



Citizens' intertemporal perspectives on municipal mergers and the role of deliberation for these

Kim Strandberg, Mikko Leino, Marina Lindell, Henrik Serup Christensen & Maija Setälä

To cite this article: Kim Strandberg, Mikko Leino, Marina Lindell, Henrik Serup Christensen & Maija Setälä (2022): Citizens' intertemporal perspectives on municipal mergers and the role of deliberation for these, *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, DOI: [10.1080/14782804.2022.2028132](https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2022.2028132)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2022.2028132>



© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 17 Jan 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 273





View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Citizens' intertemporal perspectives on municipal mergers and the role of deliberation for these

Kim Strandberg^a, Mikko Leino^b, Marina Lindell^c, Henrik Serup Christensen ^d and Maija Setälä ^b

^aFaculty of Social Sciences and Economy, Åbo Akademi University, VASA, Finland; ^bDepartment of Politics, University of Turku, Finland; ^cFaculty of Social Sciences, Business and Economics, Social Science Research Institute, Åbo Akademi University, Finland; ^dFaculty of Social Sciences and Economics, Åbo Akademi University, Turku Finland

ABSTRACT



This article studies citizens' intertemporal opinions in the context of a proposed municipal merger in Finland in 2019. We ask how important citizens regard short- and long-term aspects of politics concerning the merger. Using a survey sent to a random sample of citizens (N = 320), we studied the impact of a Citizens' Jury on developing intertemporal opinions. This was done partially by tracing the development of intertemporal opinions of the jurors (N = 21) and partially through a survey experiment among the population in the municipality. The survey experiment (N = 174) analyzed the effect of reading a written statement by the Citizens' Jury on various opinions, including intertemporal opinions. The findings show that, in the initial survey, citizens valued long-term consequences more than short-term ones in the context of the merger. Similar findings were discovered among the Citizens' Jury, and reading the Citizens' Jury's statement did not produce any statistically significant differences in intertemporal opinions. However, our findings reveal that citizens' vote intentions in a forthcoming referendum on the merger are strongly associated with whether they focused on long-term costs or long-term benefits.

KEYWORDS

Long-term policy choices; municipal mergers; deliberation; citizens' jury; survey experiment

Introduction

Most political choices concern societal issues that are long-term or even very-long term in nature (González-Ricoy and Gosseries 2016, 3; Jacobs 2016; Jacobs and Matthews 2012, 903; MacKenzie 2021). For instance, climate change, investment in sustainable energy, the pension burden, public debt and education policies all have long-term consequences. As such, most political issues contain intertemporal dilemmas, i.e. trade-offs between immediate costs and potential future benefits (Boston and Stuart 2015; Hovi, Sprinz, and Underdal 2009; Jacobs 2016; Jacobs and Matthews 2012). It is often assumed that citizens instinctively prefer the short-term over the long-term when it comes to intertemporal trade-offs, perhaps because the present is more salient and concrete in the moment whereas the latter is vague and more uncertain (Boston and Stuart 2015; Jacobs 2016, 439; MacKenzie 2016b, 25). The more complex the issue, the more uncertainty is involved. Uncertainty is also linked to a lack of trust in the government's ability to commit to long-term actions and allocate the resources needed to fulfill long-term goals (Smith 2021). Nevertheless, a few studies have

CONTACT Kim Strandberg  kistrand@abo.fi  Faculty of Social Sciences and Economy, Åbo Akademi University, Strandgatan 2, 65100 Vasa, Finland

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

contemplated citizens' intertemporal attitudes from a political perspective (e.g. Jacobs 2016; Jacobs and Matthews 2012, 904; MacKenzie 2016b) and have indicated the importance of intertemporal perspectives in most aspects of politics. Other studies (e.g. MacKenzie 2016a, 2016b, 2018; MacKenzie and Caluwaerts 2021; Niemeyer 2020) point to how certain deliberative designs may strengthen citizens' attitudes regarding the future.

With this study, we contribute to this burgeoning research agenda by exploring citizens' opinions on a proposed municipal merger in Finland, between the municipality of Korsholm and the city of Vaasa, which was about to be put to a referendum. Additionally, we examine how a deliberative Citizens' Jury affected these opinions. Municipal mergers have been common practice throughout the world over the last 50 years (Blom-Hansen et al. 2016), but their effects have mainly been studied from an economic perspective. Although municipal mergers often revolve around questions of giving up a known status quo in favor of an uncertain future (Jacobs 2016, 434), there are still very few studies of mergers from an intertemporal point of view (e.g. Strandberg & Lindell 2021). Understanding how citizens value the intertemporal aspects of municipal mergers is important since the legitimacy of such institutional engineering projects ultimately rests on citizens recognizing that they are necessary and trusting that they will benefit everyone in the long term (e.g. MacKenzie 2016a, 2016b). Hence, citizens' perspective of time when judging these efforts becomes a central concern in the public acceptance of local-level issues.

In this study, we first explore how and to what extent citizens consider politics in general and, more specifically, how a proposed municipal merger in their own municipality resonated with them from an intertemporal perspective. Second, we examine whether a deliberative Citizens' Jury (CJ henceforth) affected the citizens' intertemporal views on the merger. As an important aspect of a CJ is to reflect on the issue at hand from various points of view (e.g. Warren and Gastil 2015), the impact of a CJ on citizens' intertemporal views in relation to a municipal merger is especially interesting. Given that research has shown that deliberation on other issues such as climate change has induced intertemporal thinking among participating citizens (MacKenzie and Caluwaerts 2021; Niemeyer & Jennstål 2016, 254–258), and municipal mergers typically also contain intertemporal aspects, further exploration of this phenomenon is important. The CJ studied here was organized as part of a Citizens' Initiative Review (CIR), where a group of randomly selected voters carefully studied and evaluated the ballot measure. The conclusions were published as a 'Citizens' Statement' and sent to all voters in Korsholm before the referendum. This method was developed in Oregon, and this was the first time it was used outside the US (see Setälä et al. 2020). There is evidence from Oregon that reading a statement helps lower the cognitive costs that voters accredit to making a political judgment, and that voters put more trust in the judgements of a CIR than those of the politicians (Warren and Gastil 2015). This is the first study to analyze the impact of a CIR on intertemporal opinions in a European context.

Our results suggest that future considerations played an important role for citizens in Korsholm when deciding about the referendum, and they even prioritized the future over short-term benefits and costs. However, this future-regarding orientation among citizens was present already at the outset of the CIR process. The CJ did not affect these considerations since voters who did not have the chance to read the statement from the CJ prioritized similarly to how the voters that read the statement did.

Municipal mergers as intertemporal policy choices

Intertemporal policy choices, or trade-offs, entail paying for something now but collecting the potential benefits much later (Boston and Stuart 2015; Jacobs 2016; Jacobs and Matthews 2012). Thus, there are significant delays between the actions taken and the effects occurring (MacKenzie 2016b). Municipal mergers provide a perfect illustration of this concept since the prospective results of a merger often do not fully materialize until several decades after the decision to merge has been made (Allers and Geertsema 2016; Uusitalo and Moisio 2013, 155; Rausch 2006). The potential

benefits usually relate to economics of scale so that larger administrative units are expected to be more cost efficient and to provide higher-quality public services (e.g. Allers and Geertsema 2016; Blom-Hansen et al. 2016; Blume and Blume 2007; Hansen, Houlberg, and Pedersen 2014; Uusitalo and Moisio 2013, 149.) The costs of municipal mergers are not only the immediate and often large administrative costs of getting a merged municipality running (Allers and Geertsema 2016, 663; Blom-Hansen et al. 2016); they also include worries over diminishing democratic influence of individual citizens and the immaterial cost of giving up the identity of the current municipality. Thus, Zimmerbauer and Paasi (2013) argue that municipalities are often symbols for deeply rooted cognitive-emotional regional identities. For a significant share of municipal residents, giving up the current municipality means forgoing part of one's identity (Zimmerbauer and Paasi 2013; see also Bergholz and Bischoff 2019, 1281; Soguel and Beutler 2008).

Most studies argue that people tend to focus on tangible present costs over uncertain future gains (González-Ricoy and Gosseries 2016; Jacobs 2016, 439; Jacobs and Matthews 2012, 904; MacKenzie 2016b, 25). Regarding decisions on public policy, uncertainty effects are believed to be particularly pronounced since individuals paying the costs for contemporary investments in large-scale infrastructure projects may not be able to reap the potential rewards, even if they do materialize after several decades (Jacobs and Matthews 2012, 904). Decisions on public investments and major reforms made with a long-term perspective therefore must have public support, even when the benefits are uncertain.

This element of uncertainty is accentuated in municipal mergers that involve complex and multi-sectoral intertemporal transactions. Thus, as Jacobs states (Jacobs 2016, 434), there are distributional aspects attached to policy choices whereby various sectors of society are affected differently at various points in time. Several studies examine different effects of municipal mergers, such as economic aspects (Allers and Geertsema 2016; Blume and Blume 2007; Uusitalo and Moisio 2013), fiscal effects (Hansen, Houlberg, and Pedersen 2014), levels of public service (Allers and Geertsema 2016), the distribution of political power (Bergholz and Bischoff 2019; Yamada 2018) and citizens' trust and satisfaction with their local government (Hansen 2012, 2015; Lassen and Serritzlew 2011). Despite this vast literature, an overview of the findings provide an inconclusive picture – often varying from context to context – of what the effects of municipal mergers are (see also Blom-Hansen et al. 2016, 816), under which circumstances they emerge, what the effects are in the short-term and the long-term, and if these effects are predominantly positive or negative. Since municipal mergers are shrouded in uncertainty, it is both theoretically and empirically relevant to consider them from an intertemporal perspective.

Deliberation and opinions on intertemporal aspects of municipal mergers

Municipal mergers that are subject for an upcoming referendum often see citizens faced with two options, for or against the merger. Given the inherent complexity of municipal mergers, this dichotomy greatly simplifies the issue. Moreover, the surrounding campaigning efforts by proponents and opponents of the merger tend to focus on mobilizing supporters and spreading soundbite information that benefits their side in order to gain votes (e.g. Ford and Goodwin 2017). Since voters are often ignorant of public matters (Achen and Bartels 2016; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; but see Colombo 2018 for opposing evidence in relation policies that voters care deeply about), referenda campaigning is unlikely to induce a deeper reflection on the intertemporal aspects of municipal mergers among citizens (Chambers 2001). Since municipal mergers are complex matters, referendum outcomes are unlikely to deliver decisions that adequately consider their long-term aspects in particular.

Various proposals to enhance the role of deliberation in referendum campaigns have been suggested to address problems with a lack of deeper contemplation among the public. A deliberative body such as a CJ typically gathers people to discuss an issue in a setting that induces rational consideration of the issue from all possible perspectives (e.g. Fung 2003). In doing so, it is

conceivable that a mini-public debating a proposed municipal merger would also consider intertemporal aspects of the merger during the process of deliberation. MacKenzie (2016a, 2016b, 2018; see also MacKenzie & Caulwaerts 2021; Niemeyer 2020) has argued that deliberation can make people future-regarding since it forces cognitive thinking that breaks the human instinct to focus on the short-term. Furthermore, if deliberation is to be seen as a ‘battle’ between arguments, the argument that can credibly claim to be future-regarding is more persuasive and easier to defend (MacKenzie 2016a, 2016b). Some studies have empirically demonstrated that high-quality deliberation can make participants more future-regarding (e.g. Kulha et al. 2021; MacKenzie and Caluwaerts 2021; overview of other studies in Niemeyer & Jennstål 2016, 254–258). Deliberative processes typically increase the participating citizens’ factual knowledge about an issue and correct misperceptions (Gastil and Dillard 1999; Suiter and Reidy 2020; Setälä et al. 2020). As citizens deliberate a municipal merger and learn the facts about it, they can also be expected to become better equipped to ponder the short- and long-term consequences of a merger and to relate their arguments to this intertemporal perspective. This line of reasoning is supported by Gastil (2014), who states that reading the facts and the arguments summarized by a mini-public can help voters see beyond the manipulations and simplistic arguments put forward in referendum campaign rhetoric. Thus, deliberative mini-publics (cf. Setälä et al. 2021) could help voters make informed and reflected decisions in referendums on municipal mergers (see also Ackerman and Fishkin 2002). However, in order for such effects to reach the public, and not remain contained to a mini-public, some form of transmission mechanism is needed.

A promising example of combining mini-publics and referendums is the Citizens’ Initiative Review (CIR), which involves a Citizens’ Jury providing an impartial source of information on a ballot initiative to the broader public (Gastil and Richards 2013; Knobloch, Barthel, and Gastil 2020). The CIR process was developed by the non-profit organization Healthy Democracy Oregon to address the aforementioned problems of ballot initiatives. The key component of the CIR process is a Citizens’ Jury assigned to assess arguments for and against an initiative and produce a Citizens’ Statement including relevant, reliable and balanced information that is distributed to all voters. The CIR jury consists of a group of 18–24 participants selected through stratified random sampling, which ensures that the jury reflects the general population. The jury convenes for four days to familiarize itself with the initiative, hear advocates and independent experts, and deliberate on the issue. In a concluding one-page statement, the jury compiles a description of the composition of the jury, the central findings and the most important arguments for and against the ballot measure. This Citizens’ Statement is then mailed to all households before the vote (Healthy Democracy 2019); this serves as the key transmission mechanism between the mini-public and the general public. Past CIR jury statements have included a voting recommendation, but this is no longer done as the jury does not take an explicit position for or against the issue. Although CIRs have not previously been commissioned to discuss municipal mergers, earlier findings (e.g. Már and Gastil 2020; Knobloch, Barthel, and Gastil 2020) suggest that CIRs can enhance voters’ knowledge and capacity for reflective judgment. Findings also show that CIRs can help citizens become more confident in their ability to make an informed decision about an issue (Knobloch, Barthel, and Gastil 2020). Studies have also found notable shifts in participants’ opinions on the issue (Knobloch et al. 2013). Furthermore, as reading CIR statements has been shown to lead voters to investigate and reflect on an issue more carefully, even resulting in voters changing their initial opinion, CIR statements can affect public opinion and impact electoral outcomes (Gastil et al. 2017; Warren and Gastil 2015). Jane et al. (2020) found that when a general public reads a statement from a deliberative citizen assembly, they increase their factual knowledge on the issue as well as their other-regarding attitudes. From an intertemporal perspective, some of these other-regarding attitudes are also likely to relate to future-regarding attitudes (see MacKenzie 2016a, 2016b; MacKenzie and Caluwaerts 2021). This is especially probable for municipal mergers, which are issues that often include trade-offs between short-term costs and long-term benefits (see Strandberg & Lindell 2021). Therefore, it seems justified to expect that a CIR debating the pros

and cons of a municipal merger could affect citizens' intertemporal views of the issue, which is the topic for this study (see case description for specific intertemporal aspects of the merger in the case of this study). Thus, the following research questions are explored:

RQ1a: What are citizens' general intertemporal preferences in the context of a municipal merger?

RQ1b: What are citizens' intertemporal preferences regarding the specific proposed merger of Korsholm and Vaasa municipalities?

RQ2: Does participating in a CJ affect participants' intertemporal opinions about the municipal merger?

RQ3: Does reading the statement from the CJ affect the public's intertemporal opinions about the municipal merger?

The case, methods and data

The case: a municipal merger as an intertemporal issue

In 2017, the predominantly rural municipality of Korsholm in western Finland decided to start negotiating a possible municipal merger with the neighboring urban municipality, the city of Vasa. The merger issue had been a salient and very polarizing issue in Korsholm for several years. In a very heated public debate, several key arguments that concerned immediate costs and potential effects of a potential merger were made by both opponents and proponents of the merger. These arguments were also highlighted as important by citizens taking part in a series of public deliberations on the merger in 2018 (see Strandberg & Lindell 2021). In this section, we discuss these arguments from an intertemporal perspective.

The most crucial issue concerns the position of language minorities. The municipality of Korsholm has about 19,000 inhabitants comprising a majority of native Swedish-speaking citizens (69%) and a minority of native Finnish-speaking citizens (29%). In the city of Vasa, with 68,000 inhabitants, these language relationships are the opposite as 69% are Finnish-speakers and 23% Swedish-speakers. The municipal merger would therefore flip the Swedish-speaking majority in Korsholm into a *minority* in a merged municipality. Since language is strongly connected to ethnic identity in Finland (Liebkind and Henning-Lindblom 2015), and opponents of the merger feared a loss of identity, this issue was arguably considered the most crucial cost of the proposed merger (Zimmerbauer and Paasi 2013). Opponents of the merger argued that other costs would include deteriorating service in Swedish in the merged municipality (cf. Kushner and Siegel 2003; Yamada 2018). Concerns were also raised over the overall quality of services for the outskirts of Korsholm if the municipalities merged. Other concerns involved democracy and political representation, since the peripheral villages of Korsholm would be likely to lose representation in the assembly of the merged municipality (see Bergholz and Bischoff 2019; Yamada 2018). The arguments in favor of a merger focused on potential economic benefits of the merger. Economics of scale in terms of a larger municipality being able to afford large-scale investments and being in a stronger position when competing for government investments with other municipalities were frequently mentioned (see also Allers and Geertsema 2016; Blume and Blume 2007; Uusitalo and Moisio 2013). The positive impact the merger would have on economic growth in the surrounding region was also brought up.

The Citizens' Jury on Referendum options in Korsholm

The municipal council in Korsholm decided to arrange an advisory referendum on the merger between Korsholm and Vasa. Referendums on municipal mergers are not mandatory according to Finnish law but are nevertheless common in Finland (Jäske 2017). The advisory referendum was organized in Korsholm in March 2019. The result of the referendum was a resounding 'no' to the merging of municipalities: 61.3% voted against the merger (turnout 76.4%).

Table 1. Procedure and timeline: Citizens' Jury on referendum options in Korsholm 2019.

Time	January	February	March	April
Events		Citizens' Jury: Two weekends (9–10 and 16–17 February) Statement sent to adult population (~15,000)	Referendum on merger plan (17 March)	Municipal council rejects merger plan (2 April)
Data	Recruitment survey (n = 320)	Participant surveys (n = 21) Field experiment: Treatment group with statement (n = 97); Control group no statement (n = 77)	Post-referendum survey (n = 244)	

Inspired by the experiences and findings from the Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review (CIR), a Citizens' Jury was arranged prior to the referendum to discuss and refine the main arguments for and against the merger. To a large extent, the Citizens' Jury in Korsholm mimicked the Oregon CIR process. The jury included 21 participants selected from a random sample (N = 1,400) to resemble the general population when it came to age, language, gender, and place of living, while also ensuring that the jury included a wide range of opinions for and against the merger (Leino et al. 2019; Setala et al. 2021). The jury convened over two weekends in February 2019 to hear the evidence and deliberate on the issues involved in the merger. In honing the main arguments in support of and against the proposed merger, the jury considered what costs and effects the merger would have over time. Based on this, the jury wrote a statement (see Appendix A for a summary in English) that summarized the key findings and provided three main arguments for and three against the municipal merger. In order to maintain a neutral position, the statement did not include a panel vote on the merger issue, which could have been regarded as an indirect recommendation for how to vote. Rather, the statement left the decision open for the public to draw their own conclusions based on the evidence. This statement was sent to about 14,800 voters in Korsholm about three weeks before the referendum day on 17 March 2019. Table 1 depicts the stages of the Korsholm CIR.

Data and methods

Our analyses used survey data from various stages of the CJ process. We used the initial recruitment survey for the CJ to gauge the general opinion of Korsholm citizens on the intertemporal aspects of the merger. We analyzed 320 respondents' answers to seven survey items on intertemporal dimensions of the merger (see Appendix B for details on the survey items). This survey contained items on more general opinions on intertemporal aspects of politics – within the context of the merger – and items directly pertaining to the merger between Korsholm and Vaasa. Secondly, to examine the role of the CJ in developing intertemporal views, we focused on the 21 jury members' opinions of intertemporal aspects at the beginning of the jury's deliberations as well as at the end. Given the low n in the jury, it is important to note that the a priori (designed) statistical power when analyzing the jury was 0.90 with alpha at 0.10 and effect sizes (Cohen's delta) at 0.65 (calculated for dependent sample t-test using GPower 3.1.9.7 software). Therefore, we were unable to detect smaller and moderate effects that may have been residing among the jurors. The relatively low power also makes it harder to replicate the findings. Finally, to assess the impact of the CJ on the intertemporal views of the public, we used data from a field experiment conducted during a week-long research period immediately after the CJ's work concluded. During this period, a treatment group consisting of a random sample (n = 500) received a survey accompanied by the CJ statement and instructions to read it before filling in the survey. Simultaneously, a randomly selected control group (n = 500) received a survey with similar questions, but without the statement.

Since the statement had not yet been made public at that stage, this experimental setup allowed us to discern the impact of reading the statement on the opinions concerning intertemporal aspects in the survey; the randomization eliminated potential competing explanations (Stoker 2010, 304). While it is reasonable to assume that randomization ensured that the treatment and control groups

were identical from the outset, systematic differences in response rates could have led to differences in the composition of the two groups. To avoid potential contamination, the control group needed to return the survey before the official release of the statement on 25 February 2019, which meant they had only a few days to fill in the survey and return it. Consequently, response rates were relatively low in both the treatment and control group: 127 respondents from the treatment group (25.4%) returned the survey before the deadline and the corresponding figure in the control group was 130 (26.0%). Furthermore, delays in the postal service meant that it was impossible to determine whether some surveys in the control group were returned before the public release of the statement. We therefore decided to exclude all surveys received after 27 February 2019 to ensure that there was no contamination, meaning the valid n in this group was restricted to 77 respondents. The treatment group was less sensitive to the release of the statement. However, to ensure that other factors (media coverage, etc.) did not affect answers, we excluded answers received after 1 March 2019, reducing the valid n to 97 respondents.¹ The a priori (designed) statistical power of this experimental part of the study was 0.90 with an alpha at 0.01 and effect sizes (Cohen's delta) at 0.5 (calculated for independent sample t-test with GPower 3.1.9.7), allowing for the detection of moderate to large effects but not smaller effects.

Findings

We present the findings according to the stages of the Korsholm CIR process. We start with the citizens' opinions on intertemporal aspects at the outset of the CIR process, followed by the analysis of how the opinions of the CJ members developed during their deliberations. Finally, we present the findings on how the CJ's statement affected intertemporal views on the merger (Tables 6 and 7) and explore how these effects are connected to how citizens intended to vote in the upcoming referendum.

Opinions on intertemporal aspects at the outset of CIR process

We start by analyzing the views of the citizens regarding overarching intertemporal views on politics without directly considering the municipal merger. Essentially, the main finding here was that the citizens were rather future-oriented even before the CIR process started. Almost 80% fully or partially agreed with the statement that politicians should put effort into solving future problems even if it would mean immediate costs. Likewise, nearly 70% completely or partially disagreed with the statement that future challenges will sort themselves out without active efforts today. The third statement that we analyzed, however, indicates that citizens tended to prioritize current problems over future ones when forced to make a choice, with 70% partially or fully agreeing to prioritize current problems. While the evidence is somewhat inconclusive, it shows that citizens do not uniformly disregard the future.

We now turn to citizens' views on the intertemporal aspects directly connected to the proposed merger.

Table 2. Citizens' views of intertemporal aspects directly related to the merger between Korsholm and Vaasa ($n = 241$).

	Mean rank (0–3)	Std.dev.
Near-term costs and harms that would occur right after the merger.	***1.22	1.08
Near-term benefits that would occur right after the merger.	***1.15	0.84
Long-term costs and harms that may occur over time.	*1.63	1.05
Long-term benefits that may occur over time.	***2.10	1.21

ap < 0.001 * $p < 0.05$ tested with a one-sample t-test and confirmed with a non-parametric Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for differences to the expectation that all options are ranked equally (value 1.5)

Note. The survey question was worded (see also Appendix B): 'If the merger passes, it could have many different consequences. Please tell us how you rank the importance of four possible effects'.

The findings in Table 2 show that citizens regarded long-term aspects of the municipal merger, both costs and benefits, as more important than short-term aspects. Especially long-term benefits were seen as important. Thus, when forced to give an opinion, the citizens clearly held a long-term perspective on the municipal merger.

The intertemporal opinions of the Citizens' Jury

We now focus on the 21 members of the CJ in Korsholm and their intertemporal views. Considering the low *n*, these analyses mostly serve descriptive purposes, and our interpretations of the findings are, by necessity, indicative at best. Nevertheless, we start by looking at the general intertemporal views on politics among the CJ members. Interestingly, we found that the members of the CJ were even more future-oriented than the public. For instance, 90% of the jurors partially or fully agreed with the statement that politicians should put effort into solving future problems, and 90% of them disagreed with the statement that future problems will be solved in due time without making political decisions today. The jury was evenly split, 47% disagreeing and 53% agreeing, regarding the statement that politics should focus on current problems instead of future ones. Unfortunately, since the CJ members only answered this question once, we could not trace any developments in overarching intertemporal views during the work of the CJ.

Regarding how the CJ members ranked the consequences of the specific merger, there were two measurements during the two weekends that the CJ deliberated: at the start of the first day and at the end of the deliberations on day four. Table 3 shows the CJ members' ranking of consequences at these stages of the CJ's work.

Jurors were more focused on the long-term than the short-term regarding the specific merger. This was the case at the outset of their two-weekend deliberations as well as at the end. Nevertheless, the jurors ranked short-term benefits higher at the end of their work than they had done initially. Conversely, the mean rank of long-term costs decreased somewhat.

The impact of the CJ statement on intertemporal views of the public

The final part of the findings focuses on the field experiment conducted right after the jury's work was done, which makes it possible to discern how reading the CJ's statement affected the intertemporal views of the public in Korsholm. A comparison between the general intertemporal views for the treatment group and those of control group (significance tested with chi-squares test of distributions and confirmed with independent samples t-test of scale means) (table available on request) revealed that the CJ statement did not appear to affect the general intertemporal views of the public since there were no statistically significant differences between the groups for either of the related statements: 83% in the treatment group and 81% in the control group agreed with the

Table 3. CJ members' views of intertemporal aspects directly related to the merger at different stages of the jury work (*n* = 21).

		Mean rank (0–3)	Std.dev.
T0	Near-term costs and harms that would occur right after the merger.	1.05	0.89
	Near-term benefits that would occur right after the merger.	0.75	0.85
	Long-term costs and harms that may occur over time.	2.10	1.02
	Long-term benefits that may occur over time.	2.21	0.98
T1	Near-term costs and harms that would occur right after the merger.	1.10	1.18
	Near-term benefits that would occur right after the merger.	*1.25	0.79
	Long-term costs and harms that may occur over time.	*1.71	1.19
	Long-term benefits that may occur over time.	2.00	1.10

* *p* < .05 tested with a paired-sample t-test for differences between T0 and T1 (analysis also confirmed with a non-parametric related-samples Wilcoxon signed ranks test the a should)

Note. The survey question was worded (see also Appendix B): 'If the merger passes, it could have many different consequences. Please tell us how you rank the importance of four possible effects'. T0 represents the beginning of the CJ's work; T1 represents the end of the final day of the CJ's work.

Table 4. Effects of the CJ statement on the public's views of intertemporal aspects directly related to the merger (adjusted mean ranks 0–3).

	Treatment (n = 92)		Control (n = 75)	
	Adj.mean.	S.E.	Adj.mean.	S.E.
Near-term costs and harms that would occur right after the merger.	0.88	0.12	0.91	0.15
Near-term benefits that would occur right after the merger.	0.96	0.08	1.02	0.10
Long-term costs and harms that may occur over time.	1.90	0.11	1.75	0.13
Long-term benefits that may occur over time.	2.24	0.11	2.41	0.14

All differences between the treatment group and control group were insignificant (Ancova with adjusted means for gender and education level)

Note. The survey question was worded (see also Appendix B): 'If the merger passes, it could have many different consequences. Please tell us how you rank the importance of four possible effects'.

statement that politicians must put effort into solving future problems. Only 22% in the treatment group and 20% in the control group felt that future challenges will be solved in due time. Finally, 59% in the treatment group and 55% in the control group agreed with the statement that politics today should focus on solving current problems.

We now turn to exploring the impact of the CJ statement on how the public viewed intertemporal aspects directly tied to the specific merger (Table 4).

Again, reading the CJ statement did not have any impact on how the public ranked different potential consequences of the proposed merger. None of the four statements produced any statistically significant differences between the treatment group and the control group. However, the overall ranks echo those found earlier in this paper: the public tended to consider long-term aspects to be more important in a potential merger.

The intertemporal views were connected to vote choice. This shows the extent to which short-term and long-term factors mattered in the vote decision. To explore this, we tested the associations between the statements and stated vote intention. We included interaction effects to allow for differences in effects between the treatment group and control group since other studies have shown that reading the statement could matter in determining what factors shape voting choices (Leino et al. 2019; Setälä et al. 2021). Figure 1 shows the results.

There is a consistent gap between the control group and treatment group, which shows that the treatment group was more likely to vote 'no' on the merger (for more on this point, see Leino et al. 2019; Setälä et al. 2021). However, it should be noted that none of the interaction effects were significant, meaning there is little evidence that the statement affected the impact of short-term and long-term factors. Of course, given the rather low statistical power of the experiment, there potentially could be significant smaller effects that our experiment was not able to detect. Short-term costs and inconveniences were unrelated to vote choice, lending further credibility to the previous finding that short-term factors had a relatively modest impact. There was a significant effect for short-term benefits when all respondents together were analyzed together ($B = 0.85$, $p = 0.007$). Also, when analyzing the treatment group and control group separately, the interaction coefficient was significant in the treatment group ($B = 0.81$, $p = 0.041$) but non-significant in the control group ($B = 0.86$, $p = 0.091$). This tentatively suggests that an experiment with a higher statistical power might have detected a significant overall interaction effect. While there is some evidence that short-term benefits mattered more, it is not conclusive. What is clear, though, is that both long-term costs and long-term benefits mattered a great deal when deciding how to vote. Prioritizing long-term costs made voting 'no' very likely (probability about 0.78), whereas those who saw this as the least important were very likely to vote 'yes' on the merger. Those who prioritized long-term benefits as least important were virtually certain to vote 'no' (probability about 0.96), while this plummets to about 0.35 for those who thought it mattered most. While this is not clear-cut evidence of causal effects, it shows that long-term factors were strongly associated with vote choice.

Adjusted predictions with 95%CI

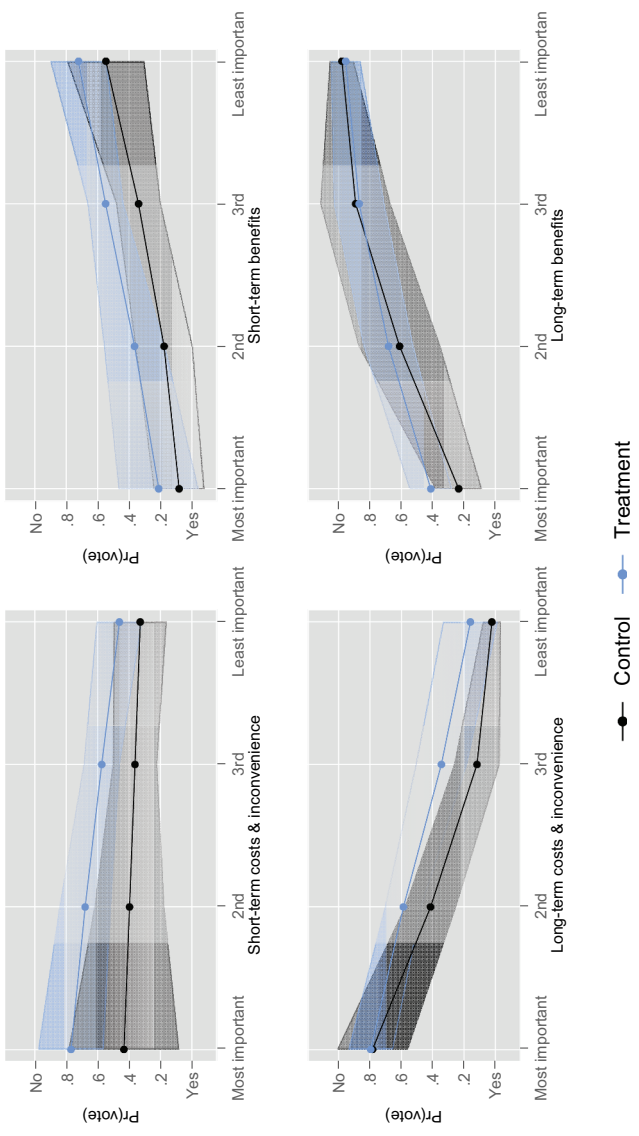


Figure 1. Associations between vote intention and intertemporal preferences in the treatment group and control group.

Conclusions

The results have a number of important implications for the perspective of time among citizens and the role of deliberation in affecting these perspectives. First, the findings show that citizens were future-oriented in their intertemporal opinions in the context of a municipal merger. This was true both regarding general intertemporal opinions on politics as well as concerning the specific merger studied here. So, in light of how citizens are often seen as more focused on the present than the future (Boston and Stuart 2015; Jacobs 2016, 439; MacKenzie 2016b, 25), this is a noteworthy finding as our case was a policy decision that had tangible, immediate effects for the citizens of Korsholm. One potential explanation to the salience of future effects of the merger could be that much of the public debate had centered around the future of the municipality and the surrounding region. For instance, proponents of the merger often talked about the ability to compete with other regions in the future, while opponents stressed the costs in terms of the position of Swedish-speakers and democratic representation. Nevertheless, this finding clearly shows that citizens did not necessarily prioritize short-term gains over uncertain benefits that would require a longer time perspective.

A second noteworthy finding concerns the role of deliberation in the Citizens' Jury for intertemporal opinions – both among the participants in the jury and among the public reading the jury's statement. Here, our results varied since there was not uniform support for the notion that deliberative bodies can enhance the time perspective of the general public. This should, to some extent, be interpreted in light of the previous result. There were obvious ceiling effects limiting the CJ's ability to further increase citizens' future-orientation as the citizens of Korsholm were already generally aware of intertemporal aspects prior to the deliberative CJ's two-weekend work. There was a possibility that the CJ deliberations could have shifted opinions towards being more present-oriented. Although a small tendency towards this occurring was observed, the general observation was that the CJ members' views were rather stable.

Reading the CJ's statement did not affect the public's intertemporal opinions on the merger. It may be argued that the CJ's role was not to focus on the intertemporal aspects of the merger and that it thus should not be expected to have affected citizens' intertemporal opinions. Jane et al. (2020, 267) found that exposure to pro and con arguments on an issue deliberated upon by a CJ might confuse voters and dampen certain learning effects. Since the statement used in this study was framed as pro and con arguments, it is possible that voters were indeed confused. Nevertheless, since the task of the CJ was to refine the main arguments for and against the merger, many of which were framed as long-term effects, an impact on citizens' intertemporal opinions on the merger was also a plausible outcome. Interestingly, the exploration of the association between vote intentions and intertemporal preferences produced indications of such opinion enhancement. Thus, while long-term effects were taken into account both by proponents and opponents to the merger, their focal points were completely divergent. Opponents emphasized long-term risks and costs, whereas proponents focused on the potential long-term benefits. This result indicates that being for or against was not a question of time perspective, but instead whether prospective costs or benefits were considered more important in the process.

As always, it may be questioned whether our results are generalizable outside of the specific context. Country contexts typically moderate the effects of a CJ on the public, whereby the more accustomed the public is to deliberative bodies being part of decision making, the more attentive it is to the recommendations of such bodies (Strandberg et al. 2021, 268). Within the local-level context studied here, it is important to bear in mind that a series of seven deliberative citizen's discussions had been held only one year prior to the CJ (see Strandberg 2021). The CJ was thus not the first time the residents of Korsholm had heard about deliberative discussions. This, in turn, makes it even more remarkable that the CJ and its statement mostly did not affect intertemporal opinions on the merger. The reasons for this could be manifold and perhaps not directly related to the deliberative CJ. First, the CJ was held at a late stage in the merger process, at a point when people's opinions regarding the merger were already rather firm. It is entirely possible that intertemporal opinions shifted a lot

earlier in the merger process. Second, the salience of intertemporal aspects of mergers is likely to depend, to some extent at least, on what the public debate surrounding each merger entails. Further studies of other mergers are therefore needed to attain greater variation in contexts. Social desirability bias may have also affected the results as citizens may have felt that taking a future-regarding position was objectively more desirable. Additionally, the low statistical power of our empirical study limited our ability to notice potential smaller changes in intertemporal opinions on the merger.

Despite these caveats, this study constitutes an important step forward in the study of intertemporal policy choices. Most importantly, the citizens of Korsholm were future-oriented in their opinions on the merger. Also, vote intentions in the prospective referendum were influenced more by whether citizens focused on potential costs or benefits rather than time perspective. Whether this is something that always occurs in the context of municipal mergers, and whether it appears where no referendum is to be held, remains an empirical question for scholars interested in intertemporal policy choices to pursue. The role of deliberative bodies, such as CJs, play in affecting citizens' opinions in local-level policy choices needs much more empirical observation in future studies before we are to gain a conclusive understanding of this phenomenon.

Note

1. This led to some differences in the composition of the groups when it comes to gender and education. However, the differences were slight and are unlikely to affect the substantial results. We nevertheless apply adjusted mean analyses when comparing the treatment and control group

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was funded by the Strategic Research Council project "Participation in Long-Term Decision-Making (PALO)", decision numbers 312671 and 312676.

ORCID

Henrik Serup Christensen  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2916-0561>
 Maija Setälä  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9341-5584>

References

- Achen, C., and L. Bartels. 2016. *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ackerman, B., and J. Fishkin. 2002. "Deliberation Day." *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 10 (2): 129–152. doi:10.1111/1467-9760.00146.
- Allers, M., and B. Geertsema. 2016. "The Effects of Local Government Amalgamation on Public Spending, Taxation, and Service Levels: Evidence from 15 Years of Municipal Consolidation." *Journal of Regional Science* 56 (4): 659–682. doi:10.1111/jors.12268.
- Bergholz, C., and I. Bischoff. 2019. "Citizens' Support for Inter-Municipal Cooperation: Evidence from a Survey in the German State of Hesse." *Applied Economics* 51 (12): 1268–1283. doi:10.1080/00036846.2018.1527444.
- Blom-Hansen, J., K. Houlberg, S. Serritzlew, and D. Treisman. 2016. "Jurisdiction Size and Local Government Policy Expenditure: Assessing the Effect of Municipal Amalgamation." *American Political Science Review* 110 (4): 812–831. doi:10.1017/S0003055416000320.
- Blume, L., and T. Blume. 2007. "The Economic Effects of Local Authority Mergers: Empirical Evidence for German City Regions." *Annual Regional Science* 41: 689–713. doi:10.1007/s00168-007-0118-6.
- Boston, J., and T. Stuart. 2015. "Protecting the Rights of Future Generations: Are Constitutional Mechanisms an Answer?" *Policy Quarterly* 11 (2): 60–71. doi:10.26686/pq.v11i2.4536.

- Chambers, S. 2001. "Constitutional Referendums and Democratic Deliberation." In *Referendum Democracy. Citizens, Elites and Deliberation in Referendum Campaigns*, edited by M. Mendelsohn and A. Parkin, 231–255. New York: Palgrave.
- Colombo, C. 2018. "Justifications and Citizen Competence in Direct Democracy – A Multilevel Analysis." *British Journal of Political Science* 48 (3): 787–806. doi:10.1017/S0007123416000090.
- Delli Carpini, M., and S. Keeter. 1996. *What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Ford, R., and M. Goodwin. 2017. "Britain after Brexit: A Nation Divided." *Journal of Democracy* 28 (1): 17–30. doi:10.1353/jod.2017.0002.
- Fung, A. 2003. "Recipes for Public Spheres: Eight Institutional Design Choices and Their Consequences." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 11 (3): 338–367. doi:10.1111/1467-9760.00181.
- Gastil, J., and J. Dillard. 1999. "Increasing Political Sophistication through Public Deliberation." *Political Communication* 16 (1): 3–23. doi:10.1080/105846099198749.
- Gastil, J., K. Knobloch, J. Reedy, M. Henkels, and K. Cramer. 2017. "Assessing the Electoral Impact of the 2010 Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review." *American Politics Research* 46 (3): 534–563. doi:10.1177/1532673X17715620.
- Gastil, J., and R. Richards. 2013. "Making Direct Democracy Deliberative through Random Assemblies." *Politics & Society* 41 (2): 253–281. doi:10.1177/0032329213483109.
- Gastil, J. 2014. "Beyond Endorsements and Partisan Cues: Giving Voters Viable Alternatives to Unreliable Cognitive Shortcuts." *The Good Society* 23 (2): 145–159. doi:10.5325/goodsociety.23.2.0145.
- González-Ricoy, I., and A. Gosseries. 2016. "Designing Institutions for Future Generations." In *Institutions for Future Generations*, edited by I. González-Ricoy, and A. Gosseries, 3–23. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hansen, S., K. Houlberg, and L. Pedersen. 2014. "Do Municipal Mergers Improve Fiscal Outcomes?" *Scandinavian Political Studies* 37 (2): 196–214. doi:10.1111/1467-9477.12020.
- Hansen, S. 2012. "Polity Size and Local Political Trust: A Quasi-Experiment Using Municipal Mergers in Denmark." *Scandinavian Political Studies* 36 (1): 43–66. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9477.2012.00296.x.
- Hansen, S. 2015. "The Democratic Cost of Size: How Increasing Size Affects Citizen Satisfaction with Local Government." *Political Studies* 63 (2): 373–389. doi:10.1111/1467-9248.12096.
- Healthy Democracy. 2019. "Citizens' Initiative Review," <https://healthydemocracy.org/cir/> [accessed 18 April 2019].
- Hovi, J., D. Sprinz, and A. Underdal. 2009. "Implementing Long-Term Climate Policy: Time Inconsistency, Domestic Politics, International Anarchy." *Global Environmental Politics* 9 (3): 20–39. doi:10.1162/glep.2009.9.3.20.
- Jacobs, A., and S. Matthews. 2012. "Why Do Citizens Discount the Future? Public Opinion and the Timing of Policy Consequences." *British Journal of Political Science* 42 (4): 903–935. doi:10.1017/S0007123412000117.
- Jacobs, A. 2016. "Policy Making for the Long Term in Advanced Democracies." *Annual Review of Political Science* 19: 433–454. doi:10.1146/annurev-polisci-110813-034103.
- Jane, S., L. Muradova, J. Gastil, and D. M. Farrell. 2020. "Scaling up Deliberation: Testing the Potential of Mini-Publics to Enhance the Deliberative Capacity of Citizens." *Swiss Political Science Review* 26 (3): 253–272. doi:10.1111/spsr.12405.
- Jäske, M. 2017. "'Soft' Forms of Direct Democracy: Explaining the Occurrence of Referendum Motions and Advisory Referendums in Finnish Local Government." *Swiss Political Science Review* 23 (1): 50–76. doi:10.1111/spsr.12238.
- Knobloch, K., J. Gastil, J. Reedy, and K. Cramer Walsh. 2013. "Did They Deliberate? Applying an Evaluative Model of Democratic Deliberation to the Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review." *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 41 (2): 105–125. doi:10.1080/00909882.2012.760746.
- Knobloch, K., M. Barthel, and J. Gastil. 2020. "Emanating Effects: The Impact of the Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review on Voters' Political Efficacy." *Political Studies* 68 (2): 426–445. doi:10.1177/0032321719852254.
- Kulha, K., M. Leino, M. Setälä, M. Jäske, and S. Himmelroos. 2021. "For the Sake of the Future: Can Democratic Deliberation Help Thinking and Caring about Future Generations?" *Sustainability* 13 (10): 5487. doi:10.3390/su13105487.
- Kushner, J., and D. Siegel. 2003. "Citizens' Attitudes toward Municipal Amalgamation in Three Ontario Municipalities." *Canadian Journal of Regional Science* 26 (1): 49–59.
- Lassen, D., and S. Serritzlew. 2011. "Jurisdiction Size and Local Democracy: Evidence on Internal Political Efficacy from Large-Scale Municipal Reform." *American Political Science Review* 105 (2): 238–258. doi:10.1017/S000305541100013X.
- Leino, M., Bäck, M., Serup Christensen, H., Kulha, K., Setälä, M., Strandberg, K., and M. Taskinen. 2019. "Puntaroituja äänestyspäätöksiä?" [Considered Referendums?] *Politiikka-lehti*, 61 (4): 337–363 Considered Referendums?] *Politiikka-lehti*.
- Liebkind, K., and A. Henning-Lindblom. 2015. "'Identitet Och Etnicitet – Och Språk?" [Identity and Ethnicity – And Language?]." In *Gruppsspråk, Samspråk, Två Språk, Svenskan I Finland – Idag Och Igår [Group Language, Common Language, Two Languages, the Swedish Language in Finland – Today and Yesterday]*, edited by M. Tandefelt, 183–200. Helsinki: Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland.
- MacKenzie, M., and D. Caluwaerts. 2021. "Paying for the Future: Deliberation and Support for Climate Action Policies." *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning* 23 (3): 317–331. doi:10.1080/1523908X.2021.1883424.
- MacKenzie, M. 2016a. "A General Purpose, Randomly Selected Chamber." In *Institutions for Future Generations*, edited by I. González-Ricoy, and A. Gosseries, 282–298. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- MacKenzie, M. 2016b. "Institutional Design and Sources of Short-Termism." In *Institutions for Future Generations*, edited by I. González-Ricoy, and A. Gosseries, 24–48. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- MacKenzie, M. 2018. "Deliberation and Long-Term Decisions: Representing Future Generations." In *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*, edited by A. Bächtiger, J. Dryzek, J. Mansbridge, and M. E. Warren, 251–272. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- MacKenzie, M. 2021. "There Is No Such Thing as a Short-Term Issue." *Futures* 125: 102652. doi:10.1016/j.futures.2020.102652.
- Már, K., and J. Gastil. 2020. "Tracing the Boundaries of Motivated Reasoning: How Deliberative Minipublics Can Improve Voter Knowledge." *Political Psychology* 41 (1): 107–127. doi:10.1111/pops.12591.
- Niemeyer, S. 2020. "Deliberation and Ecological Democracy: From Citizen to Global System." *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 22 (1): 16–29. doi:10.1080/1523908X.2019.1661232.
- Niemeyer, S., J. Jennstålet al. 2016. The deliberative democratic inclusion of future generations. In *Institutions for future generations*, edited by I. González-Ricoy, and A. Gosseries, pp. 247–265, Oxford University Press.
- Rausch, A. 2006. "The Hesei Dai Gappei: A Case Study for Understanding the Municipal Mergers of the Hesei Era." *Japan Forum* 18 (1): 133–156. doi:10.1080/09555800500498558.
- Setälä, M., Leino, M., Serup Christensen, H., Bäck, M., Jäske, M., and K. Strandberg. 2020. "Deliberative Mini-publics Facilitating Voter Knowledge and Judgement: Experience from a Finnish Local Referendum." *Representation*.
- Setälä, M., Serup Christensen, H., Strandberg, K., and M. Leino. 2021. "Beyond polarization and selective trust—a Citizen's Jury as a trusted source of information", Online first in Politics.
- Smith, G. 2021. *Can Democracy Safeguard the Future?* Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Soguel, N., and T. Beutler. 2008. "Attitude Towards Amalgamation and the Sense of Attachment to Community: The Case of Two Swiss Municipalities." *Working Paper IDHEAP* 2008: 1–20.
- Stoker, G. 2010. "Exploring the Promise of Experimentation in Political Science: Micro-Foundational Insights and Policy Relevance." *Political Studies* 58 (2): 300–319. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9248.2009.00812.x.
- Strandberg, K., J. Berg, T. Karv, and K. Backström. 2021. 'When citizens met politicians—the process and outcomes of mixed deliberations according to participant status and gender', online first, *Innovation the European Journal of Social Science Research*.
- Strandberg, K., and M. Lindell. 2020. "Citizens' Attitudes Toward Long-Term Political Decisions – Individual-Level Explanations of Opinion on a Municipal Merger." *Scandinavian Political Studies* 43 (4): 296–316.
- Suiter, J., and T. Reidy. 2020. "Does Deliberation Help Deliver Informed Electorates: Evidence from Irish Referendum Votes." *Representation* 56 (4): 539–557. doi:10.1080/00344893.2019.1704848.
- Uusitalo, R., and A. Moisiö. 2013. "The Impact of Municipal Mergers on Local Public Expenditures in Finland." *Public Finance and Management* 13 (3): 148–166.
- Warren, M., and J. Gastil. 2015. "Can Deliberative Minipublics Address the Cognitive Challenges of Democratic Citizenship?" *The Journal of Politics* 77 (2): 562–574. doi:10.1086/680078.
- Yamada, K. 2018. "From a Majority to a Minority: How Municipal Mergers in Japan Changed the Distribution of Political Powers and the Allocation of Public Services within a Merged Municipality." *Urban Affairs Review* 54 (3): 560–592. doi:10.1177/1078087416669603.
- Zimmerbauer, K., and A. Paasi. 2013. "When Old and New Regionalism Collide: Deinstitutionalization of Regions and Resistance Identity in Municipality Amalgamations." *Journal of Rural Studies* 30: 31–40. doi:10.1016/j.jrurstud.2012.11.004.

Appendix A. Summary of the Citizens' Jury's statement

Content	Summary
Page 1: Introduction	A short explanation of what the Citizens' Jury did and who arranged it.
Page 1: Central facts	Eight facts on the process of the merger agreement, population statistics, and the consequences for the economy and welfare provision

(Continued)

Content	Summary
Page 2: Most important arguments in favor of the merger	<p>Three arguments for, why they matter and a short summary:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) A stronger region helps ensure economic growth, which gives the inhabitants and businesses greater opportunities. (2) A merger can enable businesses and universities to thrive in greater competition and thereby improve services in a growing city. This is important since experts say a larger municipality has greater influence. (3) The merger aims to give functional rather than economic advantages. A merger avoids doubling of functions, which can free up resources for other purposes. This is important since decision making becomes more effective when everyone is at the same table. <p>Summary: Size matters since a united municipality will be a larger and stronger bilingual city both in Finland and internationally</p>
Page 2: Most important arguments against the merger	<p>Three arguments against, why they matter and a short summary:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Korsholm today is considered to be an effective and well-functioning municipality, and a merger risks impairing this standard. This is important since inhabitants' perceptions may be harmed. (2) Inhabitants of Korsholm have the right to decide on their own future. All areas of the municipality currently have representation in decision-making bodies, while a merger will change this and remove decision making from the people. This is important since there will be fewer people from Korsholm on the municipal council and board after the merger. (3) Since the merger procedure is rushed, there are unclarities concerning the economy, nursing and collaboration with other municipalities. The agreement does not ensure that the new municipality would fulfil visions concerning language, education and democratic involvement. This is important since many people in Korsholm are concerned about the status of the Swedish language. <p>Summary: Language, service provision and democracy are important to people in Korsholm, and the merger agreement is seen as lacking, which means the future of a merged municipality is uncertain.</p>

Appendix B. Survey items on intertemporal aspects of the merger

Q1. If the merger passes, it could have many different consequences. Please tell us how you rank the importance of four possible effects.

Options for each item:

- (1) The most important consequence
- (2) The second most important consequence
- (3) The third most important consequence
- (4) The least important consequence

Q1a. Near-term costs and harms that would occur right after the merger.

Q1b. Near-term benefits that would occur right after the merger.

Q1c. Long-term costs and harms that may occur over time.

Q1d. Long-term benefits that may occur over time.

Q2. How do you feel about the following statements that describe politics in general?

Options for each item:

- (1) Completely agree
- (2) Somewhat agree
- (3) Somewhat disagree
- (4) Completely disagree

Q2a. Politicians should put effort into solving future problems even if it means more costs and burdens for current taxpayers.

Q2b. Future challenges will be solved in due time without making political decisions today.

Q2c. Politics today should focus on solving current problems in society rather than focusing on future challenges.