

# The futures of deliberative policy-making in Finnish welfare services

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## Research tasks

- 1. To identify the possibilities and obstacles of deliberative democracy development in welfare service decision-making at the municipal level in Finland.**
2. To contemplate the possibilities of anticipatory discipline to function as a progressive, interdisciplinary collaboration of futures studies and social (administrative) sciences to serve as an articulate, systematic and participatory interpreter of societal values in current reality of societies and public administration and therefore as a means of defining and stating the goals for communal welfare services in order to estimate its functioning and effects.

## Background

- This research leans on the perception of
- increasing **complexity in societal decision making** and therefore,
- a demand to strengthen the role of citizen participation and **deliberative democracy in public governance.**
- The conception becomes emphasized along the Finnish healthcare reform, **shifting welfare decision-making and defining further off service users and communities.**
- The call for refining participation can also be seen to have grown along with **people becoming estranged from traditional, representative democracy and political decision making.**
- Growing distance from democratic political activity and increasing lack of trust in political decision making is a breeding ground for **societal conflicts.** Increasing shared decision making and fortifying civic society can thus be justified by social side effects caused by alienation.

## Central theory: Deliberative democracy

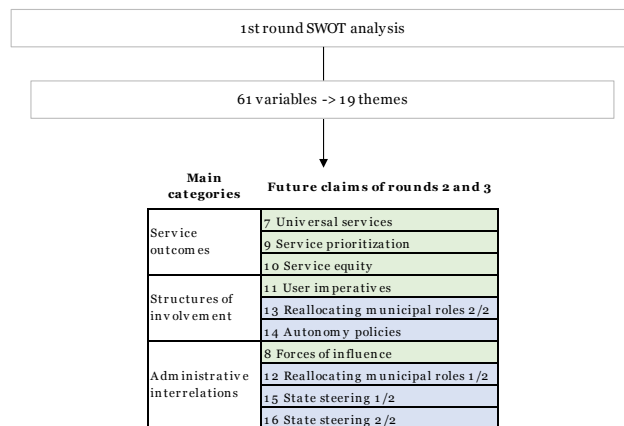
- Deliberative democracy theory is a normative theory focusing in the objective of policy **legitimation by means of communicative processes.**
- The Finnish Institute of Deliberative Democracy (DDI) : *"...political decisions can be seen as legitimate if they are based on discussion in which different views and population groups have been equally represented. Deliberative democracy is therefore a **question of reciprocity and respect for different opinions.**"*
- By means of various deliberative arrangements (e.g. citizens' juries or panels, deliberative polling) an equal discourse is reached. Ideally, after introductions given by various experts, exchanging views and profound reflection of the issue addressed, a final conclusion, in which all members of the deliberation can engage in, is reached and presented.

# Research method: Delphi

3 round eDelphi of 37 participants

- executive managers of 3rd sector organizations
- the chairmen of the municipal councils or welfare service boards and
- the leading office-holders of municipal welfare offices

estimated and discussed the future **claims of municipal welfare policy making in 2030**.



Iterative process of 1st round themes/analysis

## Research findings: round 1 (preliminary results)

<b>enabling elements (26)</b>	<b>inhibiting conditions (86)</b>
Antecedents to progression of participative decision-making practices. Reflecting current system, partly controllable by present day competences or circumstances.	
<i>Technological skills, web coverage.</i> Strong (existing) representative system and incipient hearing practices. <i>Opportunities in municipal or legislative readjustment (welfare, regional and government reform).</i> Experimental courage.	<i>Cultural inertia.</i> <i>Lack of PD knowledge.</i> Increasing inequality and consumerism in welfare services. Challenges in incorporating PD with current representative system. Challenges in municipal readjustment or governing structures in general.
<b>favorable prospects (45)</b>	<b>unfavorable consequences (32)</b>
Resultans of progression in participative decision-making practices. Future associated, partly nebulous or intangible.	
<i>Legitimacy improvement.</i> <i>More equitable and flexible resource distribution.</i> Regenerating the modi operandi of council work. Increasing health empowerment. Reconciliation of complex welfare issues.	<i>Tokenistic participation.</i> <i>Unequal coverage of involvement.</i> The decline in political representativeness. <i>Societally poor decisions.</i> Eroding liability.

*(In Italic : Variables over the amount of 1/4 or 1/5 in its category.)*

## Rounds 2 & 3 (preliminary results)

Underlying issues of DD development to be addressed

### *Service outcomes*

- Increasing general inequality and individualism.
- Public funding insufficiency - economical myopia.
- Emphases on (health care) professionalism.

### *Structures of involvement*

- Systemic & attitudinal challenges.
- Marginal involvement.

### *Administrative interrelations*

- Strong role of the Finnish welfare reform & the role of the municipalities.
- Increasing consumerism in welfare services.