low)						
middle	-.03	.10	.773	-.03	.10	.763
high	-.32	.10	.00	-.31	.10	.00
Proposals (dummy, ref: social housing)						

more police	.38	.07	.000	.39	.07	.000
health care	-.33	.08	.000	-.46	.08	.000
welfare unemployed	-.12	.07	.106	-.14	.07	.054
pensions	.16	.07	.020	.15	.07	.028
R^2 between	.42			.42		
R^2 within	.09			.10		
R^2 total	.27			.27		
N	6487			6487		

Note. non-standardized coefficients are presented, estimates with a p-value below .05 are printed in bold. "don't know"s are excluded from analysis, estimates are the results of an ols regression with clustered robust standard errors (proposals nested within individuals). Some proposals were excluded because of lack of information on their salience level (abortion, cars in center, home care). Dummies for proposal related to taxes and migration were excluded due to multicollinearity.

Table A4.24 The moderating effect of certainty on the relationship between majority perceptions and support for referendums (national)

	coef	p	robust SE
within level:			
majority perception within (ref: no)	.56	.000	.06
sup. for policy proposal within	.12	.000	.02
between level:			
Certainty about mp	1.08	.060	.57
majority perception between (ref: no)	.14	.562	.24
Interaction: mp between x certainty	-.01	.939	.14
sup. for policy proposal between	.41	.000	.05
Political trust	-.33	.000	.04
Stealth Democracy	.30	.000	.04
Political Interest	-.08	.004	.03
General trust	-.07	.018	.03
Risk aversion (reversed)	.05	.074	.03
Universal values	.07	.112	.04
Age	.00	.510	.00
Gender (ref. male)	.10	.190	.08
Education (ref. low)			
middle	.00	.963	.11
high	-.27	.011	.11
Proposals (dummy, ref: social housing)			

taxes	-.18	.861	1.05
health care	.50	.632	1.05
migration	.77	.459	1.05
abortion	.10	.921	1.05
welfare unemployed	-.22	.833	1.04
pensions	.09	.929	1.05
R2 between	.40		
R2 within	.11		
R2 total	.27		
N	5444		

Note. non-standardized coefficients are presented, estimates with a p-value below .05 are printed in bold. "don't know"s are excluded from analysis, estimates are the results of an OLS regression with clustered robust standard errors (observations nested within individuals).

Table A4.25 The moderating effect of certainty on the relationship between majority perceptions and support for referendums (local)

	coef	p	robust SE
within level:			
majority perception within (ref: no)	.36	.000	.08
sup. for policy proposal within	.15	.000	.02
between level:			
Certainty about mp	.11	.737	.33
majority perception between (ref: no)	.64	.447	.84
Interaction: mp between x certainty	.02	.914	.19
sup. for policy proposal between	.44	.000	.07
Political trust	-.31	.000	.05
Stealth Democracy	.26	.000	.05
Political Interest	-.07	.062	.04
General trust	-.03	.387	.03
Risk aversion (reversed)	.05	.123	.03
Universal values	.08	.198	.06
Age	-.01	.021	.00
Gender (ref. male)	.15	.106	.10
Education (ref. low)			
middle	-.01	.915	.13
high	-.29	.025	.13
Proposals (dummy, ref: cars in center)			
more police	-.66	.000	.07
social housing	-.40	.000	.07
home care	-.28	.001	.08

R2 between	.27
R2 within	.06
R2 total	.22
N	3403

Note. non-standardized coefficients are presented, estimates with a p-value below .05 are printed in bold. "don't know"s are excluded from analysis, estimates are the results of an OLS regression with clustered robust standard errors (observations nested within individuals).

Table A4.26 Moderation of majority perceptions and support for policy change with education levels

	Model I			Model II		
	coef	robust SE	p	coef	robust SE	p
within level:						
majority perception within (ref: no)	.73	.12	.000	.50	.05	.000
sup. for policy proposal within	.13	.01	.000	.20	.03	.000
Interaction: mp within x education						
middle	-.19	.15	.218			
high	-.32	.13	.014			
Interaction: pref. for policy within x education						
middle				-.10	.03	.002
high				-.07	.03	.023
between level:						
majority perception between (ref: no)	1.02	.17	.000	1.02	.17	.000
sup. for policy proposal between	.43	.05	.000	.43	.05	.000
Political trust	-.33	.04	.000	-.33	.04	.000
Stealth Democracy	.30	.04	.000	.30	.04	.000
Political Interest	-.06	.03	.023	-.06	.03	.023
General trust	-.06	.03	.014	-.06	.03	.014
Risk aversion (reversed)	.06	.03	.018	.06	.03	.018
Universal values	.09	.04	.035	.09	.04	.037
Age	.00	.00	.157	.00	.00	.150
Gender (ref. male)	.10	.07	.170	.10	.07	.170
Education (ref. low)						
middle	-.03	.10	.758	-.02	.10	.859
high	-.31	.10	.00	-.30	.10	.00
Proposals (dummy, ref: cars in center)						

taxes	-.80	.08	.000	-.80	.08	.000
own risk	-.13	.08	.114	-.12	.08	.128
migrants	.16	.08	.051	.17	.08	.038
abortion	-.51	.09	.000	-.51	.09	.000
welfare homeless	-.83	.08	.000	-.83	.08	.000
pension	-.53	.08	.000	-.53	.08	.000
more police	-.68	.07	.000	-.68	.07	.000
social housing	-.43	.07	.000	-.42	.07	.000
home care	-.29	.08	.000	-.29	.08	.000
R between	.40			.40		
R2 within	.09			.09		
R2 total	.25			.25		
N	8847			8847		

Note. non-standardized coefficients are presented, estimates with a p-value below .05 are printed in bold. "don't know"s are excluded from analysis, estimates are the results of an ols regression with clustered robust standard errors (observations nested within individuals).

Table A4.27 Regression model for general preferences for a referendum on the national and local level

	national			local		
	coef.	p	SE	coef.	p	SE
Majority perceptions	.48	.00	.035	.48	.00	.012
Political trust	-.33	.00	.041	-.33	.00	.015
Stealth Democracy	.38	.00	.046	.34	.00	.016
Political Interest	.00	.98	.032	.02	.05	.012
General trust	-.04	.20	.033	-.04	.00	.012
Risk aversion	.03	.31	.033	.04	.00	.012
Universal Values	.09	.07	.050	.14	.00	.018
Age	-.01	.06	.003	.00	.43	.001
Gender (1=female)	-.04	.67	.092	.12	.00	.033
Education (low)						
middle	-.06	.63	.131	.12	.01	.046
high	-.22	.09	.130	.00	.98	.046
R2	.34			.32		
N	1064			1039		

Note. Estimates with a p-value below .05 are printed in bold. "don't know"s are exlcuded from analysis, estimates are the result of a OLS regression.

Table A4.28 Explaining support for the use of referendums between and within respondents controlling for general preferences for referendums

	coef	p	robust SE
within level:			

majority perception within (ref: no)	.50	.000	.05
sup. for policy proposal within	.13	.000	.01
between level:			
majority perception between (ref: no)	.79	.000	.15
sup. for policy proposal between	.34	.000	.04
General pref. for referendums	.31	.000	.02
Political trust	-.23	.000	.03
Stealth Democracy	.16	.000	.04
Political Interest	-.06	.010	.02
General trust	-.06	.020	.03
Risk aversion (reversed)	.04	.068	.02
Universal values	.07	.107	.05
Age	.00	.458	.00
Gender (ref. male)	.09	.206	.07
Education (ref. low)			
middle	-.03	.722	.09
high	-.25	.007	.09
Proposals (dummy, ref: home care)			
cars in center	-.67	.000	.07
more police	-.42	.000	.07
social housing	-.29	.000	.08
taxes	-.80	.000	.08
own risk	-.11	.151	.08
migrants	.16	.042	.08
abortion	-.51	.000	.09
welfare homeless	-.82	.000	.08
pension	-.52	.000	.08
R between	.50		
R2 within	.08		
R2 total	.30		
N	8847		

Note. non-standardized coefficients are presented, estimates with a p-value below .05 are printed in bold. "don't know"s are exlcuded from analysis, estimates are the results of an ols regression with clustered robust standard errors (observations nested within individuals).

Table A4.29 Explaining support for the use of referendums including “don’t know” responses for majority perceptions

	coef	p	robust SE
majority perception (ref. no)			

yes	.65	.000	.06
don't know	.03	.685	.07
sup. for policy proposal	.19	.000	.01
Political trust	-.32	.000	.03
Stealth Democracy	.32	.000	.04
Political Interest	-.06	.025	.02
General trust	-.06	.013	.02
Risk aversion (reversed)	.06	.016	.02
Universal values	.12	.003	.04
Age	.00	.894	.00
Gender (ref. male)	.14	.047	.07
Education (ref. low)			
middle	-.07	.490	.10
high	-.35	.000	.09
Proposals (dummy, ref: home care)			
cars in center	-.76	.000	.06
more police	-.51	.000	.06
social housing	-.43	.000	.06
taxes	-.87	.000	.07
own risk	-.23	.001	.07
migrants	.23	.001	.07
abortion	-.38	.000	.07
welfare unemployed	-.76	.000	.07
pension	-.57	.000	.07
R2	.23		
N	11560		

Note. non-standardized coefficients are presented, estimates with a p-value below .05 are printed in bold. "don't know"s are excluded from analysis, estimates are the results of an ols regression with clustered robust standard errors (proposals nested within individuals).

Table A4.30 Explaining proposal specific preferences for referendums (national level)

Referendum on…	Taxes			Health Care			Immigration			Abortion			Unemployment benefits			Pensions		
	coef	r. SE	p	coef	r. SE	p	coef	r. SE	p	coef	r. SE	p	coef	r. SE	p	coef	r. SE	p
majority perception (ref. no)																		
yes	.26	.13	.051	.82	.17	.000	.41	.13	.001	.31	.14	.031	.64	.12	.000	.42	.15	.005
don't know	-.11	.16	.504	.21	.20	.295	.07	.15	.648	.08	.13	.569	.24	.13	.053	.10	.17	.570
Sup. for policy proposal	.23	.03	.000	.31	.03	.000	-.19	.04	.000	.18	.03	.000	.29	.03	.000	.31	.03	.000
Political trust	-.30	.05	.000	-.32	.05	.000	-.41	.05	.000	-.18	.05	.000	-.28	.04	.000	-.36	.04	.000
Stealth Democracy	.31	.05	.000	.34	.05	.000	.36	.05	.000	.25	.06	.000	.28	.05	.000	.36	.05	.000
Political Interest	-.13	.04	.000	-.07	.04	.063	.05	.04	.212	-.05	.04	.184	-.07	.03	.042	-.11	.03	.001
General trust	-.05	.04	.185	.00	.04	.989	-.09	.04	.014	-.09	.04	.032	-.09	.04	.014	-.07	.04	.059
Risk aversion (reversed)	.13	.04	.001	.09	.04	.014	.03	.04	.489	.02	.04	.564	.07	.04	.049	.07	.04	.042
Universal values	.14	.06	.013	.18	.06	.001	.00	.06	.972	.10	.06	.090	.02	.05	.652	.10	.05	.058
Age	.00	.00	.958	.00	.00	.476	.00	.00	.951	.00	.00	.887	.00	.00	.527	.00	.00	.260
Gender (ref. male)	.26	.10	.011	.19	.10	.074	.05	.11	.649	.18	.11	.104	-.09	.10	.342	-.03	.10	.758
Education (ref. low)																		
middle	-.13	.15	.372	-.24	.15	.111	-.01	.15	.951	-.09	.16	.568	.20	.14	.155	-.10	.14	.466
high	-.56	.14	.000	-.32	.15	.032	-.15	.15	.313	-.23	.16	.151	-.16	.14	.264	-.42	.14	.003
R2	.24			.34			.26			.10			.24			.33		
N	1203			1203			1203			1203			1203			1203		

Note. unstandardized coefficients are presented, estimates are the results of a OLS regression

Table A4.31 Explaining proposal specific preferences for referendums (local level)

Referendum on…	Cars in city center			More police			Social housing			Home care		
	coef	r. SE	p	coef	r. SE	p	coef	r. SE	p	coef	r. SE	p
majority perception (ref. no)												
yes	.30	.15	.040	.56	.19	.004	.12	.15	.423	.52	.17	.003
don't know	-.35	.16	.034	-.02	.20	.911	-.37	.16	.020	-.10	.18	.565
Sup. for policy proposal	-.02	.03	.371	.26	.04	.000	.39	.03	.000	.34	.04	.000
Political trust	-.25	.05	.000	-.31	.05	.000	-.38	.05	.000	-.37	.05	.000
Stealth Democracy	.38	.06	.000	.24	.05	.000	.27	.05	.000	.29	.05	.000
Political Interest	-.01	.04	.751	-.08	.04	.042	-.09	.04	.009	-.07	.03	.032
General trust	-.06	.04	.157	-.12	.04	.002	-.03	.04	.376	-.01	.03	.855
Risk aversion (reversed)	.09	.04	.031	.07	.04	.074	.02	.04	.581	.02	.03	.531
Universal values	.16	.06	.011	.13	.06	.034	.08	.06	.181	.15	.05	.005
Age	.00	.00	.445	.00	.00	.926	.00	.00	.464	.00	.00	.801
Gender (ref. male)	.30	.11	.010	.15	.11	.171	.13	.10	.224	.19	.10	.060
Education (ref. low)												
middle	.06	.16	.727	-.10	.16	.530	-.02	.15	.866	-.19	.14	.179
high	-.09	.16	.585	-.40	.15	.011	-.24	.15	.098	-.42	.14	.003
R2	.13			.23			.27			.32		
N	1203			1203			1203			1203		

Note. unstandardized coefficients are presented, estimates are the results of a OLS regression

Table A4.32 Support for policy proposal and majority perception for "More migrants should be admitted to the Netherlands"

	Majority perceptions			
Support for policy proposal	No	Yes	don't know	Total
No support - 1	81	236	44	361
2	30	118	30	178
3	46	83	54	183
4	111	64	69	244
5	90	18	18	126
6	51	8	12	71
complete support - 7	29	5	6	40
Total	438	532	233	1,203

APPENDIX CHAPTER 5

Table A5.1 Regression of support for referendums (Pre-Wave)

	Main effect (H1)			Interaction policy pref. (H2a)			Interaction majority perc.(H2b)		
	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE
populist attitudes	.99	.000	.12	1.17	.000	.15	1.02	.000	.17
policy preference (ref: pro)	.73	.000	.16	2.23	.001	.69	.73	.000	.16
majority perception	-.08	.558	.14	-.09	.520	.14	.08	.904	.67
Interaction pop. att. x pol. pref.				-.44	.026	.20			
Interaction pop. att. x maj. perc.							-.05	.800	.20
political trust	.09	.066	.05	.08	.112	.05	.09	.067	.05
age	.00	.789	.00	.00	.787	.00	.00	.789	.00
gender (ref: male)	.04	.765	.14	.03	.854	.14	.04	.770	.14
Education (ref: lower):									
middle	-.12	.537	.20	-.12	.543	.20	-.12	.541	.20
higher	-.24	.239	.20	-.23	.263	.20	-.23	.248	.20
party preference (ref: VVD):									
PVV	.08	.846	.41	.09	.832	.41	.08	.844	.41
CDA	.59	.032	.28	.59	.032	.28	.59	.033	.28
D66	.36	.222	.30	.33	.270	.30	.36	.227	.30
GroenLinks	-.09	.746	.27	-.20	.479	.28	-.10	.727	.28
SP	.67	.045	.33	.67	.044	.33	.67	.045	.33
PvdA	.36	.249	.31	.31	.329	.31	.36	.253	.31
ChristenUnie	-.57	.129	.38	-.60	.114	.38	-.58	.125	.38
Partij voor de Dieren	.88	.027	.40	.83	.038	.40	.87	.029	.40
50 Plus	.72	.077	.41	.67	.100	.41	.72	.078	.41
SGP	.40	.500	.59	.42	.476	.58	.40	.496	.59
Forum voor Democratie	.69	.056	.36	.67	.062	.36	.68	.061	.36
Other	1.85	.300	1.78	1.87	.294	1.78	1.85	.299	1.79
Blanco	1.03	.260	.92	.99	.279	.91	1.02	.268	.92
don't know	.56	.036	.27	.53	.047	.27	.56	.037	.27
don't want to disclose	.45	.448	.60	.33	.585	.60	.43	.474	.60
R2	.23			.23			.23		
N	665			665			665		

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

Table A5.2 Regression of acceptance of the referendum outcome (post-wave)

	all			decision loser (H4)		
	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.
decision loser	-1.56	.000	.13			
populist attitudes	.33	.001	.10	.48	.007	.18
political trust	-.01	.869	.04	.05	.500	.08
education (ref: lower)						
middle	-.12	.321	.12	-.17	.413	.21
higher	.00	.843	.00	.00	.526	.01
gender (ref: male)	.13	.435	.16	.30	.311	.29
age	.44	.008	.17	.61	.032	.29
party preference (ref: VVD):						
PVV	-.76	.025	.34	-.95	.098	.58
CDA	.37	.108	.23	.48	.144	.33
D66	.57	.021	.25	.96	.010	.37
GroenLinks	.27	.238	.23	.25	.589	.46
SP	.50	.071	.28	.67	.225	.55
PvdA	-.17	.518	.26	-.24	.573	.43
ChristenUnie	.09	.777	.31	.38	.450	.51
Partij voor de Dieren	-.27	.408	.33	-.80	.264	.72
50 Plus	.39	.250	.34	.55	.313	.54
SGP	-.02	.974	.48	.04	.961	.72
Forum voor Democratie	.10	.749	.30	-.05	.932	.62
Other	.27	.853	1.48			
Blanco	.11	.882	.76			
I don't know	.25	.259	.22	.72	.045	.36
I don't want to disclose	.36	.472	.50	.44	.646	.95
R2	.29			.10		
N	665			339		

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

Table A5.3 Regression of change in general support for referendums (post-wave)

	all			decision loser (H4)		
	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.
decision loser	-.10	.178	.07			
populist attitudes	.05	.389	.06	.05	.595	.09
majority perception	-.12	.084	.07	-.25	.014	.10
political trust	.01	.783	.02	.04	.310	.04
education (ref: lower)						
middle	-.01	.887	.07	-.08	.404	.10
higher	.00	.134	.00	.00	.210	.00
gender (ref: male)	.05	.620	.09	.22	.109	.14
age	.05	.586	.09	.16	.246	.14
party preference (ref: VVD):						
PVV	.17	.363	.19	.09	.753	.27
CDA	.07	.563	.13	.04	.795	.16
D66	.16	.244	.14	.32	.075	.18
GroenLinks	.13	.311	.13	.10	.654	.22

SP	.25	.105	.16	.22	.392	.26
PvdA	-.24	.106	.15	-.22	.286	.20
ChristenUnie	.24	.176	.18	.40	.104	.25
Partij voor de Dieren	.04	.823	.19	.13	.704	.34
50 Plus	-.18	.342	.19	-.34	.191	.26
SGP	.29	.291	.27	.43	.208	.34
Forum voor Democratie	.08	.635	.17	.27	.358	.29
Other	.22	.788	.83			
Blanco	.12	.772	.43			
I don't know	-.19	.133	.12	-.13	.447	.17
I don't want to disclose	.42	.137	.28	.89	.048	.45
R2	.05			.09		
N	657			334		

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

Table A5.4 Regression of acceptance of the referendum outcome (Post-Wave) full sample

	all			decision loser		
	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.
decision loser	-1.35	.000	.09			
populist attitudes	.31	.000	.06	.36	.001	.11
education (ref: lower)						
middle	.21	.126	.14	.32	.183	.24
higher	.48	.000	.14	.63	.008	.23
gender (ref: male)	-.07	.356	.08	-.26	.059	.14
age	.00	.891	.00	.00	.447	.00
party preference (ref: VVD):						
PVV	-.33	.119	.21	-.38	.261	.34
CDA	.20	.188	.15	.15	.481	.21
D66	.47	.008	.18	.83	.003	.27
GroenLinks	.47	.003	.16	.45	.129	.30
SP	.57	.002	.19	.61	.094	.36
PvdA	.25	.175	.18	.22	.473	.31
ChristenUnie	.20	.341	.21	.07	.835	.32
Partij voor de Dieren	.04	.858	.23	-.13	.802	.51
50 Plus	.66	.009	.26	.80	.049	.40
SGP	.32	.366	.36	.20	.667	.48
DENK	.25	.764	.83			
Forum voor Democratie	.12	.575	.22	-.33	.397	.39
other	-.27	.792	1.01			
do not vote	1.09	.447	1.44			
Blanco	.45	.452	.59			
don't know	.38	.011	.15	.54	.022	.24
do not want to disclose	-.28	.393	.32	.36	.61	.71
R2	.26			.07		

N	1319	658

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

Table A5.5 Regression of support for referendums (Pre-Wave) with full populism scale

	Main effect			Interaction policy preference			Interaction majority perception		
	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.
populist attitudes	1.07	.00	.12	1.28	.00	.14	1.10	.00	.17
policy preference (ref: pro)	.68	.00	.16	2.31	.00	.65	.69	.00	.16
majority perception	-.09	.52	.14	-.10	.48	.14	.06	.93	.63
Interaction pop. att. x pol. pref.				-.50	.01	.19			
Interaction pop. att. x maj. perc.							-.05	.81	.19
political trust	.11	.03	.05	.09	.06	.05	.11	.03	.05
age	.00	.78	.00	.00	.77	.00	.00	.78	.00
gender (ref: male)	.04	.75	.14	.03	.86	.14	.04	.76	.14
Education (ref: lower):									
middle	-.10	.59	.19	-.10	.61	.19	-.10	.60	.20
higher	-.22	.28	.20	-.20	.31	.20	-.21	.29	.20
party preference (ref: VVD):									
PVV	-.07	.86	.41	-.05	.89	.41	-.07	.86	.41
CDA	.57	.04	.27	.57	.04	.27	.57	.04	.27
D66	.37	.21	.29	.33	.26	.29	.37	.21	.29
GroenLinks	-.09	.75	.27	-.21	.44	.27	-.09	.73	.27
SP	.59	.07	.33	.60	.07	.33	.60	.07	.33
PvdA	.35	.25	.31	.29	.35	.31	.35	.26	.31
ChristenUnie	-.55	.14	.37	-.57	.12	.37	-.56	.14	.38
Partij voor de Dieren	.84	.03	.39	.78	.05	.39	.84	.03	.39
50 Plus	.70	.08	.40	.63	.12	.40	.70	.08	.40
SGP	.36	.53	.58	.39	.50	.58	.37	.53	.58
Forum voor Democratie	.58	.10	.36	.55	.12	.35	.57	.11	.36
Other	1.70	.34	1.76	1.74	.32	1.76	1.71	.34	1.77
Blanco	.90	.32	.90	.88	.33	.90	.89	.33	.91
don't know	.53	.05	.26	.49	.06	.26	.52	.05	.26
don't want to disclose	.37	.53	.59	.20	.74	.59	.35	.56	.60
R2	.24			.25			.24		
N	664.00			664.00			664.00		

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

Table A5.6. Regression of acceptance of the referendum outcome (Post-Wave) with full populism scale

	all			decision loser		
	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.
decision loser	-1.55	.000	.13			
populist attitudes	.31	.003	.10	.50	.005	.18
political trust	-.01	.788	.04	.06	.491	.08
education (ref: lower)						
middle	.13	.442	.16	.32	.279	.29
higher	.44	.009	.17	.63	.028	.29
gender (ref: male)	-.12	.327	.12	-.18	.399	.21
age	.00	.883	.00	.00	.535	.01
party preference (ref: VVD):						
PVV	-.76	.027	.34	-.99	.093	.59
CDA	.37	.110	.23	.48	.142	.33
D66	.57	.021	.25	.97	.010	.37
GroenLinks	.27	.237	.23	.25	.590	.46
SP	.50	.074	.28	.66	.232	.55
PvdA	-.17	.508	.26	-.25	.564	.43
ChristenUnie	.10	.742	.31	.39	.444	.51
Partij voor de Dieren	-.27	.408	.33	-.80	.265	.72
50 Plus	.40	.237	.34	.54	.320	.54
SGP	-.03	.955	.49	.05	.948	.72
Forum voor Democratie	.09	.753	.30	-.06	.923	.62
Other	.25	.866	1.48			
Blanco	.08	.921	.76			
I don't know	.25	.252	.22	.71	.046	.36
I don't want to disclose	.36	.475	.50	.35	.717	.95
R2	.29			.11		
N	664			338		

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

Table A5.7 Regression of change in general support for referendums with full populism scale

	all			decision losers		
	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.
decision loser	-.09	.232	.07			
populist attitudes	.05	.425	.06	.07	.431	.09
majority perception	-.11	.097	.07	-.25	.015	.10
political trust	.00	.857	.02	.04	.314	.04
education (ref: lower)						
middle	.03	.734	.09	.20	.151	.14
higher	.04	.673	.09	.14	.286	.14
gender (ref: male)	.00	.976	.07	-.08	.443	.10
age	.00	.143	.00	.00	.229	.00

party preference (ref: VVD):						
PVV	.24	.205	.19	.19	.485	.28
CDA	.07	.561	.13	.04	.803	.15
D66	.17	.235	.14	.33	.071	.18
GroenLinks	.14	.293	.13	.09	.679	.22
SP	.26	.102	.16	.21	.424	.26
PvdA	-.24	.109	.15	-.22	.275	.20
ChristenUnie	.25	.169	.18	.40	.107	.25
Partij voor de Dieren	.04	.814	.19	.12	.722	.34
50 Plus	-.18	.343	.19	-.35	.167	.26
SGP	.28	.294	.27	.43	.210	.34
Forum voor Democratie	.08	.621	.17	.25	.392	.29
Other	.22	.788	.83			
Blanco	.12	.776	.42			
I don't know	-.19	.135	.12	-.14	.408	.17
I don't want to disclose	.42	.135	.28	.86	.057	.45
R2	.05			.09		
N	656			333		

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

Table A5.8 Regression of Support for Referendums (Pre-Wave) on people-centrism

	Main effect			Interaction policy preference			Interaction majority perception		
	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.
people-centrism	.83	.000	.11	.99	.000	.14	.86	.000	.17
policy preference (ref: pro)	.69	.000	.16	2.06	.003	.69	.69	.000	.16
majority perception	-.07	.652	.15	-.07	.625	.14	.12	.857	.66
Interaction pop. att. x pol. pref.				-.41	.043	.20			
Interaction pop. att. x maj. perc.							-.06	.775	.20
political trust	.03	.508	.05	.02	.621	.05	.03	.510	.05
age	.00	1.000	.00	.00	.949	.00	.00	.996	.00
gender (ref: male)	.05	.740	.14	.03	.852	.14	.05	.740	.14
Education (ref: lower):									
middle	-.12	.555	.20	-.12	.543	.20	-.12	.562	.20
higher	-.27	.183	.20	-.27	.191	.20	-.27	.192	.20

party preference (ref: VVD):									
PVV	.05	.903	.42	.07	.866	.42	.05	.902	.42
CDA	.57	.040	.28	.57	.041	.28	.57	.041	.28
D66	.35	.247	.30	.32	.278	.30	.35	.249	.30
GroenLinks	-.09	.753	.28	-.18	.529	.28	-.09	.733	.28
SP	.65	.054	.34	.67	.047	.33	.65	.054	.34
PvdA	.31	.321	.32	.26	.407	.32	.31	.325	.32
ChristenUnie	-.55	.149	.38	-.56	.144	.38	-.56	.144	.38
Partij voor de Dieren	.96	.017	.40	.91	.023	.40	.95	.018	.40
50 Plus	.79	.053	.41	.75	.067	.41	.79	.054	.41
SGP	.38	.523	.59	.45	.444	.59	.38	.516	.59
Forum voor Democratie	.79	.029	.36	.79	.028	.36	.78	.033	.36
Other	1.72	.341	1.80	1.78	.321	1.80	1.73	.339	1.80
Blanco	1.13	.219	.92	1.06	.252	.92	1.12	.224	.92
don't know	.58	.032	.27	.55	.040	.27	.57	.033	.27
don't want to disclose	.54	.374	.60	.41	.499	.60	.51	.401	.61
R2	.21			.22			.21		
N	664			664			664		

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

Table A5.9 Regression of Support for Referendums (Pre-Wave) on anti-elitism

	Main effect			Interaction policy preference			Interaction majority perception		
	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.
Anti-elitism	.60	.000	.10	.72	.000	.12	.63	.000	.14
policy preference (ref: pro)	.81	.000	.16	1.79	.002	.57	.81	.000	.16
majority perception	-.08	.598	.15	-.08	.568	.15	.06	.918	.55
Interaction pop. att. x pol. pref.				-.29	.075	.16			
Interaction pop. att. x maj. perc.							-.04	.800	.16
political trust	.07	.203	.05	.05	.298	.05	.07	.204	.05
age	.00	.996	.00	.00	.958	.00	.00	.992	.00
gender (ref: male)	.01	.962	.14	.00	.976	.14	.01	.972	.15
Education (ref: lower):									
middle	-.12	.534	.20	-.12	.546	.20	-.12	.537	.20
higher	-.25	.229	.21	-.24	.250	.21	-.24	.235	.21
party preference (ref: VVD):									
PVV	.23	.576	.42	.24	.561	.42	.24	.576	.42
CDA	.66	.019	.28	.66	.018	.28	.66	.019	.28
D66	.37	.217	.30	.34	.262	.30	.37	.225	.30

GroenLinks	-.09	.760	.28	-.16	.558	.28	-.09	.741	.28
SP	.89	.008	.34	.87	.010	.34	.89	.009	.34
PvdA	.37	.241	.32	.34	.287	.32	.37	.245	.32
ChristenUnie	-.53	.173	.39	-.56	.148	.39	-.54	.168	.39
Partij voor de Dieren	.91	.025	.41	.87	.031	.41	.91	.025	.41
50 Plus	.86	.040	.41	.81	.050	.41	.85	.040	.42
SGP	.41	.495	.60	.36	.544	.60	.41	.494	.60
Forum voor Democratie	.92	.011	.36	.88	.015	.36	.91	.013	.36
Other	2.23	.220	1.82	2.18	.229	1.82	2.23	.222	1.82
Blanco	.93	.321	.93	.94	.314	.93	.91	.334	.94
don't know	.69	.010	.27	.67	.013	.27	.69	.010	.27
don't want to disclose	.61	.316	.61	.54	.375	.61	.59	.333	.61
R2	.20			.20			.20		
N	664			664			664		

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

Table A5.10 Regression of decision acceptance on people-centrism (Post-Wave)

	all			decision loser		
	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.
decision loser	-1.56	.000	.13			
people-centrism	.27	.004	.09	.47	.004	.16
political trust	-.03	.504	.04	.03	.658	.08
education (ref: lower)						
middle	.12	.449	.16	.30	.315	.29
higher	.42	.011	.17	.59	.040	.29
gender (ref: male)	-.11	.337	.12	-.18	.382	.21
age	.00	.942	.00	.00	.482	.01
party preference (ref: VVD):						
PVV	-.74	.030	.34	-1.00	.091	.59
CDA	.36	.116	.23	.47	.149	.33
D66	.56	.023	.25	.96	.011	.37
GroenLinks	.27	.247	.23	.28	.545	.46
SP	.49	.078	.28	.68	.217	.55
PvdA	-.19	.474	.26	-.29	.502	.43
ChristenUnie	.10	.760	.31	.43	.402	.51
Partij voor de Dieren	-.25	.449	.33	-.74	.305	.72
50 Plus	.41	.224	.34	.57	.290	.54
SGP	-.02	.963	.49	.10	.887	.73
Forum voor Democratie	.13	.670	.30	-.03	.961	.61
Other	.23	.879	1.48			
Blanco	.14	.854	.76			
I don't know	.25	.252	.22	.70	.051	.36
I don't want to disclose	.38	.440	.50	.48	.613	.94

R2	.29	.11
N	664	338

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

Table A5.11 Regression of decision acceptance on anti-elitism (Post-Wave)

	all			decision loser		
	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.
decision loser	-1.58	.000	.13			
anti-elitism	.20	.012	.08	.20	.139	.14
political trust	-.02	.700	.04	.02	.832	.08
education (ref: lower)						
middle	.12	.451	.16	.33	.265	.30
higher	.44	.009	.17	.63	.029	.29
gender (ref: male)	-.13	.282	.12	-.18	.397	.21
age	.00	.921	.00	.00	.732	.01
party preference (ref: VVD):						
PVV	-.68	.046	.34	-.91	.127	.59
CDA	.39	.089	.23	.50	.133	.33
D66	.57	.021	.25	.98	.010	.38
GroenLinks	.27	.242	.23	.28	.548	.47
SP	.57	.039	.28	.76	.173	.55
PvdA	-.17	.524	.26	-.21	.632	.44
ChristenUnie	.10	.747	.31	.39	.451	.51
Partij voor de Dieren	-.26	.428	.33	-.78	.283	.73
50 Plus	.43	.203	.34	.66	.225	.55
SGP	-.01	.981	.49	-.09	.901	.73
Forum voor Democratie	.17	.574	.30	.06	.925	.62
Other	.40	.787	1.48			
Blanco	.08	.919	.76			
I don't know	.29	.184	.22	.78	.030	.36
I don't want to disclose	.40	.418	.50	.66	.489	.95
R2	.28			.09		
N	664			338		

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

Table A5.12 Interaction between Pop. Attitudes and Issue Importance explaining decision acceptance (Post-Wave)

	all			decision loser		
	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.
decision loser	-1.46	.00	.14			
populist attitudes	.44	.13	.29	.99	.04	.48

issue importance	.15	.27	.14	.32	.18	.24
interaction: pop. att. x iss. imp.	-.02	.61	.04	-.08	.24	.07
political trust	-.01	.74	.04	.04	.62	.08
education (ref: lower)						
middle	.15	.35	.16	.36	.22	.30
higher	.46	.01	.17	.66	.02	.29
gender (ref: male)	-.13	.25	.12	-.19	.36	.21
age	.00	.61	.00	.00	.48	.01
party preference (ref: VVD):						
PVV	-.75	.03	.34	-1.00	.09	.59
CDA	.34	.13	.23	.46	.16	.33
D66	.55	.03	.25	.93	.01	.37
GroenLinks	.30	.19	.23	.30	.53	.47
SP	.53	.05	.28	.70	.21	.55
PvdA	-.14	.59	.26	-.21	.62	.43
ChristenUnie	.12	.71	.31	.43	.40	.51
Partij voor de Dieren	-.22	.50	.33	-.77	.28	.72
50 Plus	.40	.24	.34	.58	.29	.54
SGP	-.02	.97	.48	.12	.87	.73
Forum voor Democratie	.16	.59	.30	-.07	.92	.63
Other	.08	.96	1.47			
Blanco	.06	.94	.76			
I don't know	.28	.20	.22	.72	.05	.36
I don't want to disclose	.41	.41	.49	.53	.58	.95
R2	.30			.11		
N	664			338		

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

Table A5.13 Regression of decision acceptance on interaction between populist attitudes and losing

	Coef	p	Std. err.
decision loser	-1.92	.001	.58
populist attitudes	.28	.044	.14
interaction: loser x pop. att.	.11	.522	.17
political trust	-.01	.819	.04
age	-.12	.311	.12
gender (ref: male)	.00	.856	.00
Education (ref: lower):			
middle	.12	.447	.16
higher	.44	.009	.17
party preference (ref: VVD):			
PVV	-.76	.024	.34
CDA	.36	.114	.23
D66	.55	.026	.25
GroenLinks	.24	.299	.23
SP	.50	.074	.28

PvdA	-.19	.464	.27
ChristenUnie	.08	.802	.31
Partij voor de Dieren	-.29	.385	.33
50 Plus	.37	.278	.34
SGP	-.02	.974	.48
Forum voor Democratie	.10	.741	.30
Other	.24	.286	.22
Blanco	.33	.504	.50
don't know	.27	.853	1.48
don't want to disclose	.10	.896	.76
R2	.29		
N	665		

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

APPENDIX CHAPTER 6

INTERVIEW GUIDELINE

Specific questions on the Bürgerdialog

1. What is your overall impression of the Bürgerdialog?
2. What do you consider as strengths of the Bürgerdialog?
3. What do you consider as weaknesses of the Bürgerdialog and do you have suggestions for improvement?
4. Did your opinion about politics in the DG change after the Bürgerdialog?
5. Did you learn something or change your opinion on anything through the Bürgerdialog?
6. To what extent does the Bürgeragenda reflect your policy opinions?
7. Do you accept the Bürgeragenda and would you be willing to defend in towards friends and family?

General questions about democracy

1. Which role should citizens play in political decision-making generally?
2. (if mentioned) What is the benefit of participatory processes in your view?
3. How should citizens be involved? What would be important?
4. Should citizens make the decisions or rather take on an advisory role?
5. Which role should experts and politicians play in the process?
6. What do you think about other ways of involving citizens, for instance referendums?
7. Do you think a process like the Bürgerdialog should be organized on different levels of governance, so also on the regional or federal level?

APPENDIX CHAPTER 7

PREREGISTRATION

Study 2 and Study 3 were preregistered at Aspredicted.org. The document can be found at: https://aspredicted.org/zw2ji.pdf

The pre-registration also includes hypotheses for a separate study on individual differences (moderators: SDO and SVO, Werner & Marien, 2016).

After presenting the studies and receiving feedback at conferences we decided to deviate from the pre-registration in the following ways:

1. Apart from fairness perceptions, we also test the effects on decision acceptance. The direction of the hypotheses are the same.
2. We also run the analysis on the full sample (winners and losers) instead of only on losers
3. Based on Montgomery et al. (2018) we decided to present ITT analyses in the main text, including racers and non-compliers. We conduct a CACE analysis as we described in the pre-registration in the Appendix A7.8-A7.11

INFORMATION ON EXPERIMENTS

Table A7.1 Demographic information per study

	E1		E 2		E 3	
Gender	46%	female	51%	female	54%	female
Age (average)	52.83	years	50.07	years	50.10	years
Education						
basic	20.90%		18.75%		15.17%	
vocational	32.94%		33.33%		36.92%	
higher	46.12%		47.92%		47.92%	

Note. more details on coding of the Dutch education levels are available upon request from the authors.

STIMULUS MATERIAL EXPERIMENT 1

Link to Example Videos (in Dutch):

1. Intro (Experiment 1): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SS8Ey5o_y2g&feature=youtu.be
2. Treatment (Experiment 1: city council, more social workers): https://youtu.be/T7OrFLkA9xc
1. 3.Treatment (Experiment 3, citizen forum, opening of the asylum seeker center): https://youtu.be/XENU4mypP4A

Vignette text (spoken as voice over in the movie)

Part 1
"Imagine the following scenario:

In your municipality an important decision has to be taken: there are two projects that the municipality wants to realize but there is only sufficient budget for one of these plans.

The first plan aims to increase the safety in your municipality. Therefore, extra police officers would be hired who would walk through the neighborhood during both the day and at night to help people in need and protect neighborhoods better against crime such as burglaries. In other municipalities the project has been implemented and has indeed increased the security.

The second plan aims to increase the equality in chances in education in your municipality. Therefore, extra social workers would be hired who would help children in schools with their homework. Children with a difficult situation at home in particular would receive more support and attention from these extra social workers. Also this project has been implemented in other municipalities and has indeed led to more equal opportunities for children.

Only one of these two plan can be financed: the safety plan or the plan for equality in education. This choice leads to heated discussions in the council of the Mayor and councilors and between inhabitants of your neighborhood. Also you discuss these plans frequently with your friends and family and you discuss which plan should be chosen. Which plan do you prefer?

//preference question//

Part 2

The way in which this decision needs to be taken leads to discussion. Some opinion-makers and inhabitants propose to let the inhabitants decide themselves by organizing a citizen forum. Such citizen forum has already been used in for instance Leiden, Haarlem and Amersfoort. In such a citizen forum a randomly chosen selection of the inhabitants of the municipality is invited by an independent organization to talk about the plans. Subsequently the municipality

implements the plan that receives most support from the participants after this day of intense discussion. Other opinion-makers and inhabitants do not think this is a good idea and want the council of major and councilors to decide themselves which of the two plans should be implemented.

Involvement condition

The municipality decides to organize a citizen forum for this decision. 40 inhabitants of your municipality are selected by chance. Subsequently, the participants go to the city hall and get the chance to explain which project they prefer. After an extensive discussion between all participants, it is clear the majority of participants prefers the project for more equality in education/safety. Subsequently, the council of major and councilors implements the plan for more equality in education/safety.

No involvement condition

The municipality decides not to organize a citizen forum for this decision. The council of mayor and councilors takes the decision themselves.
The council gathers to discuss the plans. After an extensive discussion between all members, it is clear that the council prefers the project for more equality in education/safety.
Subsequently the council of mayor and councilors implements the plan for more equality in education/safety.

STIMULUS MATERIAL EXPERIMENT 2

Part 1

"Imagine the following scenario:

In your municipality an important decision has to be taken: Due to budget constraints, expenses must be cut in the city. There are two options to reduce spending. One possibility is to cut down on safety expenditures in your municipality. This means in practice that less policemen would be employed to control the neighborhoods at night. Other municipalities have already made similar cuts to their local police force.

The second option is to cut expenditures on education equality in your municipality. This would mean that less social workers would be employed to help children with their homework that have a difficult situation at home. Also this kind of budget cut has already been implemented in other municipalities.

The budget must be cut in one of these two areas: Less policemen or less social workers. The choice leads to a heated discussion among politicians and among the citizens in your municipality. You also discuss this topic with your friends and family. What is your preference?

// preference question//

Part 2 as in E1 (with adapted outcomes)

STIMULUS MATERIAL EXPERIMENT 3

Part 1

"Imagine the following scenario:

In your municipality an important decision has to be taken. To accommodate refugees in the Netherlands, reception centers are opened in several municipalities. Also in your municipality there is a plan to open such a reception center for asylum seekers. Specifically, this would mean that 150 refugees from Syria could stay in this home until they receive a residence permit or are denied asylum. This center would host refugees of all age groups as well as families. Similar centers have been installed in other municipalities in the Netherlands.

The question if such a center should be opened leads to a heated discussion among politicians and among the citizens in your municipality. You also discuss this topic with your friends and family. What is your preference? "

// preference question//

Part 2 as in E1 (with adapted outcomes)

MEASURES

Note. The questionnaire was administered in Dutch. The original wording is available upon request from the authors

Table A7.2 Fairness perceptions E1

Item	Wording "Think about the process by which the decision was taken. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?"	Answer options	Mean	SD
FP_1	The process was fair	- 1 Completely Disagree - to 7 Completely agree	4.38	1.69

Table A7.3 Fairness perceptions E2

Item	Wording "Think about the process by which the decision was taken."	Answer options	Mean	SD
FP_1	To what extent do you think the decision making process was fair?	- 1 very unfair/bad… - 2	4.52	1.36
FP_2	To what extent do you think the decision making process was good?*	- 3 - 4	4.40	1.39
FP_3	To what extent do you think the decision making process was just?*	- 5 - 6	4.38	1.41
FP_4	To what extent do you think the decision making process was appropriate?*	- 7 very fair/good…	4.36	1.43

*used for robustness check in Table A7.15 and A7.16

Table A7.4 Fairness perceptions E3

Item	Wording "Think about the process by which the decision was taken."	Answer options	Mean	SD
FP_1	To what extent do you think the decision making process was fair?*	- 1 very unfair/bad… - 2	4.49	1.43
FP_2	To what extent do you think the decision making process was good?	- 3 - 4	4.41	1.52
FP_3	To what extent do you think the decision making process was just?	- 5 - 6	4.38	1.56
FP_4	To what extent do you think the decision making process was appropriate?	- 7 very fair/good…	4.35	1.55

*used for robustness check in Table A7.15 and A7.16

Table A7.5 Decision Acceptance E1

Item	Wording "Think about the process by which the decision was taken. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?"	Answer options	Mean	SD
DA_1	I accept the decision	- 1 completely disagree - 2	5.15	1.53
DA_2	I agree with the decision	- 3	4.43	1.97
DA_3	I am willing to join a protest against the decision	- 4 - 5	2.89	1.73
DA_4	I am prepared to defend the decision in front of other people	- 6 - 7 completely agree	4.19	1.73

Table A7.6 Decision Acceptance E2

Item	Wording "Think about the process by which the decision was taken. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?"	Answer options	Mean	SD
DA_1	I accept the decision	- 1 completely disagree - 2	5.07	1.52
DA_2	I agree with the decision	- 3	4.26	1.91
DA_3	I am willing to join a protest against the decision	- 4 - 5	5.15	1.70
DA_4	I am prepared to defend the decision in front of other people	- 6 - 7 completely agree	3.74	1.71

Table A7.7 Decision Acceptance E3

Item	Wording "Think about the process by which the decision was taken. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?"	Answer options	Mean	SD
DA_1	I accept the decision	- 1 completely disagree - 2	5.16	1.65
DA_2	I agree with the decision	- 3	4.41	2.04
DA_3	I am willing to join a protest against the decision	- 4 - 5	5.16	1.79
DA_4	I am prepared to defend the decision in front of other people	- 6 - 7 completely agree	3.88	1.83

PERCEIVED CREDIBILITY OF THE TREATMENT

Respondents were asked how likely it was the described scenario would happen in their municipality. The participatory procedures were perceived slightly less likely to happen than the representative procedures. This is not odd as participatory procedures are less frequently used than a purely representative process. Yet the differences are small and overall all scenarios were perceived as plausible across the conditions (Scale 1-7; E1: M= 4.17, SD= 1.70; E2: M= 4.20. SD= 1.56; E3: M= 4.08, SD= 1.64).

ADDITIONAL ANALYSES

CACE ANALYSIS

Individuals that failed the compliance criterion (were not fully exposed to the stimulus material, meaning they left the page before the movie ended) are excluded from the analysis.

Table A7.8 Regression of fairness perceptions on hearing about a participatory process

	Experiment 1			Experiment 2			Experiment 3		
	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.
participatory process	1.58	.000	.13	.48	.000	.09	.63	.000	.10
decision winner	.29	.031	.13	.63	.000	.09	.83	.000	.10
R2	.18			.09			.13		
N	679			786			700		

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

Table A7.9 Regression of fairness perceptions on hearing about a participatory process among decision losers

	Experiment 1			Experiment 2			Experiment 3		
	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.

participatory process	1.23	.000	.17	.50	.000	.13	.60	.000	.15
R2	.14			.04			.04		
N	342			396			352		

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

Table A7.10 Regression of decision acceptance on hearing about a participatory process

	Experiment 1			Experiment 2			Experiment 3		
	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.
participatory process	.13	.140	.09	.18	.012	.07	.24	.003	.08
decision winner	1.38	.000	.09	1.29	.000	.07	1.63	.000	.08
R2	.28			.29			.37		
N	679			786			700		

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

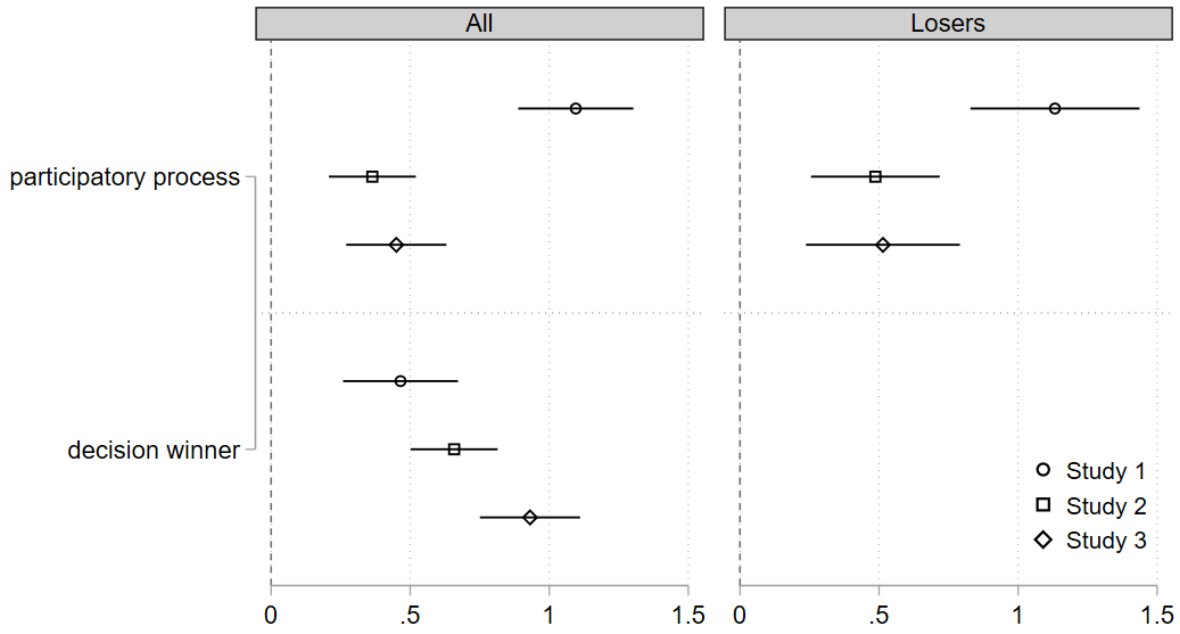
Table A7.11 Regression of decision acceptance on hearing about a participatory process among decision losers

	Experiment 1			Experiment 2			Experiment 3		
	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.
participatory process	.23	.071	.12	.34	.001	.10	.36	.002	.12
R2	.01			.03			.03		
N	342			396			352		

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

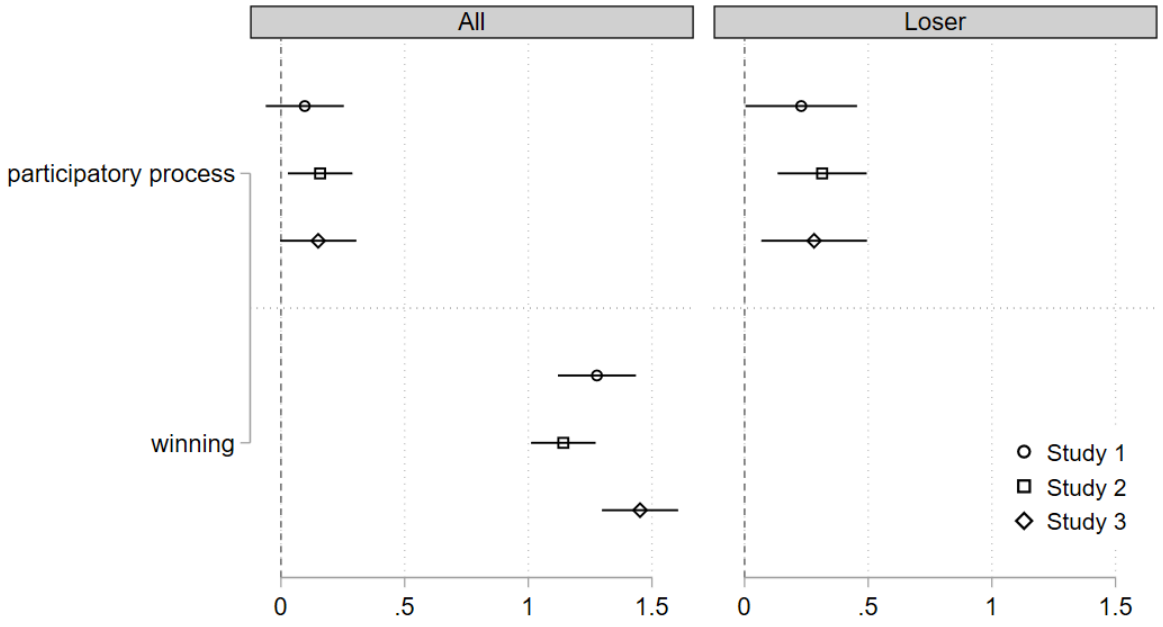
REGRESSION GRAPHS FOR THE MAIN ANALYSIS (ITT)

Figure A7.1 and A7.2 Regression of fairness perceptions on the experimental treatments.



Note: Fairness perceptions range from 1-7. Error bars present 95% confidence intervals, For All: N_{E1}=760, N_{E2}=913, N_{E3}=790, For Losers: N_{E1}= 384, N_{E2}=453, N_{E3}=399.

Figure A7.3 and A7.4 Regression of decision acceptance on hearing on the experimental treatments.



Note*:* Decision acceptance ranges from 1-7. Error bars present 95% confidence intervals, For All: N_{E1}=760, N_{E2}=913, N_{E3}=790, For Losers: N_{E1}= 384, N_{E2}=453, N_{E3}=399.

INTERACTION BETWEEN PROCESS AND LOSING

Table A7.12 Regression of fairness perceptions on interaction between process and decision favorability

	Experiment 1			Experiment 2			Experiment 3		
	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.
participatory process	1.13	.000	.15	.49	.000	.11	.51	.000	.13
decision winner	.50	.001	.14	.78	.000	.11	.99	.000	.13
part. proc. X dec. winner	-.07	.723	.21	-.24	.126	.16	-.13	.482	.18
R2	.14			.09			.14		
N	760			912			791		

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

Table A7.13 Regression of decision acceptance on interaction between process and decision favorability

	Experiment 1			Experiment 2			Experiment 3		
	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.
participatory process	.23	.043	.11	.31	.001	.09	.28	.011	.11
decision winner	1.40	.000	.11	1.29	.000	.09	1.58	.000	.11
part. proc. X dec. winner	-.27	.094	.16	-.31	.020	.13	-.26	.093	.16
R2	.25			.25			.31		
N	760			912			791		

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

ADDITIONAL ROBUSTNESS CHECKS

Table A7.14 Regression on fairness perceptions and decision acceptance among opponents of the asylum seeker center

	Fairness perceptions			Decision Acceptance		
	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.
participatory process	.73	.001	.21	.33	.048	.17
R2	.07			.02		
N	166			166		

Note. data from Experiment 3, Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

Table A7.15 Regression of 4-item index of fairness perceptions on hearing about a participatory process for Experiment 2 and 3

	Experiment 2			Experiment 3		
	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.
participatory process	.36	.000	.08	.45	.000	.09
decision winner	.66	.000	.08	.93	.000	.09
R2	.09			.14		
N	912			791		

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

Table A7.16 Regression of 4-item index of fairness perceptions among losers

	Experiment 2			Experiment 3		
	Coef	p	Std. err.	Coef	p	Std. err.
participatory process	.57	.000	.12	.54	.000	.15
R2	.04			.03		
N	453			399		

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients

APPENDIX CHAPTER 8

STUDY 1-3

See Appendix Chapter 7

STUDY 4-12

Information on the experimental treatments for the studies 4-12, that have been collected by Peter Esaiasson and colleagues are retrieved directly from their paper (Esaiasson et al, 2019).

In the vignette studies, participants were asked to read a short text in which the decision-making procedure was described. For instance for the vignette on banning religious symbols, the text read:

"The decision of whether to ban religious symbols in the schools in your municipality can be made in several different ways: One possibility is that the decision is made by expert administrators at the local school agency. Another possibility is that the decision is made by the politicians in the local council. A third possibility is that the decision is made by the citizens via referendum.

Now that the time has come for your municipality to make the decision, the pros and cons of a ban have been debated in the media. Following the public debate, politicians in the local council // expert administrators at the local school agency // citizens in a referendum // make the final decision that religious symbols // should be banned // should not be banned // from the schools in your municipality." (p. 7)

"In the field experiments, we provided a large number of high school classes with a substantial sum of money (on average, the equivalent of $290), and asked each class to decide whether to donate it to Doctors Without Borders or to keep it for a joint celebration. The objective arrangements for reaching a decision were designed by us to replicate, on a small scale, decision making in large-scale democracies, and were randomly distributed across classes"(p.7).

Table A8.1 Overview of sampling strategy and demographic composition across studies

	Type	Recruitment	Gender (% female)	age	N	country
1	Vignette	Survey company (PanelClix), stratified sampling	51%	52	796	NL
2	Vignette	Survey company (PanelClix), stratified sampling	46%	53	765	NL
3	Vignette	Survey company (PanelClix), stratified sampling	48%	50	915	NL
4	Vignette	At train station	51%	39,5	456	SE
5	Vignette	During seminar for teachers and school personnel	79%	47,1	288	SE
6	Vignette	High schools	56%	17,5	399	SE
7	Vignette	During lectures at Gothenburg and Lundt University	53%	23,2	139	SE
8	Vignette	Schools	53%	16,8	274	SE
9	Vignette	High schools	48%	17,0	200	SE
10	Field	High schools	71%	17,0	603	SE
11	Field	High schools	71%	17,0	214	SE
12	Vignette	Survey company (Novus), probability sampling	50%	46,6	1001	SE

ADDITIONAL ANALYSES

Table A8.2 Regression of fairness perceptions on participatory processes and outcome favorability

	S2			**S3**			**S4**					
	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE
treatment: participatory process	.24	.000	.02	.07	.000	.01	.09	.000	.02	.19	.000	.03
treatment: winning	.04	.033	.02	.09	.000	.01	.13	.000	.02	.19	.000	.02
R2	.16			.07			.11			.19		
N		760			915			796			456	

	S5			**S6**			**S7**			**S8**		
	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE
treatment: participatory process	.09	.055	.05	.18	.000	.03	.24	.000	.05	.24	.000	.04
treatment: winning	.26	.000	.04	.34	.000	.03	.14	.004	.05	.25	.000	.04
R2	.20			.29			.17			.24		
N		222			399			139			272	

	S9			**S10**			**S11**			**S12**		
	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE
treatment: participatory process	.19	.002	.06	.15	.000	.03	.27	.000	.05	.12	.000	.02
treatment: winning	.38	.000	.06	.16	.000	.03	.24	.000	.08	.26	.000	.02
R2	.33			.13			.26			.20		
N		99			603			214			1001	

Note. OLS with Clustered Robust Standard Errors for S7 and S8 (clustered in classes); OLS regressions for all other studies. Unstandardized coefficients are presented, fairness perceptions range from 0-1

Table A8.3 Interactions between participatory decision-making and outcome favorability

	S1			S2			S3			S4		
	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE
treatment: participatory process	.09	.000	.02	.24	.000	.03	.09	.000	.02	.23	.000	.04
treatment: winning	.13	.000	.02	.04	.145	.03	.11	.000	.02	.22	.000	.03
interaction: pp x winning	.00	.890	.03	.01	.888	.04	-.04	.136	.03	-.08	.127	.05
R2	.11			.16			.07			.20		
N	796			760			915			456		

	S5			S6			S7			S8		
	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE
treatment: participatory process	.20	.019	.08	.19	.000	.04	.26	.001	.08	.21	.000	.05
treatment: winning	.29	.000	.04	.34	.000	.04	.15	.007	.06	.23	.000	.04
interaction: pp x winning	-.16	.115	.10	-.01	.917	.06	-.05	.654	.11	.07	.375	.08
R2	.21			.29			.17			.24		
N	222			399			139			272		

	S9			S10			S11			S12		
	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE
treatment: participatory process	.22	.063	.12	.18	.000	.04	.18	.000	.04	.20	.000	.03
treatment: winning	.39	.000	.07	.17	.000	.03	.17	.000	.03	.33	.000	.03
interaction: pp x winning	-.04	.771	.14	-.04	.383	.04	-.04	.383	.04	-.14	.000	.04
R2	.33			.13			.13			.21		
N	99			603			603			1001		

Note. Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients. OLS with Clustered Robust Standard Errors for S7 and S8 (clustered in classes); OLS regressions for all other studies.

Doctoraten in de Sociale Wetenschappen en in de Sociale en Culturele Antropologie:

http://soc.kuleuven.be/fsw/doctoralprogramme/ourdoctors

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ENGLISH SUMMARY

Many citizens in western democracies are dissatisfied with the way politics works in their country. Among academics, journalists and politicians there is a deep concern about a deficit in perceived democratic legitimacy, indicated by a lack of trust in political institutions and representatives, lack of compliance and cooperation, support for protest parties and a general sense that politics is an elite affair where the ordinary citizen is not heard. Finding ways to address such popular dissatisfaction is a crucial challenge of contemporary democracies.

Participatory processes are seen as instruments that could tackle this perceived legitimacy deficit (Fung, 2015). The idea, advocated by participatory and deliberative democratic theorists such as Benjamin Barber and Carole Pateman, is that involving citizens in the political process can foster a sense of efficacy, responsiveness and acceptance of decisions, and can reconnect citizens to their political institutions and representatives. Especially the past decades have seen a renewed interest in such participatory processes, which can range from nationwide referendums to small-scale deliberative citizen assemblies. Prominent examples are the Irish Citizens' Assembly and subsequent referendums on abortion and gay marriage, participatory budgeting processes in Latin America, and state-level referendums in California.

Some scholars expect that the rapid expansion of participatory processes will alleviate public dissatisfaction with politics. But is this actually the case? Can participatory processes play a part in the major task of addressing political dissatisfaction and strengthening perceived democratic legitimacy? To gain insights into this question, this dissertation zoomed in on the perspectives, perceptions and opinions of citizens. What do citizens think of these participatory processes? What is the effect of these processes on citizens' perceptions of legitimacy? To evaluate the potential of participatory processes to address deficits in perceived legitimacy, it is paramount to focus on the perspective of those people whose opinions about the political system are expected to improve through such processes.

In this thesis, I studied both citizens' preferences for participatory processes as well as the effects of these processes on perceived legitimacy. In doing so I focused specifically on

understanding *why* these processes would be appealing for citizens. What is in it for them? Past research has studied participatory processes through the lens of normative democratic theory, and has hence narrowed our understanding of how citizens think about these processes. I investigated both large-scale participatory processes, such as referendums, and small-scale participatory processes, such as citizens' forums. I employed a variety of study designs, in particular large-scale surveys, survey-embedded experiments and in-depth interviews, to address the question from multiple perspectives.

The overarching conclusion of this dissertation is that citizens hold much more pragmatic views about participatory processes than previously known. They do not consider participatory processes as an all-encompassing cure for democracy's ills. Instead, their preferences for and reactions to participatory processes are complex and driven by different motivations and expectations. More concretely, five core findings emerged from the empirical studies conducted in this dissertation that I will briefly summarize.

1. PREFERENCES FOR REFERENDUMS ARE DRIVEN BY PRAGMATIC CONSIDERATIONS

Concretely, I found in Chapter 3 that citizens consider participatory preferences such as referendums as a solution to some, but not all problems that they see in politics nowadays. Specifically, dissatisfaction with government not listening to its citizens was positively associated with support for referendums, whereas dissatisfaction with a government's capability to lead was associated with less support for referendums.

Furthermore, I theorized that citizens do not only think about referendums in the context of normative ideas about how democracies should work but also consider the potential policy outcomes of such a process. Chapter 4 shows that particularly people who would like to see policy change or who expect to win are more in favor of referendums. This finding was robust across different policy issues on different levels of governance. It indicates that instrumental considerations play a substantial role in shaping support for referendums.

2. POPULIST CITIZENS ARE MORE PRINCIPLED IN THEIR SUPPORT FOR REFERENDUMS THAN NON-POPULIST CITIZENS

In a next step, I investigated whether a certain subgroup of the population, namely populist citizens, are especially instrumental in their support for participatory processes. The analysis of the 2018 Dutch Information Law referendum in Chapter 5 indicated that populist citizens base their support for referendums less on instrumental considerations than non-populist citizens. After the referendum, populist citizens were also *more* willing to accept the outcome in the referendum compared to non-populist citizens, even when they lost. These results suggest that populist citizens hold more principled attitudes toward direct decision-making than non-populist citizens.

3. PROCESS PREFERENCES ARE VOLATILE

In addition, several chapters provided insights into the dynamic nature of these process preferences. Whereas previous literature for the most part considered citizens' preferences about democratic decision-making as rather stable attitudes that are driven by normative ideas about democracy, the findings of this thesis offer new empirical insights on this matter. First, process preferences vary across issues. As Chapter 4 shows, citizens' preferences for decision-making through referendums vary substantially within the same individual across different issues.

Second, process preferences depend on the socio-political context. More specifically, Chapter 3 shows that the association between dissatisfaction with the listening function of government and support for referendums differs between countries, which in turn is partly explained by the level of experience with referendums in these countries. Accordingly, for people in countries where referendums are less prevalent, there is a closer connection between dissatisfaction with responsiveness and support for referendums. While this is not a direct test of whether this relationship would change over time within a country that conducts referendums more frequently, it does indicate that the reasons to support referendums can change depending on contextual factors.

4. PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES HAVE POSITIVE EFFECTS ON PERCEIVED LEGITIMACY, EVEN WHEN THE OUTCOMES ARE UNFAVORABLE

The second part of the thesis focused on the effects of participatory processes on citizens' perceptions of legitimacy. Previous research has shown that these effects are often conditional on outcome favorability, meaning that decision losers exert lower levels of perceived legitimacy than decision winners. The 12 experiments in Chapter 7 and 8 confirmed the described outcome favorability effect. However, the evidence from both chapters also showed that participatory processes have a positive effect on legitimacy perceptions across a range of experimental designs. Even when the outcome is unfavorable and the topic highly controversial, such as the opening of a refugee shelter, participatory processes exerted higher legitimacy perceptions than the status quo of representative decision-making. Importantly, this was also the case when citizens did not participate personally in such a process but merely heard about it, like in Chapter 7. At least in an experimental context, the positive impact of participatory processes on legitimacy perceptions can transcend beyond people who are directly involved.

5. CITIZENS (ALSO) VALUE PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES BECAUSE THEY FEEL LISTENED TO BY POLITICIANS

The study of the *Bürgerdialog* in Belgium in Chapter 6 added more qualitative insights into why citizens might value small-scale participatory processes and what role the outcomes of such processes play in citizens' perceptions and evaluations. The interviewees predominantly appreciated the relational aspects of the SSPP. They felt heard and respected through the process of the SSPP, and considered respect and recognition by politicians as the most important elements and a condition for a positive evaluation of the process. Further, this case shed light on the potential entanglement between instrumental and relational considerations. While participants expected a political uptake of their recommendations, they prioritized serious engagement with the proposal and accepted deviations or even rejections as long as they were justified.

In sum, this thesis has shown that participatory processes are no magical solution to legitimacy deficits. Instrumental concerns play an important role in shaping citizens' expectations, preferences and reactions to decision-making processes, but by including citizens in the process, legitimacy can be improved even among decision losers and among populist citizens. This seems to be especially the case when political authorities can convincingly signal to citizens that the process is not for show but based on genuine interest, respect and willingness to take citizens' perspectives into account.

DUTCH SUMMARY

Veel burgers in westerse democratieën zijn ontevreden over de manier waarop politiek in hun land wordt bedreven. Onder academici, journalisten en politici heerst grote bezorgdheid over een tekort aan de ervaren politieke legitimiteit. Deze komt onder andere tot door een gebrek aan vertrouwen in politieke instituties en hun vertegenwoordigers, de toenemende steun voor protestpartijen en een algemeen gevoel dat politiek een elitaire aangelegenheid is waar de gewone burger niet wordt gehoord. Het is een cruciale uitdaging voor de hedendaagse democratie om een manier te vinden waarop met deze populaire ontevredenheid kan worden omgegaan.

Inspraakprocessen worden vaak gezien als een oplossing voor het gebrek aan ervaren legitimiteit. Het idee is dat het betrekken van burgers bij het politieke proces een gevoel van daadkracht, responsiviteit en acceptatie van beslissingen kan bevorderen en burgers weer kan verbinden met hun politieke instituties en vertegenwoordigers. Vooral de laatste decennia is er hernieuwde belangstelling voor dergelijke inspraakprocessen, uiteenlopend van landelijke referenda tot kleinschalige burgerraden. Bekende voorbeelden zijn de Irish Citizens' Assembly en daaropvolgende referenda over abortus en het homohuwelijk, inspraak op de begrotingsprocessen in Latijns-Amerika en referenda op staatsniveau in Californië.

Sommige wetenschappers verwachten dat de toename aan inspraakprocessen de publieke ontevredenheid over de politiek zal verminderen. Maar is dit wel het geval? Kunnen inspraakprocessen een bijdrage leveren aan het aanpakken van politieke onvrede en het vergroten van de ervaren democratische legitimiteit? Om inzicht te krijgen in deze vraag, gaat dit proefschrift verder in op de standpunten, belevingen en meningen van burgers. Wat vinden burgers van deze inspraakprocessen? En wat is het effect van deze processen op de legitimiteitspercepties? Om de potentie van inspraakprocessen als oplossing voor het gebrek aan ervaren legitimiteit te evalueren, is het belangrijk om te standpunt van burgers zelf te onderzoeken.

In dit proefschrift bestudeer ik de voorkeuren van burgers voor inspraakprocessen, alsook de effecten van deze processen op de ervaren legitimiteit. Daarbij richt ik me vooral op de vraag waarom deze processen zo aantrekkelijk zouden zijn voor burgers. Wat levert het hen op? Eerder onderzoek heeft inspraakprocessen bestudeerd door de lens van de normatieve democratische theorie. Dit leidde tot slechts een beperkt begrip van hoe burgers over zulke processen denken. Ik bestudeer zowel grootschalige inspraakprocessen, zoals referenda, als kleinschalige participatieve processen, zoals burgerfora. En dit doe ik door gebruik te maken van verschillende onderzoeksmethoden, met name grootschalige enquêtes, experimenten en diepte-interviews, om de vraag vanuit meerdere invalshoeken te benaderen.

De overkoepelende conclusie van dit proefschrift is dat burgers veel pragmatischere opvattingen hebben over inspraakprocessen dan voorheen bekend was. Burgers beschouwen inspraakprocessen niet als een wondermiddel tegen de kwalen van de democratie. In plaats daarvan zijn hun voorkeuren voor en reacties op participatieve processen complex en gedreven door uiteenlopende motieven en verwachtingen. Concreet kwamen er vijf kernbevindingen naar voren uit de empirische studies die in dit proefschrift zijn uitgevoerd. Ik zal deze kort samenvatten.

1. VOORKEUREN VOOR REFERENDA KOMEN VOORT UIT PRAGMATISCHE OVERWEGINGEN

In hoofdstuk 3 ontdek ik dat burgers hun voorkeur voor een inspraakvorm, zoals referenda, zien als een oplossing voor sommige, maar niet alle problemen die zij in de huidige politiek ervaren. Een concrete bevinding is dat ontevredenheid over een overheid die niet luistert naar haar burgers hand in hand gaat met steun voor referenda, terwijl ontevredenheid over de leiderschapskwaliteiten van de overheid juist samenhangt met minder steun voor referenda.

Bovendien beargumenteer ik dat burgers niet alleen nadenken over referenda binnen de context van normatieve opvattingen over hoe een democratie zou moeten functioneren, maar

ook rekening houden met de mogelijke beleidsuitkomsten van een dergelijk proces. Hoofdstuk 4 laat zien dat vooral mensen die een verandering in beleid willen of die verwachten te zullen winnen, grotere voorstanders van referenda zijn. Deze bevinding bleek te gelden voor verschillende beleidskwesties op verschillende bestuursniveaus. Het geeft aan dat instrumentele overwegingen een substantiële rol spelen bij het creëren van draagvlak voor referenda.

2. POPULISTISCHE BURGERS ZIJN MEER PRINCIPIEEL IN HUN STEUN VOOR REFERENDA DAN NIET-POPULISTISCHE BURGERS

Vervolgens onderzoek ik of de steun voor inspraakprocessen voor een specifieke groep van de populatie, namelijk populistische burgers, per definitie een instrumenteel motief heeft. In hoofdstuk 5 kijk ik naar het Nederlandse referendum in 2018 over de Wet op de inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten (de 'Sleepwet'). Hieruit blijkt dat populistische burgers hun steun voor referenda juist minder baseren op instrumentele overwegingen dan niet-populistische burgers. Na het referendum waren populistische burgers dan ook in grotere mate bereid om de uitkomst van het referendum te aanvaarden dan niet-populistische burgers, zelfs als ze hadden verloren. Deze resultaten suggereren dat populistische burgers een principiëlere houding hebben ten opzichte van directe besluitvorming dan niet-populistische burgers.

3. DE PROCESVOORKEUREN ZIJN VERANDERLIJK

Verscheidene hoofdstukken geven inzicht in de veranderlijke aard van deze procesvoorkeuren. In de bestaande literatuur worden de voorkeuren van burgers ten aanzien van democratische besluitvorming grotendeels beschouwd als vrij stabiele overtuigingen die worden gedreven door normatieve ideeën over democratie. Op dit gebied bieden de bevindingen van dit proefschrift nieuwe inzichten. Ten eerste variëren procesvoorkeuren per kwestie. Zoals hoofdstuk 4 laat zien, kan bij burgers de voorkeur voor besluitvorming via referenda sterk variëren, afhankelijk van het onderwerp. Ten tweede zijn procesvoorkeuren afhankelijk van de sociaal-politieke context. Hoofdstuk 3 laat zien dat het verband tussen ontevredenheid over het vermogen van de overheid om te luisteren (responsiviteit) en steun voor referenda verschilt per land. Dit kan deels worden verklaard door de ervaring met referenda in deze landen. Dit

houdt in dat er voor mensen in landen waar referenda minder gangbaar zijn, er een nauwer verband tussen ontevredenheid over de responsiviteit en steun voor referenda bestaat. Dit geeft aan dat redenen om referenda te steunen kunnen veranderen per context.

4. INSPRAAKPROCESSEN HEBBEN POSITIEVE EFFECTEN OP DE ERVAREN LEGITIMITEIT, ZELFS ALS DE UITKOMSTEN ONGUNSTIG ZIJN

Het tweede deel van het proefschrift richt zich op de effecten van inspraakprocessen op de percepties van legitimiteit van burgers. Eerder onderzoek heeft aangetoond dat deze effecten vaak afhankelijk zijn van een gunstige uitkomst, wat betekent dat verliezers van de uitkomst een lagere mate van legitimiteit ervaren dan winnaars. De twaalf experimenten in Hoofdstuk 7 en 8 bevestigen dit beschreven resultaat-gedreven effect. Het bewijs uit beide hoofdstukken toont echter ook aan dat inspraakprocessen een positief effect hebben op legitimiteitspercepties. Zelfs als de uitkomst ongunstig is en het onderwerp zeer controversieel, zoals de opening van een vluchtelingenopvang, zorgen inspraakprocessen voor een hogere legitimiteitsperceptie dan wanneer gebruik wordt gemaakt van representatieve besluitvorming (de status quo). Belangrijk is dat dit ook het geval was voor burgers dir niet persoonlijk deelnamen aan een dergelijk proces, maar er alleen maar over hoorden, zoals beschreven in hoofdstuk 7. De positieve impact van inspraakprocessen op de perceptie van legitimiteit lijkt, in ieder geval in een experimentele context, verder te reiken dan de directe betrokkenen.

5. BURGERS WAARDEREN INSPRAAKPROCESSEN (OOK) OMDAT ZE HET GEVOEL HEBBEN DAT POLITICI NAAR HEN LUISTEREN

De studie van de Bürgerdialog in België in Hoofdstuk 6 biedt kwalitatieve inzichten in waarom burgers kleinschalige inspraakprocessen (KIP) zouden kunnen waarderen en welke rol de uitkomsten van dergelijke processen spelen in de manier waarop burgers het proces waarnemen en evalueren. De geïnterviewden waardeerden vooral de relationele aspecten van de KIP. Ze voelden zich gehoord en gerespecteerd tijdens het proces van het KIP en beschouwden respect en erkenning door politici als de belangrijkste elementen en een voorwaarde voor een positieve evaluatie van het proces. Deze casus werpt daarom licht op de

mogelijke verstrengeling tussen instrumentele en relationele overwegingen. Hoewel de deelnemers politieke erkenning van hun aanbevelingen verwachtten, gaven ze prioriteit aan serieuze betrokkenheid bij het voorstel en accepteerden afwijkingen of zelfs afwijzingen, zolang deze gerechtvaardigd waren.

Kortom, dit proefschrift toont aan dat inspraakprocessen geen magische oplossing zijn voor legitimiteitsproblemen. Instrumentele overwegingen vormen in grote mate de verwachtingen, voorkeuren en reacties van burgers op besluitvormingsprocessen. Echter, door burgers in het proces te betrekken kan de legitimiteit worden verbeterd, zelfs onder verliezers van beslissingen en onder populistische burgers. Dit lijkt vooral het geval te zijn wanneer politieke autoriteiten de burgers op overtuigende wijze kunnen laten zien dat het proces geen schijnvertoning is, maar voortkomt uit oprechte interesse, respect en bereidheid om rekening te houden met de standpunten van de burger.

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