

## **Coupling mini- and maxi-public: Can randomly selected non-participants contribute to a better linkage between the mini- and the maxi-public?**

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*An increasing number of people advocate the use of sortition to govern contemporary democracies and in particular random sampling to compose mini-publics. These processes emphasize the deliberation in which randomly selected lay citizens engage in a structured discussion so as to formulate recommendations for policy-makers. Random sampling offers an equal chance to all citizens to be randomly selected, which brings it close to the ideal of “equal participation of all citizens”. Also, this selection process is an efficient way to reach a substantial diversity through its ability to reach traditionally excluded groups. However, a large number of randomly selected citizens usually refuse to participate, which is why a larger sample has to be drawn to obtain enough positive responses to compose the panel. Then, a second random sampling is operated among the people who accepted to participate, usually along quotas reflecting the distribution of people inside the population. Often, studies miss to take this final stage of selection into account, either focusing on the ones who did not want to participate or the ones who actually participated. This is why our study is focusing on the third set of people involved in mini-publics: the ones who wanted to participate when randomly selected in the first stage but who were not eventually selected during the second stage. More specifically, our study focuses on the “Make your Brussels Mobility” mini-public. On the first stage, 8000 residents of Brussels were randomly selected and received an official invitation letter from the President of the Parliament. Among them, 377 accepted to participate. On the second stage, 41 citizens were randomly selected to compose the panel. Our article builds on a survey sent to the 336 citizens who were finally not selected to participate. This survey investigates the opinions of these non-selected participants regarding the panel and its legitimacy. This question is crucial because we still know very little about how to raise awareness of mini-public among the rest of the population. Our research provides innovative insights on whether selecting a large sample in the first step contributes to attract their interest on the mini-public’s process and outcome.*

### **Introduction**

For the last three decades, we are witnessing a “deliberative turn” in political theory but also in practice (Dryzek, 2000; Blondiaux & Sintomer, 2002). Through the lens of deliberative democracy, a legitimate political order is a political order that is able to give accounts of the decisions it produces, that is, of explaining and justifying them (Chambers, 2003). This contrasts with traditional republican “vote-centric” methods relying on the aggregation of opinions rather than on public justification (Chambers, 2003). In order to live up to this ideal of justification, deliberative democracy relies on principles of fair, equal, respectful and reasoned exchange of arguments (Gutman & Thompson 1996; Habermas, 1996; Bächtiger et al., 2010). A widespread example of empirical experience of these ideals and principles is the

mini-public. These small-scale face-to-face citizen avenues are indeed typically designed to live up to these deliberative principles in order to produce consensual and reasoned solutions to a particular societal issue. Because the quality of deliberation is easier to control in small settings, deliberative mini-publics do not involve many people. Also, to prevent them from being subject to outside pressures, these are often insulated from the rest of the political world and the broader public. This has led some authors to criticize the use of mini-publics, as they remain disconnected from mass democracy (Parkinson, 2006; Papadopoulos & Warin, 2007; Chambers, 2009; Lafont, 2015).

As we will see through this article, some authors have begun to circumvent this shortcoming by envisioning a role for mini-publics in connection with the broader public and political decision-makers, that is, in a larger deliberative system (Mansbridge et al., 2012). Following the path opened by this “systemic approach”, our aim is to discover whether linking the mini-public to the broader public might enhance the support for the recommendations it produced. Indeed, this large public support is crucial if a mini-public wants to claim any legitimacy to eventually weigh on public decisions.

Mini-publics usually fail to reach awareness in the broader public, which is why we chose to investigate the perceptions of a particular group of people who were obviously aware of the process. This group is the one formed by the 336 people who accepted to participate in the “Make Your Brussels Mobility Panel” but were eventually not selected to be part of the 41 people who finally composed the panel. Our goal, based on survey results among 209 out of the 336, is twofold. First, we aim to investigate which role the public might assign to a mini-public, through which process it enters the public debate, based on their perceptions of its different features (composition, deliberations, consensual character of the recommendations, etc.). The recommendations of a mini public can penetrate the broader public debate through different channels depending on the particular role people assign to the mini-public: it can either be a trustee (MacKenzie & Warren, 2012), or an information provider (Gastil et al., 2016) or a trigger for enhancing the public debate about the issue under discussion (Goodin, 2000; Niemeyer, 2011). Second, we will analyze to what extent our respondents, who are aware of the process, endorse its results. In other words, we will investigate to what extent the awareness of mini-public among the maxi-public enhances the support for its recommendations.

### [Mini-Publics as Parts of a Broader Deliberative System](#)

Representative democracies are nowadays the most widespread form of government. However, these states seem to undergo a crisis whose symptoms are a plummeting political participation, decreasing levels of trust and lowering rates of political interest (Dalton, 2004). These symptoms -endanger their overall legitimacy, as they shake its foundations. In reaction to this situation, politicians, parliaments and governments have started to invest in so-called

“democratic innovations” to rebuild their legitimacy and the ones of their decisions. These processes are typically designed to involve lay citizens in public decisions, outside traditional political spaces such as political parties or trade unions (Smith, 2009).

One of the most commonly used forms of such democratic innovations is the “mini-public” (Grönlund et al., 2014). These are typically gatherings of small people deliberating on a particular subject for one or several days in order to give recommendations on this particular topic to their representatives. These rest on a double principle: *deliberation* and *inclusiveness* (Carson & Hartz-Karp, 2005). As Goodin and Dryzek (2006) put it, “These are designed to be groups small enough to be genuinely deliberative, and representative enough to be genuinely democratic (though rarely will they meet standards of statistical representativeness, and they are never representative in the electoral sense)” (p. 220).

Deliberation lies at the core of mini-publics, as they aim at fostering equal, respectful and informed discussions among their participants towards the formation of collective recommendations based on the exchange of diverging and reasoned arguments (Habermas, 1996; Steiner et al., 2004). Therefore, they rely on the work of professional facilitators, the distribution of balanced information and the establishment of rules of conduct assuring that everyone has an equal chance to express his or her opinion while being listened to respectfully (Smith, 2009).

Because it is impossible to make the whole population deliberate along these principles (Dryzek, 2001), we draw a sample of the broader population to constitute the mini-public. In order to obtain an inclusive or diverse mini-public, scholars and practitioners tend to advocate for the use of random sampling (Smith and Ryan 2014; Fishkin 2011). This preference is based on two arguments. First, random sampling allows to give an equal chance to all citizens to be selected to participate, which thereby brings it closer to the idea that all citizens who are affected by a decision should participate in shaping it (Dahl, 1989). Second, it is more efficient than voluntary self-selection to reach traditionally excluded groups and thereby reach a greater diversity in the final composition of the mini-public (Fung, 2003). Reaching diversity is crucial to fuel the deliberation with diverging opinions and perceptions of the topic under discussion and thereby allow the deliberation to deliver the most benefits (Solomon, 2006). Research has demonstrated that it is only under the presence of different or even opposed views that participants are the most able to formulate reasoned and qualitative arguments and come to understand each other points of view (Luskin, Fishkin & Jowell 2002).

In conclusion, the alliance of deliberation and inclusiveness allows mini-publics to give elected representatives collective and reasoned solutions stemming from an equal and fair discussion among diverging views existing among the whole body of citizens. Based on those alleged virtues, scholars and practitioners of deliberative democracy have therefore intensively advanced the use of small-scale face-to-face deliberative forums to try to cure the democratic

malaise (Grönlund et al., 2014). In order to live up to the ideals of deliberative quality and inclusiveness, they isolated mini-publics for two reasons. On the one hand, they want to control for their composition and deliberative design and, on the other hand, to protect them from outside pressures and from potential manipulations from politicians (Chambers, 2005). In so doing, they have been treating mini-publics as isolated deliberative sites rather than as a part of a broader deliberative system. Attempts to overcome this shortcoming has begun to emerge thanks to the growing use of the “systemic approach”. As Jane Mansbridge et al. (2012) put it, “It—the systemic approach—expands the scale of analysis beyond the individual site and allows us to think about deliberations that develop among and between the sites over time.”

Starting from there, mini-publics cannot be viewed as isolated sites anymore (Mansbridge et al., 2012; Curato & Böker, 2016, Hendriks, 2016). Their virtues have to be assessed not only on their internal features (deliberation and inclusiveness) but also on their contribution to the overall deliberative quality and legitimacy of the whole system and the decisions it produces (Mansbridge et al., 2012; Curato & Böker, 2016). Following this approach, the qualities of one site might temper the weaknesses of the others and each site performs a distinct role in shaping the system. Despite their virtues of inclusiveness and deliberation, mini-publics can indeed not be taken as a universal panacea as they also naturally show weaknesses. Their legitimacy is sometimes questioned based on their lack of representativeness. The use of random sampling indeed prevents them from reaching representativeness in the electoral sense (Goodin, 2008). Also, if a random sampling improves the overall inclusiveness of the mini-public, it doesn't give the participants a mandate to represent their socio-demographic category or the people who share their opinions, as they participate as citizens as such, not as representatives of a particular group or idea (Parkinson, 2006). However, this lack of electoral representativeness of mini-publics is no longer a problem if we envision them as a part of a broader system that features different kinds of representation channels. Citizens can channel their electoral preferences through elections and their preferences as lay citizens through the use of mini-publics. Each component of such a system does not per se weaken the other. Instead, they are complementary.

In order to allow sites to reinforce each other, temper for each other weaknesses and fuel each other with their respective benefits and outcomes, sites have to be somehow “coupled”, that is linked to each other (Hendriks, 2016). What we usually see is that mini-publics remain “decoupled” as well from decision makers as from the broader public. Therefore, they have little impact on the policy-making. In turn, it weakens their potential for improving the decision-making process, as the mini-publics' arguments are not considered. This might in turn create frustration among the participants of the mini-public (Setälä, 2017), which might further widen the gap between citizens and their representatives. Scholars and practitioners have therefore begun to think of ways to reconnect mini-publics and decision-making sites (Gastil & Wright, 2018). For instance, mini-publics can be connected to mechanisms of direct

democracy, like the Citizens' Initiative Review in Oregon which distributes its voting recommendations to voters before a referendum (Gastil, Richards & Knobloch, 2014). Or a mini-public can gather lay citizens with elected policy-makers, such as the Irish Constitutional Convention (Elkink, Farrell, Reidy, & Suiter, 2017).

However, this does not mean that mini-publics should bypass traditional decision-making actors and processes to impose their recommendations to political elites and the broader public (Lafont, 2015). Indeed, nothing justifies that a mini-public should have the sole authority on policy-making and replace the input of the broader citizenry, on expert advice or on political judgements. First, they cannot be seen as a mirror of the public opinion, as mini-publics' participants were given information and were put in a highly deliberative context with intense face-to-face interactions moderated by facilitators. Thereby, their opinions changed and can therefore not be taken as a mirror of the public opinion anymore (Parkinson, 2006; Lafont, 2015). Secondly, if participants indeed become sort of "expert" on the issue under discussion thanks to the information they receive and the exchange of arguments they get to experience (Parkinson, 2006), why would their recommendations be more valuable than the ones of "true" experts? It can't be because these recommendations stem from a randomly selected body of lay citizens who represent the wider population, because they no longer are representative once they have gone through the transformative process of deliberation. Thirdly, why would representatives feel obliged to follow the recommendations of a mini-public if they consider that its recommendations are wrong and not in line with the opinion of their electorate? Because of all these elements, mini-publics cannot claim superiority on decision-making, nor can any other deliberative site. Instead, they have to find the support among the maxi-public because they make representative claims in its name. As Saward (2010) argues, a representative claim is legitimate when the constituency is able to react thereto. As a consequence, there is no shortcut: the maxi-public must be able to react to the mini-publics' recommendation, either directly or via its elected representatives. Without, a mini-public constitutes a shortcut that can weaken the legitimacy of the whole system (Lafont 2015).

Therefore, in order to claim the legitimacy to have any weight on public decisions, we argue that mini-publics have to first penetrate the wider public and second to secure a support for their recommendations among the wider public. According to the deliberative school, "democratic legitimacy resides in the right, ability, and opportunity of those subject to a collective decision to participate in deliberation about the content of that decision" (Dryzek, 2009). However, as we have seen, it is impossible to make the whole population deliberate. Therefore, in order to be deemed legitimate, "decisions still have to be justified to those who did not participate" (Dryzek, 2001). Indeed, "the legitimate exercise of political authority requires justification to those who are bound by it" (Gutmann, 1996). Following this idea, not only the participants of the mini-public, but also the whole citizenry, has to be included in the process of deliberation about the issue at stake. The deliberation in the mini-public must also be followed by the deliberation of the maxi-public, that is the rest of the citizenry which does not participate in the micro deliberation forum (Lafont, 2015). Indeed, "decision-making by

deliberation among free and equal citizens is the most defensible justification anyone has to offer for provisionally settling controversial issues” (Gutmann, 1996, p. 344). Only if a mini-public’s recommendations can be justified to and endorsed by the wider public can they claim to have any legitimacy to influence public decisions (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2015).

However, studies have shown that the broader public is not aware of the existence of ongoing deliberative mini-publics (Fournier et al., 2011). Some authors are sceptical when it comes to assessing the possibility that the results of mini-publics could ever penetrate the public debate. Fishkin (2009), for instance, considers that “the thoughtful and informed views created in the experiment [of Deliberative Polling] are not widely shared because the bulk of the public is still, in all likelihood, disengaged and inattentive precisely because it is subject to all of the limitations (...) that routinely apply to the opinions of citizens in the large-scale nation-state. Deliberative Polling overcomes those conditions, at least for a time, for a microcosm, but leaves the rest of the population largely untouched.” (p.28). Lafont (2015) goes further by saying that the broader public doesn’t have the required level of deliberative capacity to engage in such a debate because of a poor diversity in mass media or a lack of constructive dialogue in political discourses. Some others even found that enhancing the publicity of a mini-public could damage its deliberative quality (Elster, 1995). In that sense, isolating the mini-public from the maxi-public might be a “justifiable way of encouraging better discussion and fuller consideration of legislation. Publicity increases political pressure on legislators to bring a popular bill to a vote before it has received thorough discussion in committee (...) secrecy also serves another deliberative purpose: Legislators remain freer to change their minds about a Bill in response to ongoing discussions.” (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, p. 116)

Inversely, other scholars argue that a mini-public can and should penetrate the maxi-public (Curato & Böker, 2016). In doing so, they can fulfil two functions. First, mini-publics can become a “trusted information proxy”, or trustee (MacKenzie & Warren, 2012) citizens could use to position themselves on an issue. It functions as a shortcut that they could use to determine their position on an issue, such as party affiliation or expert reports. The trust implies that citizens follow the recommendation, without being invited to reflect thoroughly on the issue. So, it entails a certain authority. Such trust-based mini-public provide the broader public with guidance when they stem from the deliberation of informed and disinterested citizens (Warren & Gastil, 2015) and their recommendations are perceived as highly consensual (MacKenzie & Warren, 2012).

Second, the recommendations of a mini-public could be used as information providers that citizens could use to reflect upon their position on the subject and fosters deliberation among the public sphere (Goodin, 2000, Niemeyer, 2011). In that vision, mini-publics are not envisioned as authoritative bodies whose recommendations have to be blindly followed because they would have developed some kind of expertise and adopted consensual recommendations. Contrary to the trust-based function, this mini-public aims at increasing the citizens’ reflection on an issue. Recommendations do not need to stem from a consensus, as both arguments in favor and against help citizens to think on the issue. This taps into the question of the legitimacies of mini-publics.

## Assessing the Legitimacies of Mini-Publics

If the wider public does not perceive the mini-public as a legitimate actor to somehow weigh on public decisions, it will be less likely to assign any role to it. This legitimacy rests on the assumption that “outcomes are democratically legitimate if and only if they could be the object of free and reasoned argument among equals” (Cohen, 1997). In other words, a legitimate mini-public is a mini-public that involves free and equal citizens in a deliberative setting producing good political outcomes. As we can see, three dimensions are intertwined in this conception of a mini-public’s legitimacy: the input, throughput and output dimensions (Bekkers & Edwards, 2007; Geissel, 2011; Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2016). Depending on how they assess these three features, the respondents will assign a different role to the mini-public it is confronted with.

First, the input legitimacy rests on the inclusiveness of the mini-public. As not all those who are subject to the decision are actually able to deliberate about it, the mini-public has to encompass the diversity of opinions, ideas, backgrounds present in the wider public. Making sure that all opinions are represented not only fosters more legitimate (Thompson, 2008) but also better decisions, as it is only when all ideas are heard that the best one can be identified (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2015).

Second, throughput legitimacy refers to the ability of the procedures to guide the deliberations to foster openness towards the others’ arguments and even to persuasion in light of better arguments (Bekkers & Edwards, 2007), thereby preventing the participants to camp on their positions or only try to advance their interests. The throughput legitimacy relies on the presence of a professional facilitation, the independence of participants, and the provision of balanced information (Caluwaerts and Reuchamps 2016; Ryan and Smith 2014).

Third, output legitimacy, as understood here, rests on two elements (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2015). On the one hand, it has to generate the public endorsement of its results. On the other hand, it has to show responsiveness and accountability, that is, the results it produces have to provide an answer to the problem that was initially identified. Ultimately, if the maxi-public perceives that the mini-public actually encompasses these features (or at least part of them), they could be more likely to deem it legitimate to occupy a role in public decisions. The particular role they could assign to a mini-public they are confronted with depends on the extent to which they assess that it comprises these elements. However, irrespective of the particular role they assign to the mini-public, the broader public might or might not agree with the recommendations it issued. Indeed, as it is probably the case among the participants, non-participants might want to disagree with the final recommendations issued by the mini-public, even if they were informed and confronted to reasoned arguments (Lafont, 2015).

Starting from there, this paper aims at addressing two important issues. First, based on the perceptions shared by people aware of the mini-public of its different features, what role do these people give to the particular mini-public they are confronted with, through which channel can it penetrate the wider public? Second, is their awareness leading to a strong support towards the recommendations made by the mini-public? In our case, awareness stems from the fact that our non-participants were invited to participate but were eventually not randomly selected to do so. Contrary to the broader public, these people are already aware of the process. Then, the question is: does awareness lead to a strong support for the recommendations issued?

We first present the case under investigation before describing our population. After, we show the survey results on the perceived legitimacy of the citizen panel. Finally, we explain how to analyze them in the light of the three functions of mini-public and discuss its implications.

### The Citizens' panel "Make Your Brussels–Mobility"

In June 2017, the Brussels Parliament decided to organize a citizen panel about mobility issues in and around Brussels. This "Make Your Brussels–Mobility" panel<sup>1</sup> took place in 2017 within the framework of the new "Good Move" mobility plan of the Region of Brussels in Belgium. The organization of this citizen panel composed of 40 randomly selected people also shows that the Parliament and more particularly its president was willing to allow a panel of randomly selected citizens not only to be aware of these issues but also to have their word on such an important topic.

8000 people living in the Brussels Region were randomly selected and invited by an official letter from the President of the Brussels Parliament participate in a citizen panel. They then had to communicate their willingness to participate in the event to its organizer: the "Participation and Citizenship" (PartiCitiz) organization. Among these 8000 randomly selected people, 377 answered the call positively. This 5% response rate approximately equals the rates we usually find for other participatory experiences organized in Belgium (Reuchamps, 2011; 2013). To select the 40 participants of the panel, a second random sampling was operated. In order to reach a panel representing the diversity of the Brussels population, a stratified random sampling was used. This means that it accounted for several criteria such as gender, age, level of education, professional background, composition of the family, nationality, mode of transport and municipality.

First, the citizen panel was invited to reflect upon the following questions: "In what kind of neighborhood do you see yourself living by 2030, and how do you want to travel?". Together, the participants decided to dig deeper into 5 subtopics: communication, how to share the

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<sup>1</sup> The Brussels Parliament dedicated a page of its website to this citizen panel: [http://www.parlement.brussels/panel\\_citoyen\\_fr/](http://www.parlement.brussels/panel_citoyen_fr/) (accessed on October 30 2018).

public space, the “Mobility” card<sup>2</sup>, mobility policies and how to ease the city’s traffic. The citizen panel met four times inside the walls of the Brussels Parliament, on the 21<sup>st</sup> and the 28<sup>th</sup> of October (only in the morning) and the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of November (the whole day). All the deliberations of the panel were moderated by facilitators and went from small-group discussion to plenary sessions, sometimes also involving the insights of experts or field actors. Several votes structured the deliberations in order to reach demands and practical recommendations, which were then submitted to the approval of the whole group of panelists.

At the end of its four meetings, the panel submitted to the Parliament “citizen resolution”<sup>3</sup> containing a list of demands and recommendations around the five sub-topics cited here above. In turn, an audition of several delegates of the citizen panel was organized by a special committee in charge of the follow-up of the citizen panel in December 2017. This committee, based on a proposal of its President, decided to adopt a resolution that testifies the Parliament’s support towards the process, concluding that the reflections of the citizen panel were useful and therefore asking the Government to take the citizen resolution into account and set a deadline to respond to it. In May, the committee meets again to discuss about the citizen resolution and unanimously adopts it<sup>4</sup>. Subsequently, a meeting between the panelists and the Minister of Mobility is organized to make him respond to the citizen panel’s demands and recommendations.

**Who are the randomly selected non-participants?**

The first stage of random sampling didn’t lead to a diverse sample of potential participants, as the table below shows. Indeed, even if a random sampling allows to reach people who do not usually participate in politics, there is no obligation for them to accept to participate. Consequently, we see that these traditionally excluded groups, even if invited, still refuse to participate. This is why to compose the actual panel, the organizers decided to proceed to a second stage of random sampling, in order to temper this over-representation of highly educated and older people.

Gender	Men	Women	Total
377 drawn from 1 <sup>st</sup> stage random sampling	202 (53.6%)	175 (46.4%)	377

<sup>2</sup> The mobility card is the card that is used in Brussels for public transportation.  
<sup>3</sup> The content of the Citizen resolution is available on the website of the Parliament : [http://www.parlement.brussels/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Résolution-citoyenne-191117\\_FR.pdf](http://www.parlement.brussels/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Résolution-citoyenne-191117_FR.pdf) (accessed on October 30 2018).  
<sup>4</sup> The resolution of the special committee can be found here : <http://www.weblex.irisnet.be/data/crb/doc/2017-18/134912/images.pdf> (accessed on October 30 2018).

40 drawn from 2 <sup>nd</sup> stage random sampling	21 (52.5%)	19 (47.5%)	40
209 respondents of our survey	104 (50.5%)	102 (49.5%)	206

<b>Age</b>						
	17–24	25–34	35–50	51–65	66+	Total
377	9 (2.4%)	31 (8.2%)	118 (31.3%)	130 (34.5%)	89 (23.6%)	377
40	5 (12.5%)	10 (25.0%)	12 (30.0%)	6 (15.0%)	7 (17.5%)	40
209	0 (0.0%)	12 (8.9%)	56 ( <b>27.4%</b> )	80 ( <b>39.2%</b> )	56 ( <b>27.4%</b> )	204

<b>Education</b>				
	Primary	Secondary	Higher	Total
377	9 (2.4%)	70 (18.6%)	298 (79.0%)	377
40	5 (12.5%)	20 (50.0%)	15 (37.5%)	40
209	1 (3.8%)	24 (11.6%)	181 ( <b>87.9%</b> )	206

Our body of respondents (209) is directly drawn from the first-stage sample of 377 people. If it is well-balanced in terms of gender, it shows a clear over-representation of highly educated and older people<sup>5</sup>. If our respondents are biased in terms of socio-demographic characteristics, there is also a strong bias towards a strong feeling of self-confidence in their knowledge about political issues and mobility in particular. Indeed, 81.4% of our respondents claim they understand pretty well the mobility issues Brussels is confronted with. Also, 59.3% of them consider that they are better informed about the government and societal issues.

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Don't know/median option</b>	<b>Agree</b>
I think I am better informed about societal issues and	20.6% (43)	20.1% (42)	59.3% (124)

<sup>5</sup> 36.2% of the Brussels population over 15 years old has a higher education, 27.0% has a diploma from the secondary education and 36.8% has a diploma from the primary degree. [http://ibsa.brussels/?set\\_language=fr](http://ibsa.brussels/?set_language=fr) 18% of the Brussels population aged over 15 is aged over 66, 14% between 51 and 65, 31% between 35 and 50, 24% between 25 and 34 and 13% between 17 and 24. [http://ibsa.brussels/?set\\_language=fr](http://ibsa.brussels/?set_language=fr)

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politics than most of the people			
I think I understand pretty well the mobility issues Brussels is confronted with	10.5% (22)	8.1% (17)	81.4% (170)

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Another bias affecting our respondents' sample is obviously their pre-existing interest for citizen participation. As a matter of fact, 63.6% of them believe that half of our representative assemblies should be composed of randomly selected citizens. Moreover, 73.2% of them think one should gather citizens again to discuss about political matters. Besides, 73.6% would agree to participate in such a process if they were invited again to participate. Hence, these people positive stance towards deliberative and participatory practices. However, does a positive stance implies an awareness of the mini-public and a support for its recommendations? Does their pre-existing positive perception correlate with their perception of legitimacy of the citizen panel?

This article aims at answering these crucial questions on which the legitimacy of the mini-public rests. Indeed, if people who are aware of the process tend to trust the participants, consider them legitimate and endorse the results, then awareness would lead to the broad support a mini-public needs to build its legitimacy to weigh on political decisions. Awareness would thus be the key to generate support for the mini-public's process, participants and outcomes and thereby allow it to contribute to the overall deliberative quality of the system by fueling it with largely supported recommendations.

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	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Don't know/median option</b>	<b>Agree</b>
If I am randomly selected again in the future to participate in such a panel, I would agree to participate	3.4% (7)	23.0% (48)	73.6% (154)
We should gather citizens again to discuss about societal issues like we did with the citizen panel	3.4% (7)	23.4% (49)	73.2% (153)
Parliaments should be composed of elected	23.4% (49)	13.0% (27)	63.6% (133)

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representatives and  
randomly selected  
citizens instead of only  
elected  
representatives

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We also see that our respondents have warm feelings towards the mini-public they were invited in (59.3% of them show positive feelings about the process, 62.2% said they are satisfied with the process, and 62.7% said they were satisfied with the organization of the process). Nevertheless, the next section shows that they do not seem to have followed its work closely.

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Don't know/median option</b>	<b>Agree</b>
Overall, my feelings about the citizen panel are positive	5.7% (12)	35.0% (73)	59.3% (124)
I have positive views of the process of the citizen panel	18.2% (38)	19.6% (41)	62.2% (130)
I have positive views of the organization of the citizen panel	17.2% (36)	20.1% (42)	62.7% (131)

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### The legitimacy of the panel in the non-participants' eyes.

As we have seen, mini-publics can be linked to the wider public through different channels. They can first be used as trustees by the broader population, in the sense that its recommendations are used by the citizens willing to position themselves on the issue under discussion. Second, they can serve as information proxies: the arguments exchanged in the mini-public can enlighten citizens about the different aspects and opinions regarding the subject under discussion. A third role is their faculty to stimulate a wider public debate. This role is less individualistic compared to the two others that its, their recommendations and the arguments exchanged inside the mini-public can drive citizens towards deliberating among each other about the subject under discussion. Which one of these, if any, is the Make Your Brussels Mobility Panel likely to be assigned by our body of respondents? And to what extent does their initial awareness of the process turn into a support for its results? These are the two main questions we aim at answering through this paper. To do so, our analysis relies on the perceptions of our respondents on three features of the mini-public. Depending on how

they assess these elements, the Make Your Brussels Mobility Panel is more likely to be used either as a trustee, an information provider or a stimulus for the public debate, or none of these options. These three aspects are namely the input (composition of the panel, who are its participants), the throughput (perception of how the deliberations went on) and output (quality of and support for the recommendations it produced). Also, depending on these results, we will investigate to what extent being aware of the existence of a mini-public can generate a support for its results.

**Input**

First, the legitimacy of a mini-public can come from its composition, from the trust and the legitimacy people assign to the participants of the mini-public based on their characteristics. As Goodin and Dryzek (2006) put it, a mini-public should represent “the diversity of social characteristics and plurality of initial points of view in the larger society”. The idea is to follow the ideal of participation of all the people affected by a decision (Goodin, 2007) by drawing a sample of people representing the diversity of opinions, interests, perspectives and life-experiences (MacKenzie & Warren, 2012; Ingham & Levin, 2018) are present in the deliberations.

In this case, 39.7% of our respondents think that the panel represents accurately the diversity one can find inside the broader Brussels population, while only 8.6% think it doesn’t. More importantly, they seem to consider the participants as legitimate actors to weigh on public decisions about mobility issues. Indeed, 50.6% of them claim that the participants are not less legitimate than political actors to have their word on mobility policies.

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Don’t know/median option</b>	<b>Agree</b>
I think the participants of the citizen panel accurately represent the diversity of the Brussels’ population	8.6% (18)	51.7% (108)	39.7% (83)

The participants have different opinions about mobility in Brussels	4.3% (9)	35.9% (75)	59.8% (125)
I think the participants have as much legitimacy as elected representatives to express their views about mobility issues	11.0% (23)	38.4% (80)	50.6% (106)

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### Throughput

Diversity is not sufficient to ensure trust in the mini-public and its recommendations. In addition, this diversity has to be articulated in face-to-face deliberations aiming at the formulation of recommendations to enhance the common good. In other words, the deliberations among the participants have to be based on the public interest and not on each participant's individual interests and reflect a consensus among the participants (MacKenzie & Warren, 2012) in order to foster trust among the wider public. In this case, the respondents do not seem to believe that the participants have the ability to come up with consensual recommendations to advance the common good. Indeed, only 47.8% of the respondents think that the participants are only defending their personal interests without trying to advance the common good. Also, 41.7% think that the participants do not listen to one another but only try to promote their own opinions. Also, they seem to think that participants have strong opinions on the subject. Indeed, they seem quite convinced that the participants have different opinions, and that they are not afraid of defending them: so much that it would be almost impossible to find solutions on which everyone agrees. When it comes to the ability of participants to change their mind in light of better arguments, the respondents are quite unsure. Indeed, 40.7% of them answered with the median option or abstained and the percentage of people agreeing and disagreeing is quite the same.

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Don't know/median option</b>	<b>Agree</b>
The citizen panel should have auditioned more experts	30.2% (63)	46.4% (97)	23.4% (49)
The participants of the citizen panel do not have enough expertise	43.0% (90)	44.0% (92)	13.0% (27)

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to express their views  
on mobility issues

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	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Don't know/median option</b>	<b>Agree</b>
The participants don't pay attention to what others say. They just came to defend their own opinions	25.8% (54)	32.5% (68)	41.7% (87)
The participants focused on their individual interest rather than on the common good	22.0% (46)	30.1% (63)	47.8% (100)
The participants are sincere. They do not hide their true opinions	12.9% (27)	30.6% (64)	56.5% (118)
It is difficult, maybe even impossible, to find solutions on which everyone agrees	14.8% (31)	24.4% (51)	60.8% (127)
The participants didn't change their mind, even if the others presented good arguments	29.7% (62)	40.7% (85)	29.6% (62)

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## Output

As a matter of fact, 51.2% of the respondents did not follow the outcomes of the mini-public in the press or elsewhere and 62.2% of them did not read the final report. Also, in the previous sections, when it comes to assessing particular features of the mini-public or its outcomes, many respondents abstain or answer by the average option. This trend could be caused by the weak follow-up of the results among respondents. The following tables are thus to interpret with regard to this high abstention and average response rate.

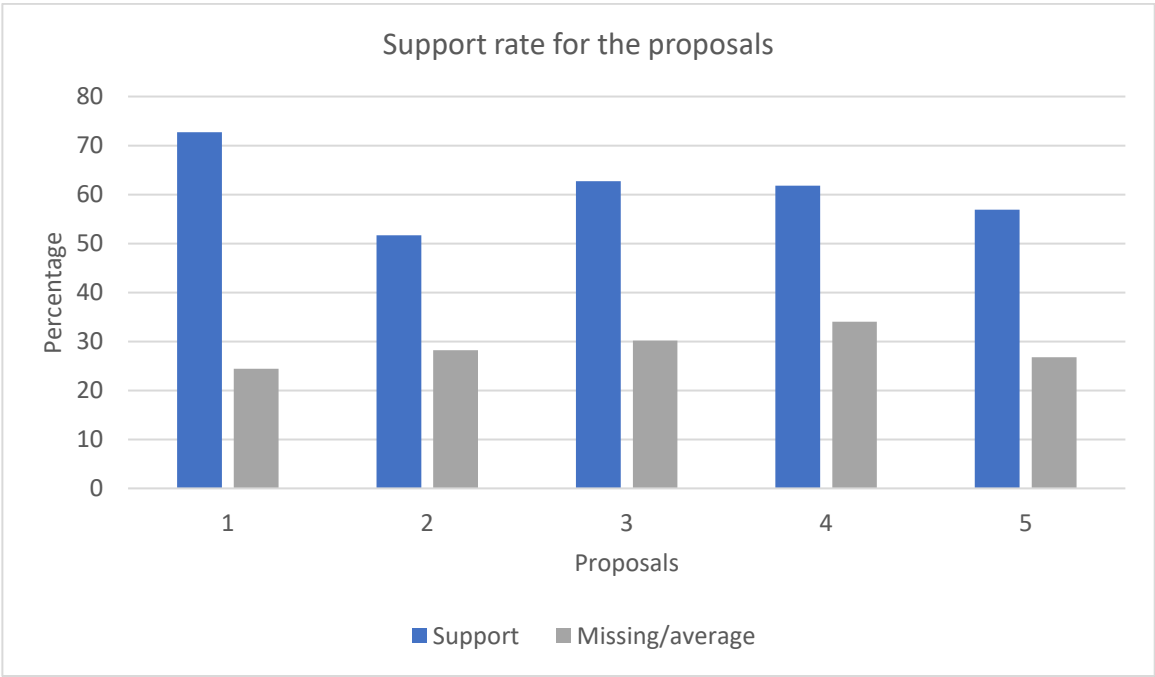
	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Don't know/median option</b>	<b>Agree</b>
Even if I didn't participate, I followed the work of a citizen panel closely, for instance through the media, social networks, friends, and/or the Parliament website.	51.2% (107)	19.6% (41)	29.2% (61)

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Missing</b>
Have you read the final report?	30.6% (64)	62.2% (130)	7.2% (15)

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Don't know/median option</b>	<b>Agree</b>
The citizen panel forgot important issues when it comes to mobility in Brussels	13.9% (29)	40.7% (85)	45.4% (95)
I totally agree with the recommendations made by the citizen panel	9.6% (20)	44.0% (92)	46.4% (97)
I think the majority of the citizens agrees with the recommendations made by the citizen panel	5.7% (12)	40.2% (84)	54.1% (113)
I think good decisions were made by the citizen panel	20.1% (42)	57.9% (121)	22.0% (46)
I have positive views of the results of the citizen panel	17.7% (37)	21.5% (45)	60.8% (127)
The recommendations of the citizen panel should be turned into laws	10.5% (22)	36.8% (77)	52.6% (110)

When it comes to the support for the results, when they do position themselves on the outcomes of the mini-public, the respondents seem to support them. Indeed, 60.8% of them are satisfied with the results, and 52.6% of them even think they should be turned into laws. However, if they think the majority of the population could support these recommendations, they also think that the panel forgot important issues when it comes to mobility. Also, all items show a high non-positioning rate among the respondents, which again could be a consequence of the low attention they devoted to following the outcomes of the mini-public in the press or elsewhere.

The low awareness rate we find among the respondents also seems to lead to a lack of positioning of the respondents on the particular proposals made by the mini-public. However, if the non-positioning rate is high, the support rate for the proposals is also quite high and varies from one proposal to another, depending on their polarizing or more consensual character.



- 1= Creating a digital platform gathering all the information about public transports (timetables, routes, prices, etc.).
- 2= Reducing the parking spaces in favor of a better public space
- 3= Obliging all public transport operators to use the MOBIB card to provide their services
- 4= Creating a central authority in charge of coordinating and supervising all mobility actors
- 5= Implementing a toll for citizens who do not live in Brussels and use its profits to invest in a better public transport infrastructure

To sum up, the support among our group of respondents for the recommendations issued by the “Make Your Brussels Mobility Panel” cannot really be attributed to a higher awareness they would have of the process or the outcomes it produced, as their initial awareness didn’t turn into a higher interest for the work of the mini-public. Moreover, there is no statistically significant relationship between having followed the results with attention or having read the final report and being in favor of a particular proposal. In other words, awareness doesn’t seem to lead to a stronger support for the recommendations made by the mini-public.

Besides, the higher awareness we find among some of our respondents doesn’t seem to lead to a more positive or more negative evaluation of the process or its outcomes. Indeed, there is no statistically significant relationship between having followed the results with attention or having read the final report and holding positive views of the process and its results.

To sum up, having followed the process and outcomes of the mini-public closely does not lead to a higher trust or support for its process and results. This in turn reveals that awareness or even strong interest doesn’t necessarily lead to build a link between the mini and the maxi-public. Therefore, awareness doesn’t necessarily lead to a reinforced legitimacy of the mini-public to weigh on public decisions, because awareness does not seem to increase the support for the process and outcomes of the mini-public.

## Discussion

The present research makes two contributions to the understanding of the coupling of a mini-public with the maxi public. First, we assumed that the coupling relied on the maxi-public’s awareness of the mini-public. Subsequently, this awareness would lead to the support for the mini-public’s recommendations. Our results show that a majority of the randomly selected non-participants is not aware of the mini-public, despite receiving an invitation letter from the President of the Brussels Parliament and accepting to participate. Furthermore, when these non-participants have followed the citizen panel, their awareness does not significantly correlate with the support for the recommendations. As a consequence, our assumption does not seem to hold. In order to couple the mini-public with the maxi-public, the fact of being aware may not be enough. The support for the recommendations could stem from the mini-public’s legitimacy. However, non-participants have a mitigated perception of its legitimacy.

Our second contribution offers an interpretation for this first finding. We distinguished two roles for mini-publics apropos its coupling with the maxi-public. On the one hand, it could be used as a trustee, that is providing the maxi-public with consensual recommendations that they could use without being invited to think through the matter. On the other hand, the mini-public could act as an information provider. It then aims to induce reflection among the maxi-public by presenting all the pros and cons of a decision. Our results show that non-participants do not envision the citizen panel as a trustee. The trustee implies that the maxi-public follows the mini-public’s recommendations because they find it legitimate. Almost the half believes

that participants focus on their individual interests instead of advancing the common good. Moreover, more than two third believe it is “difficult or maybe even impossible” to take consensual decision.

Hence, overall, the results are mitigated: the diverse and more expert character of the mini-public might enhance its potential to be perceived as a trustee for the wider public to position itself on the issue under discussion, but its inability to produce consensual recommendations to represent the common good might weaken it (MacKenzie & Warren, 2012). At the same time, it can rather be used as an information-provider because it produces contested results. Citizens could use to inform themselves about the issue and generate a wider debate about it, using the arguments and proposals exchanged inside the mini-public (Gastil et al., 2016). However, this option seems quite unlikely as our respondents, if they are aware of the existence of the mini-public, do not seem familiar with its particular process or outcomes. Indeed, if the wider public doesn't follow the process and outcomes of the mini-public, it isn't likely to use it as an information provider or a basis on which to foster broader deliberations about mobility, as they are not aware of how the participants deliberated, of what arguments they exchanged and which solutions they eventually came up with.

## Conclusion

This current study aims to better understand the coupling between a mini-public and the maxi-public. We argued that the mini-public is an isolated site of deliberation that is disconnected from the rest of the system. For this research, we focused on its connection with the rest of the population that does not participate in the mini-public. More precisely, we focused on a specific group that has not yet been studied: the citizens that positively answered the invitation of the first random sampling, but that were not selected in the second sampling. This group is of special interest for the coupling with the maxi-public because they could potentially enhance the awareness and support for the mini-public. These randomly selected non-participants could be more aware of the mini-public and show stronger support for its recommendations because they were invited to the citizen panel. If this assumption holds, one may think about increasing the number of randomly selected citizens so as to enhance the maxi-public's awareness and support for the mini-public.

Our research was a preliminary step towards testing this assumption. We explore the feasibility of this idea by surveying whether these non-participants were aware of the citizen panel “Make your Brussels Mobility” and supported its recommendations. Because our research was explorative, our findings should be read cautiously. Indeed, several limitations to this pilot study need to be acknowledged. First, we could not compare our survey results with the perception among the rest of the maxi-public. This is problematic because the non-participants under scrutiny are very likely to show a more positive stance towards mini-publics. The description of our population shows that the participation paradox applies on the non-participants. They are mainly older and highly educated citizens that are not representative of the population in Brussels. As a consequence, further research needs to

compare the awareness and support in both the non-participants and the rest of the population. Only then will we know the capacity of the random sampling to improve the coupling between the mini- and maxi-public. Second, our theoretical model of the roles of the mini-publics does not seem to grasp adequately the non-participants' perception of legitimacy. Future trials should reconsider the normative role of mini-public regarding the maxi-public.

Although the current study is explorative and suffers from certain limitations, it suggests that the awareness does not seem to lead to a stronger support for the mini-public's recommendations. We did not find any significant relation between the people being aware and the support for the recommendations. This implies that the awareness cannot ensure on its own the legitimacy of the mini-publics. A natural progression of this work is to analyze which additional element to the awareness could strengthen the coupling with the maxi-public.

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