

Ideals and Actions

Do citizens' patterns of political participation correspond to their process preferences?

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1st draft

Paper prepared for EPOP 2013, 13-15 September, Lancaster University, UK

The interest in procedures for political decision making has grown tremendously during last decades. Political theorists have called for more participatory forms of democracy and scholars as well as policy-makers have pursued an array of projects that engage citizens in participatory and deliberative participation. Taken the intense scholarly debate, and the implementation of greater opportunities for citizen participation in many democracies, the scant interest in citizens' preferences concerning the processes by which the political system works can be considered as surprising. Some recent attempts do however suggest that it is a meaningful endeavour to expand the study of public opinion from policy output to decision-making processes, and that there are coherent patterns in citizens' expectations for the way in which political decisions come about. What is not clear, however, is whether these different perceptions also have repercussions for the actual participation of citizens. Using the Finnish national election study 2011 (FNES 2011), this study explores the relation between citizens' process preferences and patterns of political participation. The analyses are performed in two stages; first the dimensionality in citizens' process preferences is explored, and second the three process dimensions attained (representation, citizen-centred, technocratic) are used to analyse patterns in electoral, institutionalised and non-institutionalised participation. Results demonstrate a distinct association between the preferences citizens have concerning procedures for political decision-making and the actions they take.

1. Introduction

The debate about how democracy should work is ancient. Political philosophers and theorists have engaged in the debate since the birth of the democratic system some 2500 years ago, and the debate about democratic processes is still very much alive. Decreasing levels of electoral turnout and party membership, as well as more severe criticism directed towards politicians and parties have caused intense scholarly activity throughout the last decades (Dalton 2004; Norris 1999). An abundant share of this research has been oriented towards various mechanisms by which the people can be brought back in to politics. Political theorists have called for more participatory forms of democracy and scholars as well as policy-makers have pursued an array of projects that engage citizens in participatory and deliberative participation (Scarrow 2001; 2004; Michels & de Graaf 2010; Setälä et al. 2010).

While research on democratic processes has flourished from many perspectives, citizens' preferences concerning procedures for political decision-making were for long left untouched. Some recent attempts to expand knowledge on this topic has however been made and they indicate that the preferences held by citizens are far from uniform (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse 2001; Neblo et al. 2010; Bengtsson 2012a; Font 2011). Perhaps unsurprisingly, it seems as if there are different ideals held by different groups of citizens; while some favour great citizen involvement in in the political sphere, others are more inclined to leave political decisions in the hands of those thought to be more capable. What is not clear, however, is whether these different perceptions also have repercussions for the behaviour of citizens. Do they act in accordance with their beliefs or are they largely irrelevant for predicting behaviour? For this reason, there is a need to examine whether different views on representation are connected to different political behaviours among citizens.

The aim of this paper is to explore the relation between citizens' process preferences and patterns of participation. The data analysed is the Finnish national election study 2011 (FNES 2011, FSD2269), a post-election study that includes a rich selection of survey items on political processes and political decision making. The analyses are performed in two stages; firstly the dimensionality in citizens' process preferences is explored, and secondly the three process dimensions attained (representation, citizen-centred, technocratic) are used to analyse patterns in electoral, institutionalised and non-institutionalised participation. Results demonstrate a clear association between the preferences citizens have concerning procedures for political decision-making and the actions they take.

The paper is structured as follows. The first section provides an introduction to different models of political processes and their bases in theoretical literature, as well as the current state of research on citizens' preferences for political decision making. In the following section the hypotheses are outlined alongside with a more general presentation of the research design applied. This is followed by the empirical analyses and a concluding discussion of the results and their implications.

2. A turn towards processes

The study of citizens' preferences for political decision-making procedures has not been prominent for a number of reasons. From a theoretical point of view, there has been a prevailing assumption that processes are of subordinate to outcomes, and that citizens' hence would be likely to tolerate a

procedure as long as it produces favourable results (Popkin, 1991; Fiorina, 1981).¹ Hence, the bulk of research on public opinion has been oriented towards policy output rather than the process by which this outcome is obtained (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse 2001). From a methodological point of view, there has been an at least implicit assumption that most people lack the ability to form opinions on such complex matters as procedures for political decision making (see Carman 2007)² and that the complex issues of processes are difficult to translate into simplistic survey questions (Bengtsson 2012). Finally, from a more pragmatic point of view, the issue has not been considered topical, since it has been hard to envisage drastic changes to the system of representative democracy found in most countries – with the main exception of Switzerland, where direct democratic procedures have been the norm.

Nevertheless, recent years has seen an increase of interest in what citizens expect or prefer when it comes to political processes, both concerning alternatives in the actual procedures for decision making (see e.g. Hibbing & Theiss-Morse 2001, 2002; Esaiasson et al. 2012; Bengtsson & Mattila 2009) and the roles adopted by elected representatives (Carman 2007; Barker & Carman 2012; Bengtsson & Wass 2010, 2011). Concerning the first alternative, the most established line of literature has dealt with citizens' attitudes towards the use of direct democratic procedures, where it is well-established that citizens generally have a positive perception of the use of referenda for political decision-making (Anderson & Goodyear-Grant 2010; Bowler et al. 2007; Donovan & Karp 2006; Dalton et al. 2001). Other studies suggest that there is a willingness to use other forms of citizen involvement such as public deliberation as a method for reaching decisions (Neblo et al. 2010). This line of research has however been criticised for not providing a balanced illustration of the publics' preferences, since it does not consider alternative models of political decision making (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse 2002). The criticism raised implies that the adaption of a more overarching strategy in terms of outlining existing variation in peoples' attitudes towards different types of decision-making process ought to be considered as an important research task (Bengtsson 2012a; see also Font 2011).

Contrary to the negative expectations outlined above, a recent attempt by Bengtsson (2012a), based on Finnish data, demonstrate that it is possible to detect coherent dimensions in how people respond to questions about different processes of political decision-making. Given the complex and abstract nature of political decision-making, this is far from self-evident, and it suggests that people have at least vague preferences concerning what actors should be responsible for making political decisions.³ Furthermore, these preferences correspond relatively well with ideals found in political theory as well as results from the few previous empirical studies. The study identifies three distinct dimensions in the views on political processes: the representative, the expert and the participatory dimension.

The first dimension concerns maintaining representative democratic procedures and in particular with a more elitist version of representation (Schumpeter 1942; Dahl 1956; Riker 1982; Sartori 1987). According to the elitist ideal, democracy is a method for leadership selection where the role of

¹ See however the prominent literature on procedural justice within social psychology occupied with the effects of procedural fairness on the willingness to accept authoritative decisions (e.g. Tyler 2006; Esaiasson et al. 2013).

² Considering the fact that peoples' ability to form stable opinions on far more straight forward issues (Zaller & Feldman 1992; Tourangeau et al. 2000), these expectations are perhaps not surprising.

³ Although this finding does not imply that citizens have clearly articulated and cognitively well processed opinions, it demonstrates that they at least instinctively have different views on the proper political processes in a democratic society.

citizens is limited to choosing their leaders through elections. Between elections, citizens should give the elected representatives unrestricted room for making the decisions they see fit. This view of democracy is found in the classical work of Joseph Schumpeter *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (1942). Since the pure representative ideal emphasizes decision-making by elected representatives and the role of citizens as electing leaders, massive participation is seen as undesirable and even dangerous (Dahl 1956, 89). Instead, the elected representatives should be free to decide as they see fit while being aware of the necessity to face the consequences on Election Day to ensure democratic accountability.

The second process-dimension found among Finnish citizens accentuates the role of experts rather than elected representatives. Historically, the role of experts and neutral bureaucrats has been emphasized by a number of scholars such as Max Weber (Keane 2009, 571-572; see also Rosanvallon, 2011, 43-50). A more recent version is the *stealth democracy*-ideal identified by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) in one of the few existing studies of political processes from a citizen perspective. Based on focus group and survey data, Hibbing & Theiss-Morse (2002) argue that American citizens prefer a latent but efficient representation of citizens' needs, which is what they refer to as "stealth democracy". Citizen involvement in the form of deliberation or compromise-seeking endeavours are not valued since citizens generally are not politically interested and prefer to avoid political disagreement in general. According to this view, experts with the appropriate knowledge should be allowed to make the necessary decisions, since they can ensure optimal outcomes for society when issues are growing increasingly complex (for more on this line of argument see e.g. Fischer 2000).

The third process-dimension can be described as a participatory ideal of democracy, which has been dominant in the academic debate during the last decades. *Participatory democrats* regard participation by citizens as a vital element of democracy and claim that the delegation of decision-making power causes citizens to become alienated from politics. The theoretical roots go back to J.J. Rousseau and J. S. Mill, but it experienced a revival as a reaction to the elitist view prominent following WW2. One of the most important critics was Carol Pateman (1970), who contended that participation should cover every aspect of the political decision-making and even encompass other areas such as the work-place. According to participatory democracy, citizens are central actors and participation by citizens is a means to reach political decisions of higher quality and develop the political capacities of citizens. Popular involvement in the political decision-making is therefore a central ingredient to ensure the democratic legitimacy of the political decisions.

2.1. Process and participation

Even if it has been shown to be possible to distinguish relatively coherent preference structures among citizens concerning methods for political decision making, it is not clear whether citizens actually act in accordance with their expressed preferences. Nevertheless, considering the close connection between the process views and normative ideals of how the ideal citizen ought to behave in a representative democracy, we may expect the ideals held to have implications for the political behaviour of citizens as well.

This expectation is further strengthened when considering the variety of political activities citizens have at their disposal. The toolbox available for political engagement is rich and the traditional modes of participation embodied by voting and being active in political parties have been supplemented by new modes at the borderline of the political, economic and private spheres (Stolle

et al. 2005; Bennett 1998). Research demonstrates that citizens concentrate their political activities to similar modes of participation, rather than being active in all ways conceivable (Verba & Nie 1972; Verba et al. 1978; Teorell et al. 2007). Voting is still a central form of involvement in representative democracies, but this is complemented by citizen involvement in between elections, which varies from traditional or institutionalised activities orchestrated on the premises of the political system to more bottom-up and elite-challenging forms of non-institutionalised political activities (Kaase 1999; Marien et al., 2010; Marien & Christensen 2013; Esaiasson & Narud, *forthcoming*). The ensuing question is what systematic differences we may expect to appear in the involvement in these different activities because of the different process views?

The representative process dimension outlined above has an emphasis on elected representatives as the central decision makers. According to this, the primary role of citizens is to elect their representatives, who are then free to make the decisions they want. This ensures that it is clear to voters who are responsible for the decisions made, and it is therefore possible to keep them accountable in the upcoming elections (cf. Powell 2000). We anticipate that citizens who believe the political decision-making ought to reflect this ideal to be particularly active in elections, since this is envisioned as the central outlet for citizen views. Between elections, it can be expected that the political engagement of these respondents is limited. This is especially the case when it comes to newer and more spontaneous non-institutionalised forms of political participation since involvement in such activities reflects a certain responsibility-taking on behalf of citizens (Micheletti & McFarland 2011), which contradicts the elitist foundations of this view of the political processes. However, a certain involvement in more traditional activities is to be expected considering that this mode of participation includes activities that are common in connection to election campaigns, which constitute an extension of electoral participation beyond the act of voting (Verba et al. 1995; Dalton 2006, 43). Fewer people are routinely involved in these activities since they are more demanding than casting a vote, but we may nonetheless expect those who adhere to the representative process to be more active than the general population.

The second dimension – the expert view – is connected to a technocratic view of politics, where citizens as an ideal prefer to leave the decision-making to experts with the expectation that they are more capable of ensuring correct and efficient policy making. As in the representative view, there is a belief that citizens are incapable of contributing to the complex decisions that make society work. However, within the expert dimension, we expect that citizens further lack interest to be involved in political matters except for extraordinary circumstances. This dimension emphasizes the role of autonomous experts and efficiency, which can be understood as an engineer-view of politics, according to which politics is not about representation of different interests in society, but rather about finding “optimal” solutions. It hence is driven by scepticism towards political representative’s ability to act in the interest of the general public rather than catering to special interests. Politics is here considered an inherently centralized decision making system, where detailed expert knowledge is valued higher than popular involvement (Stoker 2006, 116-117). Those who believe that the political processes ought to conform to this pattern of decision-making are likely to value autonomous expert, even technocratic, decision-making over popular involvement, which is today a style of decision-making often associated with the European Union and in particular the European Commission (cf. Wallace & Smith 1995; Majone 2002). We expect citizens who share this ideal of decision-making based on an inherent scepticism towards the value of being involved, to be less

politically active than the general population, which is manifested in by a lower propensity to become active regardless of the form of participation.

The third dimension provides an alternative where the proponents emphasise popular involvement. According to this ideal of pluralist democracy, taking part in collective decision-making is an inherently rewarding activity and the participation of citizens ought to be encouraged since it ensures the legitimacy of the political decision-making by ensuring that all interests can have a say in the decision-making. Those who profess to this kind of political processes are likely to see political participation as an inherent part of being a democratic citizen. This may take the form of system supportive activities such as voting, since this is not only a central channel for influencing political decisions but also an expression of belief in the functioning of the political system (Verba et al. 1995; Dalton 2006, 38-42). However, the involvement is not necessarily confined to these traditional activities, since these citizens may seek alternative outlets for their political preferences (Inglehart 1997; Norris 1999). Hence, we expect those who adhere to participatory processes as the best way to make political decisions to engage in a wide range of political activity, including voting, institutionalised participation, and even non-institutionalised participation.

In table 1 we compile the arguments presented above concerning the differences between the three dimensions of process preferences previously found and the expected relationships with political activity.

Table 1. Three views of political processes

	REPRESENTATION	EXPERT	PARTICIPATION
<i>Political ideal</i>	Elitist	Technocratic	Pluralistic
<i>Process preference</i>	Elected representatives should make political decisions independently of citizens	Experts should make decisions, efficiency is stressed	Citizens should be actively involved in decision-making and express opinions
<i>Central democratic value</i>	Accountability	Output quality	Legitimacy
<i>Perception of citizen engagement</i>	Citizens elect representatives and assigns accountability in elections	Citizens participate only when necessary	Extensive participation guaranties multitude and legitimacy
<i>Political activity</i>	Voting, conventional political activities	Lower engagement in all forms of participation	Extensive engagement in all forms of participation

We expect systematic differences to materialise in the behaviour of those who subscribe to the different ideals and consider it as an important research endeavour to examine whether our

expectations holds true since it can help us to understand what consequences the ideals have for society. Moreover, if we are able to present logical patterns between process preferences and actual behaviour, it can be taken as a general reassurance of the fruitfulness in trying to grasp preferences towards such complicated matters as political processes. It should however be noted that a negative result not necessarily implies the opposite, since there are potential reasons to why even genuine ideals might not crystallize into actual behaviour. Hence, even if there are valid theoretically grounded expectations that citizens act in accordance with their preferences, it should not be taken for granted that this is actually the case. For example, citizens may well want the political system to allow for citizen input in principle, but this does not necessarily mean that they will take advantage of these opportunities by becoming active themselves due to the leeway of free-riding on the efforts of others (Olson 1971; Tullock 1971). It is also possible to envisage the opposite, i.e. citizens who are sceptical towards citizen involvement in politics, but nonetheless active themselves. This might for example be due to a general scepticism concerning the 'generalised other's'⁴ political competence, in combination with a high sense of internal political efficacy.

3. Research design

Based on the theoretical review, we expect the following patterns to exist for the behaviour of citizens:

- H1: Adhering to the representative view leads to higher engagement in voting and institutionalised political participation.
- H2: Adhering to the expert view leads to lower engagement in voting, institutionalised and non-institutionalised participation.
- H3: Adhering to the participatory view leads to higher engagement in voting, institutionalised and non-institutionalised participation.

To examine the extent to which people's process preference has an impact on their patterns of political participation we use the most recent round of the Finnish National Electoral Study (FNES) from 2011, a cross-sectional post-election survey performed in two stages, including face-to-face interviews and a self-administrated questionnaire (FSD2269).⁵ This data make it possible to examine these questions since it contains a wide set of indicators various procedures of political decision making and political participation as well as appropriate indicators on control variables of well-established nature. The survey forms part of the international CSES-study and includes 1298 respondents. However, since the questions on political processes were asked in self-administrated questionnaire filled in by 806 participants, the study is restricted to these respondents.

The use of this data is warranted since there are few sources of data that include the necessary items on views on political processes, even if the restriction to a Finnish context means the generalizability of any findings is limited. However, Finland is an interesting case from both the perspective of public

⁴ For more on the "generalised other's" political competence and implications for process attitudes see Anderson & Goodyear-Grant (2010), who are inspired by Diana Mutz' (1998) work on impersonal influence.

⁵ The FNES is based on quota sampling (based on age, gender, and province of residence of the respondents). The face-to-face interviews were conducted within five weeks of the election (18.4-28.5.2011). The last self-administrated questionnaire was returned by the 14th of June 2012. The data is weighted according to party choice in order to resemble the outcome of the election. For more on data collection and access to the data see www.fsd.uta.fi/en/data/catalogue/FSD2653/meF2653e.html

opinion and behaviour as well as political culture and due to the specific circumstances may be considered a critical case with favourable conditions for finding the relations under scrutiny. Finland has traditionally been a strong representative democracy, with limited use of referenda, which suggests strong support for the representative view. At the same time, Finland's geopolitical position and the historically sensitive foreign relations with Soviet Union (and later Russia), as well as the tradition of broad coalition governments with a general emphasis on political negotiations, are factors that have contributed to a consensus-striving political culture with low transparency. Previous studies have indicated that Finns display comparatively high levels of support for expert rule (Bengtsson & Mattila 2009) as well as relatively low expectations concerning civic duties (Bengtsson 2012b). All of this suggests that we can expect a significant share of the population to subscribe to the expert view. At the same time, there is also a relatively strong tradition of political participation, which indicates that participatory decision-making also has support in Finland. Although Finland has experienced a drop in turnout since the 1980s (Wass 2007), the level is not among the lowest in a European perspective. Moreover, Finns are relatively active in different forms of political participation, in particular more traditional forms, but also new forms, such as Internet activities have become common (Christensen & Bengtsson 2011; Christensen 2012). All of this suggests that Finns have diverging process perceptions as well as patterns of participation, which ought to be considered as favourable conditions for studying the relationships between these factors.

The central variables of the study are the views on political processes. The data includes seven questions that probe the views on political processes by examining what the respondents feel is the best way to make political decisions and what actors they think should be involved in the decision-making. The first three questions are statements with agree-disagree response alternatives to the involvement of citizens, representatives and experts in the political decision-making. The four other questions are alternative answers to a combined question concerning the best way to make political decisions: 1) Make it easier for people to participate and discuss important political decisions; 2) Regularly ask citizens; 3) Let experts decide; and 4) Let elected politicians make decisions. The four alternatives are ranked on an 11 point continuum where 0 represents the worst, and 10 the best way to make political decisions (later recoded to 0-1). For more details see the Appendix.

We first examine the dimensionality of these variables with exploratory factor analysis. This technique is an attempt to reduce a set of p observed variables to a set of m new variables ($m < p$) in order to be able to interpret the pattern matrix A to describe the relationship between the original variables and the new variables (Velicer & Jackson 1990, 1). Although exploratory factor analysis does not make it possible to draw firm conclusions about the dimensionality, the relatively few manifest indicators compared to the expected number of dimensions prohibits the use of other techniques such as confirmatory factor analysis. Furthermore, since there are no well-established theories for the number of dimensions, exploratory factor analysis is preferable as a conservative research strategy (ibid., 21).

Based on the results from the factor analysis, we create indexes measuring the strength of the process views of the participants. These indexes subsequently form the main independent variables in the analyses of the extent to which citizens' process views influence the actual patterns of political participation. The dependent variables analysed are three modes of political participation. The FNES includes items on a wide range of political activities. In addition to whether or not they voted in the last election, respondents were asked to indicate whether they performed a number of political

actions between the elections during the last four years. Based on their answers, measures for three forms of political participation are formed:⁶ Voting, institutionalised participation, and non-institutionalised participation. All three indexes are coded to be dichotomous to indicate whether the respondents participated or not.

The three modes of political activities are subsequently analysed by logistic regression analysis and the use of two different models for each mode; the first model including only the focal independent variables of the study, i.e. process perceptions, and a second model including a number of control variables to ascertain the validity of the findings.⁷ The controls are restricted to central socio-demographic characteristics that have been known to affect both political attitudes and the propensity to be politically active (Verba et al. 1995; Marien et al. 2010). We do not control for political attitudes such as political interest even if these may also be closely connected to the central variables. There are good reasons to expect an inherent relationship to exist between the process views and political attitudes such as political interest since respondents who take a more activist view are likely to be more interested in political matters. This relationship is, however, more aptly considered formative rather than causal and it is therefore inappropriate to control for these factors.⁸

4. Empirical analyses

In the first section of the empirical analyses, the dimensionality and consistency of the process views are under scrutiny. Seven items, dealing with different modes and actors involved in the making of political decisions are included in the exploratory factor analysis to see whether there is a clear and interpretable pattern. The results are displayed in table 2.

First of all, we see that the data is suitable for factor analysis, since the KMO of 0.57 is above the common rule of thumb of 0.50 cut-off value (Williams et al. 2010). Three components with an eigenvalue larger than 1 are extracted, and these capture about 64% of the total variation. Moreover, a clear pattern appears in the loadings of the manifest variables onto the latent components and the interpretation of these are in line with the theoretical expectations. Three variables load strongly onto the first component, which all concern the involvement of citizens in the political decision-making. Hence, this component resembles the participation dimension outlined above. Two variables load strongly onto the second dimension, and since both concern the role of experts in the decision-making, this dimension can be interpreted as the expert dimension. The final two questions load onto the third component. One of these clearly concerns the role of elected representatives, which is in line with the expectations. The other manifest variable concerns the use

⁶ An exploratory factor analysis suggests that the activities between elections load onto two separate dimensions that correspond to the distinction between institutionalised and non-institutionalised activities. Eight activities were included in this analysis: Write opinion piece, Contact politicians, Sign petition, Active in political party, Environmental boycott, Political boycott, Boycott, Peaceful demonstration. We excluded some activities due to a lack of respondents having performed the activities (participated in illegal demonstration, used violence) or because of an unclear connotation in relation to the distinction between institutionalised and non-institutionalised activities (worked other organisation).

⁷ The specific regression method is logistic regression as is appropriate for dichotomous dependent variables. The variable estimate obtained through a logistic regression indicates the change in the logit for each unit change in the independent variable when holding all other variables constant. Since all variables are coded to vary between 0-1, this in our case means comparing the differences between the lowest and highest categories. For ease of interpretation, we take the exponential of central estimates to obtain the odds ratio.

⁸ We did examine the effects in tests and as expected the inclusion of various political attitudes weakened the effects of the process views on participation. However, the main conclusions were not affected.

of referenda, and the strong negative loading of this is at first sight perplexing. However, considering the link to direct democracy, it makes sense that those who support a representative process would have a strongly negative view on this item. This component can therefore be interpreted as the representative dimension.

Table 2. Exploratory factor analyses of views on political processes

	Component		
	1	2	3
Public discussions for ordinary people should be organised in order to support representative democracy	.525	-.223	.023
Important questions should be determined by referendums more often than today	.284	-.078	-.669
Political decisions better left up to experts	-.137	.793	-.273
Best way to make political decisions: Make it easier for people to participate and discuss important political decisions	.827	.074	.103
Best way to make political decisions: regularly ask citizens	.701	.142	-.331
Best way to make political decisions: let experts decide	.131	.802	.347
Best way to make political decisions: let elected politicians make decisions	.109	-.025	.859
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO)		0,57	
% Variance explained	28,14	18,79	16,94

Note: The entries are loadings from a Principal Component Analysis with Oblimin rotation and all components with an Eigenvalue larger than 1.0 extracted. Strong loadings bolded. Component 1: Participation; Component 2: Experts; Component 3: Representation.

These results thus corroborate the previous findings of Bengtsson (2012a) who find a similar dimensionality albeit with a slightly different battery of questions. It therefore seems fair to proceed on the assumption that the Finns do hold fairly consistent views on political processes.

Based on these result, we construct three indexes that measure the extent to which each respondent agrees with each of the three process views. These indexes are sum indexes, which we construct by including the variables loading strongly onto each dimension and subsequently recode them to vary between 0-1 with 1 indicating the highest extent of agreement with the process view in question.⁹ Table 3 displays information on the popularity of the three views together with information on the three forms of political participation identified in the previous section.

The participatory ideal, i.e. the view that citizens should be involved in the political decision-making, has strong support among the Finns (mean 0.69) while there is also a fair amount of support for the representative ideal, emphasising the role of elected representatives (mean 0.51). The expert-ideal, involving a preference for decision making in the hands of non-elected experts, does not receive as

⁹ The question on the use of referenda loading negatively onto the representative dimensions was reversed before constructing the index.

strong a backing (mean 0.44), but the score nonetheless suggest that there are also those who prescribe to this view.

Table 3. Views on political processes and political participation

		<i>Process preference</i>								
		Representation			Expert			Participation		
		Mean score	S.E.	(n)	Mean score	S.E.	(n)	Mean score	S.E.	(n)
		0.51	0.23	(784)	0.44	0.22	(711)	0.69	0.17	(761)
<i>Participation</i>	Total	Low (0.0-0.5)	High (0.5-1.0)	Low (0.0-0.5)	High (0.5-1.0)	Low (0.0-0.5)	High (0.5-1.0)			
Voted in last election (%) (n= 806)	90.1	84.6	96.5	92.4	89.8	91.2	90.7			
Performed institutionalised activity (%) (n=794)	37.9	37.9	38.3	45.6	31.3	22.1	41.5			
Performed non-institutionalised activity (%) (n=771)	77.0	78.2	78.8	80.8	77.8	74.8	78.9			
(n)	(806)	(389)	(395)	(408)	(303)	(114)	(647)			

Note: The process dimensions are indexes measuring the extent to which the respondent agrees with the process view in question. For more on the coding see the appendix and the discussion in conjunction to table 2.

Table 3 also gives a first insight into the question of whether these views have repercussions for the political behaviour of citizens. Here the differences in political behaviour between those scoring above and below the absolute mean of 0.5 on each of the three indexes. For the representational index, we see that as expected, 96.6 per cent of those who are strong supporters of involving elected representatives in the political decision-making compared to 84.6 per cent among those who are more vary of this way of making decisions.¹⁰ For both institutionalised and non-institutionalised activities, the percentage active is higher among the strong supporters, but here the differences are less pronounced.

For supporters of the expert ideal, these preliminary findings are in line with expectations, since we for all three political activities find a lower percentage of actives in the group of strong supporters. For the participatory ideal, the findings are in line with expectations for two out of the three activities, the exception being voting where the percentage of voters among the strong supporters is slightly lower.

It should be noted that although the differences between the high and low scoring individuals are generally in line with expectations, this is not necessarily the case when considering the differences

¹⁰ The total reported level of voting of 90.1 clearly exceeds the actual turnout of 70.5. This is most likely due to an overestimation of the actual extent of participation due to social pressures or forgetfulness. Even if the reported levels should only be considered indicative of the actual extent of participation, the differences between groups are nonetheless relevant.

compared to the population means. For example, there are 77.8 per cent active in non-institutionalised activities among those with high scores on the expert dimension compared to a population percentage of 77.0. At first sight this seems to contradict our expectations. However, the level of activity is affected by a host of factors such as age, gender and education (Marien et al. 2010), which are likely to affect the views on political processes as well. In order to ascertain how the views on processes are related to the political behaviour, we need to take other factors into account.

To this end, we performed a series of logistic regression analyses, where we control for various socio-demographic factors. For each type of participation we first run a model which only includes the three process views, followed by a model where we control for the socio-demographic variables. The results are shown in table 4.

Table 4. The effect of process ideals on political participation (logistic regression)

	Voting		Institutionalised		Non-institutionalised	
	b (s.e.)	b (se.)	b (s.e.)	b (se.)	b (s.e.)	b (se.)
Representation	4.23 (0.72)***	4.48 (0.83)***	0.86 (0.38)*	0.70 (0.41) [†]	0.34 (0.44)	0.38 (0.49)
Expert	-0.72 (0.65)	-0.65 (0.71)	-1.53 (0.39)***	-1.75 (0.42)***	-0.37 (0.46)	-0.76 (0.51)
Participation	0.84 (0.89)	1.20 (0.97)	2.69 (0.55)***	2.86 (0.59)***	1.15 (0.61) [†]	1.33 (0.67)*
Age		2.34 (0.69)**		0.26 (0.40)		-2.35 (0.51)***
Gender		0.22 (0.32)		0.03 (0.18)		-0.78 (0.23)**
Education		0.94 (0.63)		0.87 (0.33)**		1.19 (0.41)**
Income		1.27 (0.56)*		0.39 (0.32)		0.33 (0.40)
Language		-0.68 (0.55)		0.51 (0.32)		0.29 (0.43)
Marital status		0.25 (0.38)		-0.06 (0.22)		0.45 (0.26) [†]
Urbanisation		0.92 (0.54) [†]		0.05 (0.31)		-0.14 (0.38)
Constant	0.34 (0.82)	-2.79 (1.10)*	-2.06 (0.52)***	-2.93 (0.65)***	0.58 (0.58)	1.16 (0.75)
Pseudo R ² (Nagelkerke)	0.13	0.26	0.09	0.13	0.01	0.17
-2 Log likelihood	351.74	291.20	862.39	766.88	664.50	552.12
N	685	625	676	618	661	607

Note: Entries are estimates from logistic regressions with standard errors in parenthesis. All variables coded to vary between 0 and 1. ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05, [†]p<0.10

Support for decisions-making with representative structures has the expected strong positive effect on the propensity of voting, also after controlling for the socio-demographic variables. The coefficient of 4.48 in the second model is equal to an odds ratio of about 88. Since all variables are coded between 0-1, this shows that when taking account of the socio-demographic differences, the odds of voting for those with the highest belief in the representation view are 88 times as large as for those who do not at all believe in this form of political decision-making. Although suggesting a very strong effect, it should be recalled that there are relatively few with very negative attitudes towards representation, especially considering the limited differences found in voter turnout in table 3

between those with low and high values on the index. It also seems likely that those who favour this form of decision-making would be more likely to answer in the positive when answering the survey, even when they did not vote. Hence, while the exact impact should be taken with some caution, there is little doubt that those who favour representative decision-making are more likely to also vote in elections. Concerning the expert and participation indexes and the propensity to vote, the directions of the coefficients are in line with the expectations, but the results are not significant.

For institutionalised participation, the coefficients for all three views on representation have the expected directions in both models – positive for representation and participation, and negative for expert – and they are all significant albeit for representation only at a lenient 0.10-value in the second model. The estimate of 0.70 for representation in the second model equals an odds ratio of about 2.0, which implies that when taking account of socio-demographic differences those with the strongest belief in representation have an increase in the odds of being active of about 100% compared to those with the lowest belief in this political process. The corresponding odds ratio for expert is 0.17, which implies that those who hold the lowest belief in expert decision are about six times more likely to become active compared to the strongest supporters.

For non-institutionalised participation, the coefficients again have the expected directions, but only the estimate for participation reaches significance. The coefficient in the second model here equals an odds ratio of 3.8, which implies that the odds of being active is about 280% higher for those who believe strongly in citizen involvement compared to those who do not at all believe in this form of decision-making. Although the pseudo R^2 should be interpreted with some caution, it is here interesting to note that the views in representation explain a small proportion of the variation compared to the two other activities, suggesting that this form of participation is less closely connected to the views on processes.

5. Conclusions

The results obtained in this study have a number of important implications for the research on process views among citizens. In line with previous research (Bengtsson 2012a; Font 2011), the findings demonstrate that it is possible to identify a predictable and coherent pattern in preferences for political decision-making. These are separated into three distinct dimensions, since a basic distinction can be made between preferences for representative, expert and participatory decision-making.

More importantly from the perspective of this study is the finding that these preferences towards political processes are not just ideals without substantial consequences. On the contrary they have systematic effects on the political behaviour of citizens. Citizens not only have preferences for how political decisions ought to be made, these preferences influence how active they are in political matters.

In support of our first hypothesis we find that those who believe that political decisions ought to be made by elected representatives in line with a representative ideal-model were more likely to vote in elections and participate in institutionalised activities in close vicinity to the formal political system, while there was no discernible effect on non-institutionalised participation. Clearly, the formal representative structures still have many supporters who are satisfied with choosing their leaders on Election Day (Schumpeter 1942).

The second outlined hypothesis held that those adhering to a belief that experts should make political decisions should be less likely to be active in all kinds of participation. The hypothesis rendered some support. Citizens with high values on this index reported lower levels of participation in all three activities. Furthermore, a negative estimate was found for all three forms of participation in the regression analyses, albeit only significant for the institutionalised activities. Hence, although we cannot establish the impact of this belief with great certainty, the results indicate that some citizens are satisfied with leaving the decision-making to those who should know, and have little desire for getting involved in the political decision-making on a more permanent basis (cf. Hibbing & Theiss-Morse 2002).

Nevertheless, this is clearly only part of the truth, since the last finding suggests that many citizens in Finland prefer more direct involvement and are also actively involved in political activities. The third hypothesis concerned the impact of believing that citizens should be more involved in the political decision-making, which was expected to lead to higher levels of participation in all forms of political activities. Our findings confirmed a positive effect on activity in institutionalised and non-institutionalised activities, while the effect on voting was negative. The unexpectedly negative effect on turnout might be due to dissatisfaction with the limited possibilities for influence offered by voting among citizens with a preference for greater involvement by citizens in the political processes. The result may however also be related to systematic differences in over-reporting when it comes to voting. Those who believe that citizens should be active in other activities may feel less pressure to report that they voted even if they did not, meaning the differences are evened out in the survey material. Yet another interesting finding is that the three process preferences had the most consistent impact on the institutionalised activities between elections. While this may to some extent be due to the inherent problems with measuring the two other modes of participation adequately, it could also suggest that these activities at the centre of the democratic process are more closely affected by how citizens perceive the system ought to function (Dalton 2006, 43). In this sense, these activities may still play a very central role in creating a viable democratic system in the future, although concerns have been raised over the lack of popularity of these activities (Mair 2006).

At a more general level, the findings presented here clearly demonstrate why it is has become a challenge to construct a system of democratic decision-making that can satisfy large shares of the population. The great diversity of preferences concerning the ideal system, and which the major actors ought to be, puts democratic decision-making under great pressure. In this sense, the results support the idea that it is changes in citizens demands, rather than the democratic performance, that cause the perceived lack of political support in many democratic societies (Norris 2011).

Some of these results should be taken with caution. Due to the limited variation in some of the central variables and problems with measurement, it was not possible to establish all connections with great certainty. It should also be recalled that Finland can be considered a “most likely case” for finding the expected patterns. Research from other contexts is therefore necessary to establish how well the conclusions drawn here travel to other settings. Nevertheless, this study certainly suggests that citizens do act in accordance with their ideals in political matters, which as such can be taken as a general confirmation of the fruitfulness of trying to grasp preference towards political decision-making with the use of survey research.

Appendix – coding of variables

Question and coding		Valid N	Mean	St.D.	Min.	Max.
Dependent variables						
Turnout	<i>Nowadays many people do not vote in elections for some reason or other. Did you vote or not in these parliamentary elections? If you did vote, did you vote in advance or on the election day?</i> Coded 0/1 where 'voted in advance' and 'voted on election day' = 1, else = 0.	806	0,90	0,30	0,00	1,00
Institutionalized participation index	<i>Have done during last 4 years:</i> Write opinion piece, contact politicians, active political party. Coded 0/1 with indicating having done at least one of the activities.	794	0,38	0,49	0,00	1,00
Non-institutionalized participation index	<i>Have done during last 4 years:</i> Sign petition, environmental buycott, political buycott, boycott, peaceful demonstration. Coded 0/1 with indicating having done at least one of the activities.	771	0,77	0,42	0,00	1,00
Independent variables						
Views on processes						
Best way to make political decisions: Regularly ask	<i>On a scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 = worst, 10 = best), how would you rate the following approaches to political decision-making: Regular investigation of public opinion.</i> Coded 0-1, 1=best.	797	0.70	0.23	0.00	1.00
Best way to make political decisions: Experts	<i>On a scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 = worst, 10 = best), how would you rate the following approaches to political decision-making: Letting experts of different fields make the decisions.</i> Coded 0-1, 1=best.	793	0.57	0.24	0.00	1.00
Best way to make political decisions: Easier participate	<i>On a scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 = worst, 10 = best), how would you rate the following approaches to political decision-making: Promoting citizen participation in and discussion on important political decisions.</i> Coded 0-1, 1=best.	796	0.72	0.18	0.00	1.00
Best way to make political decisions: Elected politicians	<i>On a scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 = worst, 10 = best), how would you rate the following approaches to political decision-making: Letting elected politicians make the decisions</i>	798	0.63	0.23	0.00	1.00
Important questions determined by referendums	<i>Important national issues should more often be decided in a referendum.</i> Scored four point scale totally disagree-totally agree, coded 0-1, 1=strongly agree.	800	0.61	0.34	0.00	1.00
Debates to support representative democracy	<i>To support representative democracy, public debates on policy issues should be organised for ordinary people</i> Scored four point scale totally disagree-totally agree, coded 0-1, 1=strongly agree.	779	0.64	0.29	0.00	1.00
Decisions better left to experts	<i>Things would be better in Finland if independent experts made the decisions instead of politicians and citizens.</i> Scored four point scale totally disagree-totally agree, coded 0-1, 1=strongly agree.	721	0.33	0.29	0.00	1.00
Participation index	See discussion in conjunction to table 2. Coded 0-1, 1=highest extent of agreement.	761	0,69	0,17	0,13	1,00
Expert index	See discussion in conjunction to table 2. Coded 0-1, 1=highest extent of agreement.	711	0,44	0,22	0,00	1,00
Representation index	See discussion in conjunction to table 2. Coded 0-1, 1=highest extent of agreement.	784	0,51	0,23	0,00	1,00
Control variables						
Age	Age in years, recoded 0-1, 1 = highest.	806	0,46	0,23	0,01	0,99
Gender	Coded 0/1, 1= male.	806	0,49	0,50	0,00	1,00
Education	Highest degree completed, coded 0-1, 1=highest.	806	0,54	0,29	0,00	1,00
Income	Total household income, coded 0-1, 1 = highest.	736	0,56	0,35	0,00	1,00
Language	Mother tongue, 0/1, 1=Swedish, 0=Finnish + other	806	0,08	0,26	0,00	1,00
Marital status	Coded 0/1, 1=married/cohabiting/registered partnership.	806	0,59	0,49	0,00	1,00
Urbanisation	Level of urbanisation where respondent live, coded 0-1, 1=city.	806	0,60	0,29	0,00	1,00

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