Unraveling a Mystery: The Influences of Deliberative Minipublics on Public Decision-making

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Preface

Before commencing with my scientific contribution, I would like to describe the personal journey that led to this manuscript. Like some other people, I have a fascination for minipublics. And like many of these people, my interest was triggered by reading in 2015 David Van Reybrouck's book 'Against Elections'. In the beginning, my curiosity for minipublics was mainly driven by a concern about the state of our democracy and a will to understand how these unique deliberative forums could help us reform democracy and build fairer societies. I had great hopes in minipublics because I thought that their artificial setting could insulate the participation of citizens from undue external influences and other structural inequalities. If citizens learned about an issue and were protected from manipulation and populism, their deliberative outcome could only support a more progressive political agenda. I believe minipublics captivate because they make us believe that another society is possible and that we are witnessing it first-hand in a minipublic. Anyone who has observed or participated in a minipublic has been dazzled by the positive effects they generate on participants. As ordinary citizens learn about the issue, engage in the deliberation and formulate sound recommendations, they gain self-confidence to learn more about and participate in politics. People listen to and respect each other. The picture of a minipublic is truly inspirational.

When I started drafting a PhD research project on minipublics in 2016, I could not just rely on these first-hand experiences of minipublics or my enthusiasm stemming from my reading of David Van Reybrouck, James Fishkin and others. I had to find the research gap. After reviewing the literature, I quickly found out that there was very little research about the consequences of minipublics on public decisions and most research focused on the effects on its participants. I therefore developed a first research project in which I wanted to understand the conditions under which minipublics had an impact on public decisions and, to do so, I planned on comparing all the minipublics that have taken place in Belgium. This research question would enable me to understand how minipublics could become more influential and, thereby, become a vessel of progress for society. Like many other PhD students, I had to review my objectives after the investigation of my first case, the citizens' panel 'Brussels—Make your Mobility'. I felt that the existing methods to assess the influence left out a lot of crucial factors and did not enable me to make reliable claims about the genuine influence of the citizens' panel. I therefore decided to first focus on the concept of influence and how to measure it. While I was working on these questions, I observed regularly minipublics in Belgium at the municipal, regional and national level and abroad too, where I had the chance to observe the French minipublics of the Grand Débat National and the Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat. On the field, I discussed with a lot of practitioners, participants, journalists, and decision makers. At the same time, I also met many scholars working on minipublics and whose views have challenged my earlier understandings of and hope for minipublics. All these encounters and observations formed precious and fruitful resources to develop my reflection on the minipublics' influences.

One theorist in particular had a significant impact on me, actually provoking a complete paradigmatic shift, and she did so in a conversation that lasted only a couple of minutes. I met

Cristina Lafont in Australia in the beginning of 2020. My research was then still implicitly driven by a willingness to use minipublics for a political project—building a more equal and fair society. I presented to her the arguments that I had built for the past four years based on the scientific literature and which supported my normative political project, but she readily confuted them all. I was lost for words. She made me realize that I misunderstood the actual purpose of minipublic: to increase the legitimacy of public decisions, irrespective of their political orientation.

After that, my personal objective behind the PhD research changed. It was not only about understanding the minipublics' influence on public decisions anymore, I also wanted to better understand their genuine democratic purpose and how their political influences could help build vast public majorities to agree with any public decisions, not only the ones I deemed right. As a result, while my fascination did not fade at all, my idealism for minipublics was progressively replaced by a more pragmatic perspective. My meetings with Mark Warren, Nicole Curato, and, especially, André Bächthiger significantly contributed to this evolution. Mark's problem-based approach to democratic theory has been extremely influential, even though we actually still need to theorize an equivalent of his framework to apply specifically to democratic innovations. The structure of this manuscript does not follow the evolution I just depicted. The reader may thus sense a contradiction throughout the PhD, as some sections reflect more my initial and idealist hopes for minipublics while others are cemented in a more realistic perspective. Finally, a couple of my arguments may read as cynical, but this is because I should have taken more holidays and stop cogitating about minipublics. In the end, I remain a strong supporter of minipublics, albeit just a more demanding one.

1. Chapter 1. Introduction

Representative democracies are facing a series of serious challenges. Citizens allegedly feel increasingly more disconnected from their elected representatives, resulting in a broad distrust of public institutions, political parties and politicians (Dalton, 2004, 2013). The foundations of representative democracies are further undermined by a decline in electoral turnout and membership in traditional mobilization organizations such as political parties and unions (Mair, 2013; Papadopoulos, 2013), while the augmentation of polarization makes it increasingly difficult to adopt policies that receive public support beyond partisan lines. The idea of democracy itself is being challenged by illiberal and authoritarian threats, such as the rise of illiberal democracies (e.g., Hungary, Poland, or Turkey), leaders (e.g., Donald Trump, Narendra Modi, or Jair Bolsonaro), political parties (e.g., the radical-right), and the direct attacks from authoritarian regimes (e.g., Russia or China) that seek to discredit democracy in order to legitimize its own rule. In this turbulent time, many people seek to address these democratic challenges or to reinvent democracy with various solutions. Chief among them is the use democratic innovations and other participatory governance schemes, which are expected to generate multiple benefits that can help improve democracy and offer a response to the aforementioned issues (Elstub & Escobar, 2019; Smith, 2009).

Among these democratic innovations, minipublics have been set up, sometimes already long ago, in many places across the world. A deliberative minipublic is a participatory process in which lay citizens are selected with (stratified) random sampling to engage in a structured deliberation so as to exert public influences (Setälä & Smith, 2018). Minipublics have become a popular participatory process to address a series of symptoms of the democratic crisis. Their implementation in the past decade has mushroomed (Paulis et al., 2021) to the point that the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) optimistically describes their proliferation as a 'deliberative wave' (OECD, 2020). The French Citizens' Convention on Climate epitomizes their increasing political presence: President Emmanuel Macron, convened a minipublic to elaborate the national climate plan. Supranational institutions are relying on minipublics as well: the European Commission recently implemented a large-scale minipublic to discuss the future of the European Union, while 100 citizens worldwide took part in a Global Assembly to deliberate on climate and the ecological crisis ahead of the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference. Likewise, scholars have devoted increasingly more attention to minipublics, as illustrated by the proliferation of scientific publications (Jacquet & van der Does, 2020b).

The mushrooming of minipublics and the excitement they generate raise several questions. What makes minipublics so popular and why do so many people pin their hope on them? Which principles do they embody, and which democratic functions do they aim to fulfill? How much influence do they exert on public decisions? And does their impact on politics meet the high expectations that people have for them? This PhD thesis seeks to offer elements of answers to these questions. Its main objective is to demystify their influences on public decisions. How minipublics impact policymaking is pivotal but the question of whether and how this is achieved largely remain enfolded in a 'black box', and we lack a clear understanding of the

kinds of influence they exert, how, and with which effects. This focus on minipublics' influences also relates to their broader purpose in our representative democracies. Why are minipublics implemented? Which problems are they supposed to solve, and which contributions are they expected to make? This PhD research also aims to investigate these questions.

The attractiveness of minipublics lies in their capacity to instantiate to some extent the principles of deliberation, inclusion and public influences. In the next section of **Chapter 1**, I describe the **theoretical foundations of minipublics** and how these are realized through the specific design of minipublics. Although a consensus exists around these three principles, people have different expectations about which one is more important. Decision-makers, practitioners, citizens, and scholars all have different hopes and expectations for minipublics as they rely on a different conception of the purpose of these deliberative forums. The gap between practice and theory is particularly important here. Minipublics were initially developed and implemented within academic circles (Crosby & Nethercut, 2004; Dienel, 2002; Fishkin, 1997), where scholars could have a tight control on the design and functions of their deliberative processes. However, the alleged rise of a 'deliberative wave' raises the question of whether theorists and organizers are still on the same page when it comes to conceive and justify the purpose of minipublics. Accordingly, if a desynchronization exists between theory and practice, what does it mean for the literature and, more broadly, the way we conceive the functions of minipublics?

Chapter 2 tackles this issue as it examines **the purposes of minipublics in theory and in practice** so as to offer an overview of the theoretical and practical conceptions of minipublics' contributions. I map and analyse the projected public image of all the minipublics that took place in Belgium between 2001 and 2021 and I then compare these contributions to the theoretical literature. The study reveals an important gap between theory and practice: several theoretical functions are rarely picked up to justify minipublics, while a couple of important practical justifications lack a theoretical background. The overall picture of minipublics' public justifications over the last twenty years also reveals that the minipublics are increasingly associated with ambitious contributions, such as solving the crisis of democracy, even if the literature has emphasized the incapacity of minipublics to tackle such structural problems. These findings suggest the creation of a minipublic bubble which inflates the capacity of minipublics to deal with structural problems.

While researchers have devoted a lot of time and energy to analyse the benefits of minipublics on their participants (for an overview, see Lindell, Forthcoming), the literature has only recently started to focus more closely to the consequences of minipublics on policymaking (e.g., Font et al., 2018; Jacquet & van der Does, 2020b, 2020a; for a pioneering work, see also Michels, 2011). As a result, this emerging research agenda still lacks a proper conceptualization and operationalization of the influences of minipublics on public decisions. For instance, most researchers study the influence of minipublics as if decision makers had no preferences before and they therefore assume that the coincidence of a minipublic's proposal with a public decision demonstrates the impact of the deliberative forum. While studying influence is a

search for causality *par excellence*, the research agenda still needs to take on the analytical challenges inherent it.

Chapter 3 makes a series of contributions about how minipublics influence public decisions and how we can measure it. It first elaborates a new conceptualization of the influence of minipublics on public decisions, before translating it into a new analytical framework, **the Sequential Impact Matrix**. This new methodological approach integrates how the recommendations of a minipublic relates to the expressed initial preferences of decision makers, and the type of public policy elements that these recommendations entail. I compare the Sequential Impact framework with other methodologies used in the literature and apply them all on a case study, the citizens' panel 'Brussels—Make your Mobility', so as to show how different measurements produce diverging, even contradictory, empirical findings. The citizens' panel was organized by the Parliament of the Region of Brussels-Capital and was meant to influence the 10-year mobility plan 'Good Move'. The objective of this chapter is to **standardize the existing methodologies** to measure influence and propose ways to increase the reliability of the findings. Based on the case study, I argue that the most reliable and precise measurement method consists of a combination of the Sequential Impact Matrix and a mixed method. Thanks to the former, we can analyse the extent to which decision-makers take up recommendations that align with their agenda and disregard those that diverge from it, but it also proposes an operationalization of public policy which helps capture more systematically the congruency between a recommendation and its uptake in a public decision. With the mixed method, we interview key policy and decision makers to triangulate the findings from the desk research and generate additional insights into the more subtle political influences of minipublics.

The literature has hitherto not reflected on how much influence minipublics should exert, as the debate has so far revolved around the question of whether minipublics should remain consultative or receive the authority to make binding public decisions and thereby guarantee their impact. We are still left without any normative yardsticks to assess how many proposals from a minipublics should be translated into public decisions in order to count as successful. We currently imagine that minipublics can exert a great influence, even producing significant policy changes like with the adoption of the same-sex marriage in Ireland commonly attributed to the Irish Citizens' Assembly (Farrell et al., 2019). But we have not yet thoroughly analysed the exact weight of a minipublic with regard to other sources of influences that also affect public decisions, such as unions, civil society organizations and political parties. The focus on high-profile and succseful cases also generates a misleading picture of what minipublics can actually do in terms of influence on public decisions (Spada & Ryan, 2017).

Chapter 4 therefore explores the issue of our **normative expectations about what minipublics can and should achieve when influencing public decisions**. I propose a new realist and contingency-based approach that associates the influence expectations with neither specific and ambitious understanding of democracy nor a mechanistic understanding of minipublics' influence. It first clarifies the influence on public decisions minipublics can hope to achieve in the light of the constraints inherent to policymaking, highlighting the rare and

difficult chances for a minipublic to produce significant policy changes on its own. I next turn to decision makers and how they should engage with minipublics' recommendations. I argue that a legitimate influence on public decision mainly depends on the reaction of decision-makers to the recommendations of a minipublic. I build upon Cristina Lafont's model (2019) to discuss decision makers' reactions in four different scenarios that consider the relations between the preferences of a minipublic, decision makers, and the public opinion. I conclude this normative discussion with a series of recommendations that can help minipublics to unleash their potential to generate legitimate non-incremental public decisions.

In the **Conclusions**, I close the manuscript with a series of reflections about the entire PhD research. I describe several limitations of my methodological strategies and I discuss the recent local opposition to the implementation of the Good Move Plan and what it means for my interpretations from Chapter 3 as well as for researching minipublics' influences. I conclude with a final, more personal, reflection about my motivation behind making a somewhat provocative claim about the minipublic bubble.

Finally, let me briefly explain the form of the manuscript. This PhD thesis was based on research articles and needed to feature three papers already published and one publishable. Instead of compiling summaries of each paper alongside an introduction and a conclusion, I decided to opt for a hybrid format which would later enable me to publish the manuscript as a book. I therefore modified and enriched the content of the articles. For instance, I merged into Chapter 3 the two Articles "How Do Minipublics Affect Public Policy?" and "Measuring the Impact of Consultative Citizen Participation" (see Section 8. Published Articles). I also enriched the Discussion Section (3.5) with additional insights from my other research which does not count as an article composing the PhD thesis. Chapter 2 is identical to the third published article "the Minipublic Bubble". As for the publishable paper, I wrote two pieces which compose Chapter 4. These are not yet submitted to a journal because they are still a work in progress. Due to practical constraints (i.e., the start of my postdoctoral position), I had to submit my PhD thesis earlier than expected and I therefore could not finalize them on time for this manuscript. This hybrid format furthermore implies that the reader may observe different writing styles, especially between the chapters based on published articles (Chapters 2 and 3) and the others (Chapters 4 and 5).

1.1. Minipublics: a definition

I think the noteworthiness of minipublics stems from their capacity to embody three key principles through their design characteristics: deliberation, inclusion, and public influences. For each, I first present the theoretical underpinnings before explaining how minipublics seek to realize them in practice through their design. This section not only delineates the concept of minipublics used in this PhD thesis, but also highlights a series of shortcomings and unaddressed questions about the purposes of minipublics, and their capacity to meet the expectations set from them, in particular their influence on public decisions.

1.1.1. Deliberation

The participants of a minipublic engage in a deliberation on a public issue. Deliberation can be minimally understood as "mutual communication that involves weighing and reflecting on preferences, values, and interests regarding matters of common concern" (Bächtiger et al., 2018, p. 2). This form of communication differs from others, like debating, negotiating or conversing, because it involves mutual reason-giving and reciprocity. The former refers to the exchange of reasons, which seeks to change judgements, preferences and views of participants through persuasions instead of coercion, manipulation or deception (Bächtiger & Parkinson, 2019, p. 2; Dryzek, 2002, p. 1). Reciprocity—i.e., mutual respect—means that participants must respect the views and the right of others to deliberate and be open-minded when considering the merits in the others' views (Bächtiger & Parkinson, 2019, p. 22; Gutmann & Thompson, 1998; Mansbridge et al., 2010). It hence implies that participants adopt a deliberative stance, that is "a relation to others as equals engaged in the mutual exchange of reasons oriented as if to reaching a shared practical judgement" (Owen & Smith, 2015, p. 228).

This communicative action lies at the roots of the broader theoretical paradigm of deliberative democracy. According to Floridia (2017), the theory of deliberative democracy is the result of a dialogue among various approaches to philosophy (Cohen, 1989; Manin, 1987), laws and constitutions (Bessette, 1980; Habermas, 2015; Sunstein, 1985), social theory (Elster, 1986) and political theory and science (Dryzek, 1994; Fishkin, 1991; Mansbridge, 1983). We can summarize the main distinctive contribution of deliberative democracy with the definition of Simone Chambers, for whom deliberative democracy is a 'talk-centric' approach to democracy that replaces the traditional and widespread 'vote-centric' perspective: "Voting-centric views see democracy as the arena in which fixed preferences and interests compete via fair mechanisms of aggregation. In contrast, deliberative democracy focuses on the communicative processes of opinion and will-formation that precede voting" (2003, p. 308). In other words, the purpose of deliberation is to form a collective will, considering the various solutions and weighing the pros and cons of each, before making a decision about one of them (Manin, 1987, p. 345).

Theorists argue that deliberation prior to decision confers many benefits. For instance, it can improve the epistemic credentials of decisions: through the exchange of arguments, participants can broaden their perspectives, understand the rationale of others, and identify potential flaws or particular interests (Bächtiger & Parkinson, 2019, p. 2; Manin, 1987, pp. 351–355). Most notably, deliberation holds the potential to increase the legitimacy of public decisions. For deliberative democrats, a law is legitimate to the extent that it is the result of democratic deliberation, which implies that all citizens and points of view affected by that law can participate in the deliberation and receive an equal consideration and are freely compared (Floridia, 2017, p. 108; Habermas, 2015; Manin, 1987). The theory of deliberative democracy is essential to understand the recent creation, development, and functions of minipublics. These were initially commonly conceived as a micro strategy for testing and realizing deliberative democracy (Elstub et al., 2016; Hendriks, 2006), although it has now changed. Following the

systemic turn to deliberation (Dryzek, 2010; Mansbridge et al., 2012), scholars now tend to highlight minipublics' contributions to the broader deliberative system.

Minipublics possess a series of design features to ensure its deliberative character. First, deliberation must be inclusive, that is making sure that everyone participating has the effective opportunity of expressing her opinions, values, and preferences. This not only requires that deliberation must engage a diverse group of citizens (see below), but that everyone at the table has an equal opportunity to participate. As Curato et al. point out, "getting a seat at the table is vastly different from having a voice at the table" (2019, p. 68). Research has shown that some citizen groups are less likely to participate in a deliberation—for instance, women, people with lower income or lower formal education, ethnic minorities—while other groups tend to dominate the discussion—for instance, men, people with higher income and formal education (Carpini et al., 2004; Karpowitz et al., 2012; Lupia & Norton, 2017).

An essential design feature of minipublics is the facilitation, which ensures that everyone receives an equal opportunity to express themselves, and that each voice is equally respected (Landwehr, 2014; Moore, 2012). Facilitation is a delicate task, as it must spot the subtle and implicit ways through which inequalities occur and shape genuine deliberation (Curato & Farrell, 2021, pp. 62–63; Landwehr, 2014b). Inclusion also involves allowing a wide range of expression styles, so that everyone feels legitimate to participate (Curato & Farrell, 2021), thereby broadening the scope of deliberation beyond the Habermasian ideal of rational discourse (Bächtiger et al., 2010; Young, 2000) and reducing the adverse effects of inequality (Siu, 2017). As Smith argued, facilitation is "the most critical factor that enables the realization of equality of voices and considered judgement among participants" (Smith, 2012, pp. 98–99).

Another important design characteristic is the provision of information: participants in a minipublic should receive information so as to inform their deliberation, stimulate the production of informed judgement and considered reflection, and to compensate for some internal qualities among participants (Curato & Farrell, 2021, pp. 71–72; Drury et al., 2021; Gastil, 2008, p. 9; Levine et al., 2005, p. 275; Smith, 2009, p. 94). Exposing participants to the diversity in frames, perspectives and interpretations encourages them to consider all relevant opinions (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2015; Caluwaerts & Ugarriza, 2012; Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p. 15). They also acquire considerable policy-relevant factual knowledge which helps them to grasp the costs, benefits and implications of adopting a certain policy over another alternative (O'Flynn & Sood, 2014). Information provision can take different forms, from information booklets distributed before a minipublic, to hearings of experts, stakeholders, and advocates.

1.1.2. Inclusion

Minipublics seek to create the ideal conditions for a deliberative democracy, which implies that the diversity of its participants mirrors the heterogeneity of the broader population. As Dryzek (2009, p. 1382) famously argues: "without inclusiveness, there may be deliberation but not deliberative democracy". Ideally, all citizens affected by a public decision should have the

equal opportunity of providing input to collective decision-making to ensure that the public decision is seen as legitimate (Dryzek, 2010; Goodin, 2007; Manin, 1987). Inclusion is however constrained by the impossibility of realizing simultaneously the three principles of political equality, deliberation, and mass participation (Fishkin, 2020; Fishkin, 2018). Typically, institutions that combine political equality with mass participation fail to be deliberative, for instance elections. Alternatively, deliberation and mass participation are likely to result in an unequal involvement of citizens in deliberation (see below). The final configuration with political equality and deliberation, incarnated by minipublics, fails to realize mass participation because deliberation requires small groups in order to be effective (for an institutional proposal to solve this issue, see Ackerman & Fishkin, 2004).

Inclusion is moreover difficult to realize in practice because power is unequally distributed among citizens. Political participation is indeed determined by income, wealth and education and other attributes (Gallego, 2015; Verba et al., 1978). These factors correlate with who participates not only in elections but also in other ad hoc participatory processes that rely on self-selection, such as participatory budgeting, referenda or public hearings. As Smith (2009, p. 15; see also pp. 163-69) points out, "The widely held concern among democratic theorists is that extending opportunities for citizen participation in the political process will simply reinforce and amplify the existing differentials of power and influence within society". Minipublics are attractive because they ensure a certain degree of political equality in the deliberation, an achievement that no other participatory institutions have yet equaled. By gathering a group of diverse citizens, minipublics help to artificially repair the unequal distribution of power and voices in representative democracy (Curato et al., 2019; see chapter 2). The design of minipublics seeks to realize inclusion by addressing the inequality of power through different design features, both through the aforementioned structured deliberation and its selection procedure.

Ryan and Smith's (2014) definition of minipublics provides a great typology to present the three main approaches to selection procedures and how these aim to realize inclusion. A stricter and more orthodox approach implies that minipublic participants must precisely mirror the demographics of the broader population. Stemming from the work of James Fishkin (2011) on his deliberative polls, minipublics are supposed to create 'deliberative microcosms', which are legitimate to the extent that they are statistically representative of the broader public. He conceives his deliberative polls as a survey that reveals "what the public would think, had it better opportunity to consider the question at issue (Fishkin, 1997, p. 162). Such a minipublic model must thus achieve the same standards as a survey or a poll, because the legitimacy of its results depends on the inferences we can draw from the broader population. It therefore implies that their democratic credentials rely on a 'pure' sortition, without the use of quotas or targeted recruitment (see below) of a group of lay citizens large enough to be statistically representative of the relevant population. Pure random sampling is essential because it enacts the principle of equality that "gives the same probability of being included in the sample" (Curato & Farrell, 2021, p. 39). This more restrictive approach to selection has nevertheless been criticized because it dismisses the added value of quasi-random sampling techniques, and it repudiates any minipublics that are not large enough to uphold the criteria of statistical representativeness.

Nevertheless, if minipublics were supposed to meet the standards of statistical validity, they should contain at least 1,000 participants. The large number of participants in practice (between 100 and 500) puts a strain on the quality of deliberation, which is difficult to organize in practice for so many participants (Curato & Farrell, 2021, p. 39) and results in costly short deliberation meetings (Elstub, 2014).

Scholars have therefore advocated for an alternative approach to select a diverse group of lay citizens. Goodin and Dryzek (2006a, p. 220) famously argued that minipublics are "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)". This definition adjusts the principle of representativeness so that it needs not only to be realized in a statistical sense but seeks instead to be representative of the diversity of the broader population. As Ryan and Smith (2014, p. 20) summarize: "The primary aim is clearly to engage an inclusive subgroup of participants from the affected population, from which no social group or perspective, particularly those who are traditional politically marginalized, is excluded". Minipublic can thus convene smaller groups of lay citizens, as long as all perspectives from the affected population are included. Departing from the demanding statistical representativeness, minipublic can rely on stratified random sampling and targeted mobilization strategies to make sure that all groups are represented. The former implies that minipublic designers use various socio-demographic, geographic and political criteria (Curato & Farrell, 2021, pp. 39–41; Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2008).

The sortition thus commonly follows a two-stage process (OECD, 2020; for a detailed description of the procedure, see Curato & Farrell, 2021 pp. 41-46): the minipublic organizers first send a bulk of invitations to randomly selected citizens. They next use a stratified random sampling to select the participants from the citizens who accepted the invitations. In addition, since some groups remain difficult to reach through the communication channels commonly used (letters, telephone, door-to-door), organizers sometimes employ targeted mobilization strategies, like the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly which recruited two representatives from aboriginal communities (Smith, 2009, p. 81). We should finally mention that the selection procedure is not the only way of ensuring the principle of inclusion. Besides inclusion within deliberation, various mechanisms have been implemented to increase the response rate from groups that are more difficult to reach: the minipublic organizers commonly cover the travel and accommodation expenses of participants and offer supporting infrastructures, such as childcare. We also increasingly witness the use of various financial incentives, which are intended to attract individuals with lower incomes.

1.1.3. Public influences

Minipublics must be consequential in the sense that deliberation should result in some public influences. Public influences can refer to any effects a minipublic has on the public broadly understood. So far, the theory has mainly focused on contributions to policymaking, mainly regarding how minipublic recommendations help policy-makers adopt more informed and

responsive decisions (Grönlund et al., 2014; Setälä, 2017). The rationale behind influencing policymaking consists of the need for a minipublic to see some of its deliberative outcome translated into public decisions. Like any participatory processes, citizen participation should result in some effects on decision-making (Rowe & Frewer, 2000; Smith, 2009, pp. 22–23); otherwise it dissolves into tokenism and leads to the frustration of its participants (Fernández-Martínez et al., 2020; Pateman, 2012) and the broader public (Van Dijk & Lefevere, 2022). As Rowe and Frewer argued about citizen participation more than twenty years ago, it should have "a genuine impact on policy and be seen to do so" (2000, p. 14) if they are to be sustainable and improve democracy. It is moreover a basic question of respecting the engagement of the participating citizens who have devoted time and energy to deliberation during evenings and weekends. Empirical studies indeed show that citizens deem it to be important for minipublics to influence public decisions if they want to participate or perceive the process as legitimate (Germann et al., 2021; Gundelach et al., 2017; Jacquet, 2017).

Inconsequential minipublics become a participatory experimentation without any practical use for solving the democratic crisis (Chambers, 2009), which ultimately questions their *raison d'être*. Minipublics are in principle used to enhance "the democratic legitimacy of the political decision-making process" (Setälä & Smith, 2018, p. 306), a contribution that can only be realized if the outcome of deliberation is to some extent integrated in public decisions. Given the little or absence of influence of many minipublics in practice, several scholars have formulated theoretical proposals to give decision-making authority to minipublics (Courant, 2021; Gastil & Wright, 2019; Landemore, 2020). Nevertheless, over the past decade many theoretical essays have advocated for examining and assessing broader public contributions, mainly as a result of the systematic turn to deliberation (Dryzek, 2010; Mansbridge et al., 2012) and Cristina Lafont's (2015, 2019) argument against the use of minipublics as a shortcut to public deliberation. These broader contributions mainly relate to the public sphere, such as improving public deliberation, distilling reasoned and informed arguments among the citizenry, building the deliberative capacity of the system, or fostering a macro-deliberative culture (Böker, 2017; Dryzek, 2017; Niemeyer, 2014). Other scholars have also highlighted the long-term effects of minipublics on the institutional culture of public institutions (Gourgues, 2013; Jacquet & van der Does, 2020a; Michels & Binnema, 2018) or have considered the extent to which recommendations made in minipublics are taken up in political debates (Jacquet & van der Does, 2020a). We should also not forget the benefits that minipublics exert on participants, although the public nature of these positive influences is proportionate to the—limited—number of citizens that take part in minipublics (Lindell, Forthcoming).

Minipublics are mainly designed in a way that allows for deliberation to produce some tangible results for the public. The deliberative process is thus result-oriented, meaning that after allowing all participants to share their views, the group must seek to formulate a collective judgement on a question (Curato & Farrell, 2021; Landwehr, 2014). The provision of information also enables participants to make recommendations that take into account the various legal and substantive factors that constrain decision makers. The outcome of deliberation aims to form an informed collective will, which was initially intended to be based

on consensus. Yet, more recent theoretical and empirical accounts of deliberation and decision-making procedures point out the risk for consensus-seeking deliberation to end up in anodyne outcomes that favor the status quo (Curato & Farrell, 2021, pp. 93–94). Minipublics' procedures for collective decision-making therefore often consist of voting procedures allowing participants to support or oppose the recommendations and ideas resulting from deliberation. Minority views are also integrated in the description of the collective will. The outcome can thus take various forms in practice. Many end up with a series of recommendations on public policy, which entail abstract or concrete proposals for policymaking, as well as a description of the reasoning that led to such recommendations. Minipublics can also feature the results of a survey of its participants: they commonly measure the epistemic transformation, showing how participants have changed their opinions on the question thanks to the deliberative experience. A collective judgement is then compiled in an official public report, which is circulated among the broader public and policymakers. That report is the main channel through which minipublics pursue public influence, although media coverage, the involvement of elected representatives, or the mobilization of the participants can also allow a minipublic to exert public influence.

2. Chapter 2. The purposes of minipublics in practice and theory[1]

Representative democracies are confronted with a crisis of legitimacy, whose symptoms can be observed in the decline of traditional forms of political participation, the growing public discontent with the political system and its elected representatives and the rise of populism (Dalton, 2013; Inglehart & Norris, 2017). Many actors—ranging from policymakers and civil society to citizens—are trying to solve these structural problems through various processes of public engagement and are advancing deliberative minipublics as one of the most promising solutions. It, however, remains unclear how the people initiating and organizing minipublics conceive their purposes. Which problems do they want to solve with minipublics? And how do they conceive minipublics' contributions to society's challenges? While the literature has been prolific in theorizing the functions of minipublics, we do not know to which extent these are taken up by the people initiating minipublics on the field. Much uncertainty still exists about the degree of synchronization between the organizers' conceptions and the recent theoretical developments such as considering minipublics as a deliberative stimulant (Niemeyer, 2014) or an institution redistributing power (Curato et al., 2019). Previous studies indicate a gap between theory and practice, as organizers have different expectations and conceptions than theorists (Bächtiger et al., 2014; Hisschemöller & Cuppen, 2015; Lee, 2014). Yet, the treatment of the (de)synchronization between theory and practice relies on some interviews or field observation, meaning that we have not yet systematically investigated both how organizers conceive minipublics' contributions and the extent to which these contributions coincide with the theory.

This chapter fills this gap by analyzing the first comprehensive national database of minipublics, the Belgian Minipublics' Project, which has listed all cases implemented between 2001 and 2021 (n=51), including the inconspicuous minipublics organized at the local level or the failed experiments that pass under the public and scientific radar. The research objectives are twofold. I first conduct an inductive thematic analysis of the minipublics' reports to map how organizers conceive their minipublics' contributions. To do so, it relies on a taxonomy that distinguishes the way organizers approach a contribution (either goal- or problem-oriented) and conceive its scope (endemic or structural). I next compare these findings to the theoretical literature, which reveals important discrepancies between theory and practice. The recent popular theoretical function of improving public deliberation remains strikingly peripheral among organizers, who still predominantly see in minipublics a way to contribute to policymaking or to solve the broader crisis of democracy. The analysis also shows that common functions in practice are still under-theorized by scholars, in particular the rationale of using minipublics to bridge the gap between citizens and politics. Considering this desynchronization, the chapter argues that both scholars and practitioners spur the creation of a *minipublic bubble*. Associating minipublics with so many ambitious desired outcomes leads to the inflation of their capacity to actually contribute to solving problems or realize certain democratic functions.

[1] This chapter is an author version of the article published in European Political Science Review. The published version of the research can be found here : https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-political-science-review/article/minipublic-bubble-how-the-contributions-of-minipublics-are-conceived-in-belgium-20012021/6AFA7B8F59ECF2A3A5651EEC45AC7D22

2.1. The projected public image of minipublics

The literature has devoted increasingly more attention to the public perceptions of minipublics. For instance, several empirical studies investigate the support of the broader population for the concept of minipublics in general (e.g., Germann et al., 2021; Pilet et al., 2020) and for specific instances (e.g., Devillers et al., 2021; Pow, 2021). Scholars also survey how decision- and policy-makers conceive the functions of minipublics (Beswick & Elstub, 2019; Bobbio, 2019; Rangoni et al., 2021) and participatory processes (Dean, 2019; Hendriks & Lees-Marshment, 2019), their support for minipublics (Jacquet et al., 2020; Koskimaa & Rapeli, 2020) and their motivations to institutionalize them (Macq & Jacquet, 2021). Some of these studies analyse decision makers' attitudes regarding a specific case, such as the Belgian *Ostbelgien-model* (Macq & Jacquet, 2021) and a minipublic in a parliamentary committee in the United Kingdom (Beswick & Elstub, 2019), while the others surveyed the perceptions about more general and abstract conceptions of minipublics, in particular the authority they should have, (Jacquet et al., 2020; Koskimaa & Rapeli, 2020; Rangoni et al., 2021) and participatory governance and public engagement (Dean, 2019; Hendriks & Lees-Marshment, 2019). We also find a couple of studies about practitioners' posture regarding minipublics. These show that practitioners hold different discourses about the purpose of minipublics, either conceiving them as a part of a broader strategy to revitalize democracy or as symbolic tools for decision makers whose interests subvert genuine citizen participation (Cooper & Smith, 2012, p. 19;21; Lee, 2014). Moreover, other works highlight a discrepancy between how particular tools and methods are applied in practice and how they are prescribed by theory (Grönlund et al., 2014; Hisschemöller & Cuppen, 2015, p. 42). Considering the rapid development of the literature on minipublics for two decades (Jacquet & van der Does, 2020c), a divergence between the practice and the theory is likely because practitioners and, as a matter of fact, other policy- and decision makers, are unlikely to stay updated with the extensive and rapidly growing scientific literature on minipublics. These actors who are involved with the use of minipublics in practice must thus seemingly engage, as Rikki Dean puts it, in an "act of everyday philosophy. They must make sense of the diversity of conceptions of participation and what it means for their practice" (2019, p. 171).

This chapter seeks to make an innovative contribution to this research agenda. Instead of looking at how different publics perceive a specific instance of minipublics or the general concept of a minipublic, it investigates the projected image of the purposes of minipublics. Scholars have so far focused on the *recipients* of various images of minipublics, for instance the opinions of the public and elected representatives about an authoritative minipublic (Jacquet et al., 2020; Pilet et al., 2020). Yet, we do not know how actors involved with the practical organization of minipublics want to depict the image of their deliberative forums. The projected image matters because minipublics only gather a miniscule proportion of the population while the broader public has a very limited access—if one at all—to them. Their isolation implies that public attitudes are likely to be shaped by the image of minipublics that is constructed by multiple contributions from different actors, such as the media, the people initiating and implementing them, politicians or academic researchers. This paper focuses on

the image that the actors involved with the initiation and organization of minipublics want to project to the broader public. It relies predominantly on the official reports that these actors published after a minipublic, in which organizers describe the process and its purposes. Minipublics' reports are written and edited by different field actors, such as elected officials, policymakers, practitioners, or civil society, who commission, design, or implement a minipublic. These actors—which are hereafter referred to as organizers—occupy a central role in the development of minipublics because they are the ones on the field, forging these deliberative fora and shaping the democratic transformation of the policy process (Dean, 2019, p. 171; see also Warren, 2009). In addition to presenting the citizens' recommendations, a minipublic's report fulfills an important communicative function because its power of abstraction and its capacity to stand for absent things (see Sedlačko, 2018) make it one of the main mechanisms through which the minipublic becomes concrete and real for the outside world. Although texts are polysemic by nature and it is complex to know how a reader ultimately gives meaning to them, minipublics' reports constitute a vehicle of discourse with a force to act itself (Prior, 2008) and which shapes public attitudes to some extent.

Focusing on the reports also makes it possible to broaden the scope of analysis and examine a comprehensive population of cases. This study relies on a database that has listed all minipublics taking place in Belgium between 2001 and 2021, including the low-profile cases at the local level and the failed cases that tend to remain under the radar (Spada & Ryan, 2017). The diversity of the 51 cases enables the examination of the evolution of the projected image of minipublics' purposes since 2001 and whether these conceptions correlate with the type of organizers (executive, legislative, public administration, civil society) and the level of authority (supranational, federal, regional, and local). This database makes it possible to give a more complete picture of how the purposes of minipublics are conceived in practice and how these relate to the theory. Building on the existing studies (Bächtiger et al., 2014; Hisschemöller & Cuppen, 2015), this paper analyses the extent to which the purposes of minipublics in practice, as described by the organizers, align with the main theoretical functions that we find in the literature. This paper does not conduct a systematic and exhaustive literature review of the theories on the functions of minipublics, but it relies instead on the works of important scholars whose theories have shaped the field for the last two decades. These theorists conceive minipublics as a process to integrate citizens in policymaking and, thanks to the diversity of its participants, improve descriptive representation and generate better policies (Fishkin, 2011; Fung, 2006; Mercier & Landemore, 2012; Smith, 2009). They, moreover, argue that minipublics can improve the quality of deliberation not only in policymaking processes (Chambers, 2003; Setälä, 2017) but also in the broader public sphere (Curato & Böker, 2016; Lafont, 2019; Niemeyer, 2014), and augment the legitimacy of public decisions (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Papadopoulos & Warin, 2007; Setälä & Smith, 2018). While we could expect that organizers share to a large extent these general theoretical conceptions of minipublics' functions, the analysis reveals that the purposes in practice only partially align with the theory because organizers tend to marginally refer to important theoretical functions or advance contributions that have not yet been theorized.

2.2. Data: The Belgian Minipublics Project

The analysis relies on the database "Belgian Minipublics Project" which has collected data on all minipublics taking place in Belgium from 2001 until 2019 (Vrydagh et al., 2020; Vrydagh et al., 2021). The selection criteria for the minipublics are the use of (stratified) random selection of citizens, the deliberative character of the participatory process, and the fact that participants are residents based in Belgium. I collected additional data for minipublics between 2020 and 2021[2], which results in an inventory of 51 cases (for an overview, see Table 1 below). Each instance comprises at least one report. For a couple of cases, the public report was missing, or it did not contain sufficient data. I thus relied on news articles reporting on the minipublic, in which I analysed quotes from organizers (see table 1 in the appendix for an overview of the data source for each case). The reports show a great diversity, but they generally start with a general description of the minipublics' objectives, before presenting its results and, in some cases explicating the methodology in an appendix. The description of the objectives varies greatly: in a couple of cases, organizers do not present them at all, but the majority tends to explain them in one or a couple of pages. Likewise, the format and editorial style show a great variety: some are more engaging while others are more distant and descriptive, and some follow the format of a parliamentary resolution while others consist of a PowerPoint Presentation or can be read as a magazine.

[2] The database includes minipublics completed by 1 August 2021.

Table 1. The overview of the minipublics in Belgium between 2001 and 2021[3]

minipublics	date	level	Type of commissioner	Participants	length	Items coded
Quel brabant wallon pour demain ?	2001	Provincial	Executive	62	3	20
Burgerpanel on GMOs	2003	Regional	Parliament	15	9	15
Lire dans mes gênes ?	2003	Federal	Civil Society	30	7	4
Panels citoyens sur les OGM	2003	Federal	Executive	17	2	24
Panel citoyen sur la consommation	2004	Federal	Executive	30	2	5
Panel citoyen sur la sécurité alimentaire	2004	Federal	Public Administration	30	2	10
Meeting of Minds	2005	European	Executive	21	6	33
IBGE	2006	Regional	Executive	21	10	12
Nos Campagnes demain en Europe	2006	Regional	Executive	35	6	36
Panel Citoyen Plan IRIS	2006	Regional	Executive	30	4	4
Burgerconventie — Auto & smog	2007	Regional	Parliament	224	1	6
Citizens' perspective on the future of Europe	2007	European	Executive	132	3	17
Burgerconventie COP 15	2009	Global	Civil Society	100	1	36
Civisti	2009	European	Executive	21	2	30
European Citizens' Consultation in Belgium	2009	European	Executive	49	2	12
Radioactive Waste Management Plan	2010	Federal	Public Administration	32	6	5
G1000	2011	Federal	Civil Society	704	9	50
Notre Futur	2013	Federal	Civil Society	24	6	24
BurgerLabo	2014	Federal	Public Administration	32	9	28
G100 Grez-Doiceau	2014	Local	Civil Society	50	1	10
Climacteurs	2015	Regional	Executive	55	1	7
ouderpanel	2015	Regional	Executive	22	6	4
Parlement Citoyen climat	2015	Provincial	Parliament	33	6	8
Canal Citoyen !	2016	Local	Civil Society	30	1	8
Pacte d'Excellence — Conférence citoyenne sur le redoublement	2016	Regional	Executive	116	1	6
Pacte d'excellence — Panel citoyen	2016	Regional	Executive	24	6	7
Gents Burgerkabinet	2017	Local	Executive	50	3	9
LLN— Panel citoyen pour l'Esplanade	2017	Local	Civil Society	98	1	33
Make Your Brussels Mobility	2017	Regional	Parliament	38	4	12
Panel citoyen sur la petite enfance	2017	Regional	Parliament	22	3	14
Panel citoyen sur les enjeux du vieillissement	2017	Regional	Parliament	27	3	10
Parlement Citoyen — Quelle Europe pour demain	2017	Regional	Parliament	83	2	31
Verviers — Fabrique de liens citoyens	2017	Local	Executive	1	5	10
We Are Molenbeek	2017	Local	Executive	112	1	4
Make My Administration	2018	Federal	Public Administration	46	2	7
Mon ADN, tous concernés	2018	Federal	Executive	29	6	10
Pacte d'excellence — Conférence du Consensus	2018	Regional	Executive	116	1	4
Panel citoyen sur la propreté à Enghien	2018	Local	Executive	15	3	10
Panel citoyen sur les jeunes en Wallonie	2018	Regional	Parliament	27	4	17
Agora Citoyenne sur la forêt	2019	provincial	Public Administration	34	6	20
LLN - SOL panel ciotyen	2019	Local	Executive	25	5	6
Ostbelgien - Burgerdialog	2019	Regional	Parliament	28	*4	7
Agora — Assemblée citoyenne	2020	Regional	Civil Society	89	*6	25
Auderghem — Assemblées citoyennes	2020	Local	Executive	100	*	14
Brussels City—Neighborhood councils	2020	Local	Executive	33	*	31
Burgerpanel—Mechelen	2021	Local	Executive	27	*3	9
Etterbeek—Neighborhood Councils	2021	Local	Executive	30	8	6
G100 Oud Heverlee—Zoet Water	2021	Local	Executive	50	3	27
Overijse tax shift	2021	Local	Executive	40	2	5
RBC & COCOM— Commission Délibérative	2021	Regional	Parliament	45	*4	17
Saint Gilles — Conseil Citoyen	2021	Local	Executive	35	*4	13

[3] In the column on the length, the (*) indicates that the process is permanent. The number after the star refers to the number of days that one cycle lasts

Belgium offers an excellent case for investigating the projected image of minipublics because it has a long history with these deliberative processes, and it features a diversity of organizers. Its federal structure creates a multilevel and decentralized political system wherein subnational levels enjoy considerable autonomy. All these authorities have convened their own minipublics, which have taken many different forms. In light of their evolution, design, and the topics, minipublics in Belgium constitute a typical case in comparison with OECD countries (Vrydagh et al., 2021)[4]. However, Belgium departs from these countries due to the recent institutionalization of minipublics at the regional and local levels (Niessen & Reuchamps, 2019; Reuchamps, 2020), which puts it at the forefront of the so-called *deliberative wave* (OECD, 2020). Its historical and political context also makes it a particular case: whereas this country was described as a copy-book example of a consociational state wherein political decisions are made by elites of all segments of society without any citizen participation (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2020; Deschouwer, 2012), it is now one of the leading forces behind the rise of minipublics in Western democracies (see Vrydagh et al., 2021). Its history also explains why all Belgian minipublics must be consultative, as the Article 33 in the constitution forbids citizens to exercise any decision-making authority. A final particularity about minipublic in Belgium is the role of academic researchers who are often consulted for or involved in the development and implementation of minipublics (Vrydagh et al., 2021). For instance, several researchers belonged to the organizing committee of the iconic G1000 and are now members of the G1000 platform, which lobbies for the use of minipublics in Belgium and cooperates with other important groups of practitioners such as the King Baudouin Foundation and the Foundation for the Future Generations. Belgium could therefore feature a closer alignment between practice and theory than in Britain, Germany and the United States where researchers and organizers seem less interwoven (Cooper & Smith, 2012; Lee, 2014).

I conducted an inductive thematic analysis to map how organizers conceive the minipublics' functions. A thematic analysis can be used to study the perceptions and understandings of political actors by examining a large variety of qualitative data, including policy documents or any other type of text (Herzog et al., 2019). I relied on a six-step approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I first went through the data to identify themes that emerge from the report "without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83), which resulted in approximately 1,100 raw coded items. This first reading revealed a considerable diversity in the minipublics' desired contributions. I thus needed to develop "conceptual containers" to distribute and categorize the bulk of data and theory (Sartori, 1970, p. 1039). To do so, I first rely on a holistic theoretical framework to group the justifications into main categories. Warren's (2017) problem-based approach to democracy provides a solid framework to group the contributions of minipublics and other participatory processes (see for instance Beauvais & Warren, 2019; Jäske & Setälä, 2020). The framework posits that a political system needs to realize three functions in order to be democratic. *Empowered inclusion* (hereafter inclusion) is

[4] We observe in both Belgium and OECD countries a steady increase in the number of minipublics between 2001 and 2016, followed a substantial augmentation; a widespread use of citizens' panels and consensus conferences; and the main topics addressed by minipublics relate to territory, health, and the environment (OECD, 2020; Vrydagh, Devillers, et al., 2021).

about providing an equal opportunity for citizens to have a say about a public decision that affects them. *Collective will and agenda formation* (hereafter will formation) refer to the transformation of individual values, preferences and interests into collective will and agenda. Finally, the *collective decision-making capacity* (hereafter decision-making) consists of the capability of a democratic system to "to make and impose binding decisions upon themselves" (Warren, 2017, p. 44).

In addition to these functions, I needed to capture the degree of ambition of minipublics' contributions. Some organizers indeed present minipublics as a solution to the whole democratic crisis, while others advanced them as a tailored corrective to a particular problem. I therefore distinguish the scope of a minipublic's contribution. On the one hand, the scope is *endemic* when a minipublic seeks to address particular and contingent elements, such as a political deadlock on a particular public issue or a lack of inclusion in a specific policymaking process. On the other hand, the scope is *structural* when the contribution relates to the broader system, like the crisis of democracy, climate change, or the idea that implementing a minipublic generates systemic effects on its own, like making a political system more deliberative or participatory. Finally, I capture how organizers approach a minipublic's contribution by distinguishing the *problem- or goal-oriented perspective*. The former explicitly states the problem that a minipublic is expected to solve, whereas the latter consists of the contributions that a minipublic is expected to make, without an emphatic reference to a problematic situation. Relying on this three-level taxonomy, I reviewed all the coded items and categorized them into the three democratic functions, before identifying whether they contain structural or endemic contributions and whether they are problem- or goal-driven (for an illustration of the coding, see Table 2 in the appendix). The result amounts to 755 coded items for 511 thematic justifications[5]. These justifications were finally categorized into 93 subthemes, which I summarized around 20 general themes. I used the software MAXQDA throughout this analytical process to code items and categorize them into different themes.

2.3. Mapping the purposes of minipublics

The analytical section is divided into four subsections based on the functions of inclusion, will formation, decision-making, and an overview of the findings. For the first three, I present the main results of the thematic analysis and I compare them to the literature. The final subsection concludes with an overview of the findings which offers a general comparison of the theory and practice and discusses whether the evolution, level of authority, and the kind of organizers reveal a pattern of justifications. An appendix also features a detailed table with the codes for each democratic function.

[5] In some cases, multiple meaning units were coded for a single thematic justification.

2.3.1. Inclusion

There are three main thematic functions regarding inclusion (see Table 2). First, a homonymous theme which presents minipublics as a way to include citizens. This theme varies depending on the problem- and goal-oriented perspective, as well as the endemic or structural nature of the contribution. Endemic problems of inclusion mainly entail the necessity of including citizens because a policymaking process should not only listen to traditional experts but also citizens. Organizers, furthermore, refer to the fact that citizens are affected by a public decision and should thus be included in the decision-making process. Structural problems of inclusion entail larger deficiencies, like a deficit of inclusion affecting the whole political system, the citizens' feeling of disempowerment, or the limits of elections to realize inclusion. A goal-oriented approach to citizen inclusion is more prevalent. When organizers associate their minipublics with an endemic goal, it mainly entails giving them a voice and, more marginally, involve them in a policy debate. Minipublics are also depicted as a mechanism to realize more structural and ambitious objectives of inclusion. In doing so, organizers entwine the implementation of a minipublic with the participation of the whole citizenry or a structural improvement of citizen inclusion. For instance, organizers depict minipublics as a mechanism to include and give a voice to the entire citizenry—even if their deliberative forum only includes a miniscule proportion of the population; or to institutionalize citizen participation or make it sustainable at a systemic level.

Table 2. The distribution of themes for inclusion

Approach	Scope	General theme	Sub-theme
Problem of inclusion 27	Endemic 19	Citizen inclusion 16	Not only experts 10
			Citizens are affected 9
			Need to include citizens 6
			Citizens are voiceless 1
		Policymaking 7	Closed policymaking 5
			Unknown citizens' preferences 4
	Structural 14	Citizen inclusion 14	Need to include citizens 9
			Citizens feel disempowered 6
			Elections are ineffective and insufficient 5
			Not only experts 4
			A citizens' right 2
			Deficient descriptive representation 1
		Distrust in citizens' capacity 1	
Contribution to inclusion 47	Endemic 40	Citizen consultation 25	To consult the citizenry 12
			To learn their preferences 9
		Citizen inclusion 21	To give them a voice 10
			To involve them in a policy debate 5
			To co-create 4
			Because of citizens' expertise 2
		Participatory experimentation 19	To implement a democratic innovation 9
			To learn and experiment with citizen participation 7
			To learn and experiment with minipublics 7
			To start with a pilot project 5
		Institutional opening 13	To open a policymaking sector 7
			To open an institution 6
	Systemic 32	Citizen inclusion 22	To include the citizenry 7
			To make citizen participation sustainable 7
			To involve citizens better 6
			To give citizens a voice 6
			To bring in citizens' expertise 4
			Not only experts 3
		Realize a democratic model 11	To realize a deliberative democracy 7
			To realize a participatory democracy 7
		To stimulate the participation of the broader public 9	To stimulate public participation 7
			To facilitate public participation 4
		Citizen consultation 6	To consult the citizenry 5
			To identify citizens' preferences 2
		Institutional opening 4	To open decision-making 4
		Participatory experimentation 4	To test citizen participation at new authority levels 4
		Citizenship 4	To create new citizens 2
			To demonstrate citizens' capacity 2

Colour-scale (corresponding to the number of minipublics)

0–5	6–10	11–15	16–20	21–25	26–30	31–35	36–40	41–45	46–50

A second important theme consists of citizen consultation. Organizers predominantly rely on this justification for endemic objectives such as their willingness to hear what the citizens think about a specific issue. The themes of citizen inclusion and consultation closely align with the theory, which conceives minipublics (1)[6] as a way to integrate ordinary citizens into policymaking, giving them a voice to express their views, opinions, and interests (Fung, 2006; Smith, 2009; Warren & Pearse, 2008). Organizers occasionally refer to (2) the diversity of minipublics' participants and their *local knowledge* (Drury et al., 2021, p. 32), which offers them a comparative advantage over traditional expert-based input (Fung, 2006; Mercier & Landemore, 2012). A final important theme relates to the experimentation with citizen participation: organizers implement a minipublic because they want to try out and learn from citizen participation or minipublics. They experiment with minipublics—sometimes associating them with the broader concepts of citizen participation or democratic innovations—mainly in a specific context, such as a test for a municipality for the G100 Zoet Water or for a specific policy sector, such as research with the Burgerlabo or the Civisti. As one may expect, this more practical justification has not received a significant attention from theorists.

We can also mention three more secondary themes. First, organizers state that their minipublics can fulfill an opening function, that is to open either a policymaking sector, like the reimbursement of health care, or global climate policy; or a public institution, namely regional Parliaments. A couple of minipublics are also presented as a way to open decision-making for the entire political system. In a similar vein, organizers associate their minipublics with the realization of participatory or deliberative democracy, or with the activation of the broader citizenry. Behind these themes lies an assumption that minipublics are sufficient to fulfill these systemic functions, which departs from the theory as scholars have pointed out the limits—if not the incapacity—of minipublics to make long-lasting contributions or solve structural problems on their own (Curato et al., 2019, p. 65; Lafont, 2019; Newton & Geissel, 2012).

Another disconnection between theory and practice emerges from the absence of two important theoretical functions. Scholars commonly claim that minipublics (3) improve descriptive representation by inviting and giving a voice to traditionally marginalized groups thanks to the (stratified) random selection (Curato et al., 2019; J. Fishkin, 2011; Fung, 2006b). In doing so, (4) minipublics more broadly contribute to redistributing power, curbing the "uneven distribution of voices in the public sphere" by equalizing the opportunities to speak and be heard (Curato et al., 2019, p. 65). These two functions, however, remain peripheral: organizers rarely refer to the inclusion of traditionally marginalized groups. Instead, they define citizens homogeneously: people should participate because they are *all* voiceless, disempowered, affected by the issue at hand, or entitled to participate. Only one minipublic—a deliberative poll on an urban question[7]—explicitly seeks to integrate the voices of citizens that are excluded from the public debate preceding a local referendum. Another minipublic—l'Assemblée citoyenne d'Agora—seeks to address the structural lack of descriptive representation in

[6] These numbers refer to the theoretical functions presented in Table 5, which offers an overview of the comparison of minipublics' functions in theory and in practice.

[7] The citizen panel on the expansion of a mall in Louvain-La-Neuve sought to include the voices of students who were not registered as inhabitants of the city and could therefore not participate in the local consultation.

political institutions and to realize political equality. Except for these two examples, the reports do not present minipublics as a way to redistribute power and equalize the opportunities to participate (Curato et al., 2019, p. 65), nor do they describe the added value of (stratified) random selection, although the literature puts the latter forward as a key comparative advantage of minipublics versus other participatory processes (Ryan & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2009).

The inclusion-related themes have also evolved during the two decades. Organizers first depicted minipublics as a process to fulfill endemic purposes, such as consulting citizens on a specific policy issue or to experiment with citizen participation. More recently (especially after 2016 and 2017), they have increased their ambition: minipublics aim to realize a structural inclusion or to stimulate the participation of the whole citizenry. Interestingly, the idea that minipublics realize a deliberative or participatory democracy has remained constant for two decades. We do not find many variations for the kind of organizers and the level of authority, except for minipublics at the local level which rarely rely on themes of inclusion except for systemic contributions such as equating minipublics to the participation of the entire local population, which has, however, not taken part or been involved in the process.

2.3.2. Will Formation

There are two prevalent general themes for will formation (see Table 3). First, a vast majority of minipublics aims to contribute to policymaking. Organizers essentially present their deliberative fora as processes wherein citizens deliberate on an issue to form a collective judgement and recommendations, which are, in turn, transmitted to decision makers to influence the formulation of policies. In addition to the omnipresent idea of an *influence on policy formulation*, other subthemes entail feeding the reflection of decision makers and stakeholders, bringing in new ideas to policymaking, contributing to a debate within a policymaking sector, or increasing the responsiveness of public decisions. Another interesting subtheme consists of the necessity for minipublics to have an impact on public decisions, which is mainly mentioned by regional parliaments. Some organizers also delineate a structural component to minipublics' contributions to policymaking, which are expected to improve the systemic capacity to produce better decisions and policies. Except for the structural dimension, the literature has extensively theorized about the benefits of minipublics for policymaking and governance. Scholars argue that (5) minipublics can inform decision makers, generating new knowledge and framing that can improve decision makers' understanding of the problems and solutions (Curato et al., 2019; Fung, 2003, 2006b; Papadopoulos & Warin, 2007). As consultative participatory processes (Warren, 2009), minipublics transmit considered recommendations to decision makers so as to help them adopt better and more responsive public decisions (Chambers, 2003; Estlund & Landemore, 2018; Fung, 2006; Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Grönlund et al., 2014; Papadopoulos & Warin, 2007; Setälä, 2017; Setälä & Smith, 2018). Within that governance-driven narrative, scholars also claim that minipublics can increase the accountability of decision-making (Beauvais & Warren, 2019; M. Brown, 2006), but this function has not emerged in the analysis.

Table 3. The distribution of themes for the collective agenda and will formation

Approach	Scope	General theme	Sub-theme
Problems of collective will formation 17	Endemic 2	Controversial debate 2	
	Systemic 15	Gap between citizens and politics 13	Relation between citizens and decision makers 7
			Relation between citizens and 'politics' 7
			Misunderstanding of the political system 2
		Public debate 3	No translational debate 2
			No citizen deliberation 1
			Need to learn how to debate 1
		Social cohesion 3	
Contribution to collective will formation 50	Endemic 46	To improve policymaking 45	To influence policy formulation 29
			To transmit recommendations 17
			To form a collective will 14
			To influence policymakers' reflection 10
			To bring in new ideas 10
			To contribute to a policy debate 8
			To provide stakeholders with citizen input 8
			Need to have an impact on a public policy 7
			To improve the responsiveness of a public decision/policy 6
			To increase the knowledge base of policymaking 4
		Public debate 12	To stimulate a debate on a policy issue 10
			To feed the public debate 3
		To educate participants 12	To learn about a public issue 9
			To learn the difficulties of policymaking 6
		To inform the maxi-public 7	To inform the maxi-public 6
			To popularize deliberative citizen participation 3
		To create a network of citizen participation 2	
	Structural 29	Gap between citizens and politics 20	To stimulate interactions between citizens and elected representatives 12
			To improve relation between citizens and policymaking actors (stakeholders, policymakers…) 6
			To improve relation between citizens and the state 4
			To reduce the gap between citizens and elected officials 3
		To improve policymaking 12	To improve public decisions 6
			To improve policymaking 5
			To bring in new ideas in policymaking 3
			To improve representativeness of public policy 2
			To give elected officials a reality check 1
			To improve the transparency of policymaking 1
		Public debate 9	To generate public debate 4
			To stimulate the participation of the broader population in public debate 3
			To stimulate a debate culture in the population 3
		Social cohesion 7	To improve social cohesion 5
			To improve the relation among citizens 4

Colour-scale (corresponding to the number of minipublics)

0–5	6–10	11–15	16–20	21–25	26–30	31–35	36–40	41–45	46–50

The second general theme is about the structural gap between citizens and *politics*. From a problem-driven perspective, organizers point out the problematic relation between citizens and decision makers, public institutions, and the more abstract and generic concept of *politics*. Minipublics are expected to generate systemic benefits to bridge this gap by stimulating interactions between citizens and elected representatives, improving the relationship between citizens and policymaking actors (such as stakeholders and public servants) and with the state. It is interesting to observe that the gap between citizens and politics is only approached through its structural dimension and organizers never pinpoint the particular causes or contributions that minipublics could make, implying that organizers lack an endemic view on this structural issue. This theme reveals an important desynchronization with the theory. Except for two empirical studies reporting that policy-makers see minipublics as a way to reconnect citizens with politics (Hendriks, 2016; Macq & Jacquet, 2021)[8], the theory lags behind: it still remains theoretically unclear whether minipublics are an appropriate participatory institution to bring the citizenry closer to political elites and institutions. Whereas empirical studies show that a minipublic can generate long-term benefits in terms of interest in politics and political engagement (Lindell, Forthcoming), these positive effects just apply to the few participants. To my knowledge, there are no solid theories of empirical findings that demonstrate that this connection can be scaled up to the whole citizenry.

There are three additional secondary themes. First, several organizers see in minipublics a mechanism to generate social cohesion among the whole citizenry, a theme which has recently become popular, especially among local organizers[9]. The theory has, however, not covered this function and it is unclear whether and how a micro deliberative forum may realize on its own such an ambitious function. Second, several minipublics seek to educate their participating citizens so that they learn about a public issue or the complexities of policymaking. This occasional theme seems less prevalent than in the literature, in which theorists commonly argue that (6) minipublics can play an educative functions to help participants to refine and clarify their opinions, enrich their understanding of policy issues, and acquire citizenship skills (Curato et al., 2019; Fung, 2003; Knobloch & Gastil, 2015; Papadopoulos & Warin, 2007, p. 456). In a similar vein, scholars assert that (7) minipublics also aim to demonstrate to decision makers that citizens are capable of deliberating and making sound judgments (Bächtiger & Parkinson, 2019; Dryzek, 2010, p. 158), but this argument remains mostly absent in the practice.

The theory has shifted the focus from the internal to the external dimension of minipublics. For a decade, a prolific reflection on a systemic approach to deliberation (Dryzek, 2010; Mansbridge et al., 2012) has generated a raft of new functions that emphasize the contributions of minipublics to the broader public debate. Many scholars are increasingly arguing that

[8] We can also mention Mansbridge and her concept of recursive representation which is "based on an aspiration for iterative, ongoing communication between constituents and their representatives" (2019, p. 299). It is however not specifically developed for minipublics.

[9] Eight minipublics mention this theme and seven out of them are local minipublics (there are fifteen minipublics at the local level).

minipublics should primarily aim to improve the quality of public deliberation (Curato & Böker, 2016; Dryzek, 2017; Lafont, 2019). They can provide trusted information and considered arguments to the broader population so that it can gain a better understanding of the issue and make decisions or voice opinions that are more considered (Felicetti et al., 2016; Lafont, 2019; MacKenzie & Warren, 2012; Niemeyer, 2014). In the same vein, Setälä (2017) argues that (9) minipublics can remedy the deficient deliberation among decision makers, while Chambers (2003) suggests that they can promote mutual respect among parties. Whereas the literature on a systemic approach is booming, themes about improving public and political deliberation occasionally emerge in practice, with respectively seventeen and eight minipublics (nineteen in total). Only a few minipublics are implemented to stimulate and feed a public debate or to improve the quality of the debate in the public sphere, and only a couple are convened to solve problems related to deliberation. Strikingly, the majority of minipublics aiming at public deliberation happened before the theoretical inception of a deliberative system in the early 2010s: out of the seventeen instances, ten took place before 2012. This finding reveals an important gap between theory and practice: while a scientific consensus has emerged about the need to advocate for minipublics for their deliberative macro-effects, only one instance out of five since 2012 alluded to this narrative.

2.3.3. Decision-making

Decision-making is the least common democratic function within which the purpose of minipublics is justified. The main theme related to decision-making consists of legitimacy (see Table 4). While only a couple of cases invoke the legitimacy crisis as a problem, organizers rely more on this theme to justify goal-driven contributions, presenting minipublics as a process that generates legitimacy endemically for a specific public decision. Structural contributions generalize this objective—claiming that minipublics generate legitimacy for all public decisions or for the whole political system. The literature abounds of theoretical arguments to support the idea that minipublics can generate legitimacy for decision-making and public decisions (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Hendriks, 2009; Papadopoulos & Warin, 2007; Setälä & Smith, 2018; Warren & Gastil, 2015). As Beauvais and Warren argue, decision makers "borrow democratic legitimacy from citizens' assembly proposals, making it both easier for them to act and more likely that they will act" (2019, p. 908). Referring to Fung (2011, pp. 192–193), Curato et al. assert that minipublics can enhance the public "support for and compliance with difficult policy decisions" (2019, p. 74). These benefits mainly stem from minipublics' qualities to involve a representative group of ordinary citizens and to engage them in a deliberative process which results in better public decisions—i.e., more public-spirited and responsive (Estlund & Landemore, 2018; Hendriks, 2009). Although extensively developed in the literature, it remains a fringe theme in practice: less than a quarter of Belgian minipublics aim to legitimize public decisions and only seven cases mention generating legitimacy for the political system.

Table 4. The distribution of themes for collective decision-making capacity

Approach	Scope	General theme	Sub-theme
Problems 14	Endemic 9	Decision-making incapacity 9	Political deadlock 7
			Scale of the policy problem 2
	Structural 6	Crisis of representative democracy 6	Crisis of legitimacy 4
			Disillusionment with representative democracy 1
			Incapacity of representative democracy 1
			Increasing difficulty of elected officials' job 1
Contributions 22	Endemic 8	To generate legitimacy 8	for a public decision 8
	Structural 18	To improve democracy 12	To reinforce democracy 6
			To renew democracy 4
			To create a new governance 3
			To build sustainable community 1
		To generate legitimacy 10	for the political system 5
			for public decisions 5

Colour-scale (corresponding to the number of minipublics)

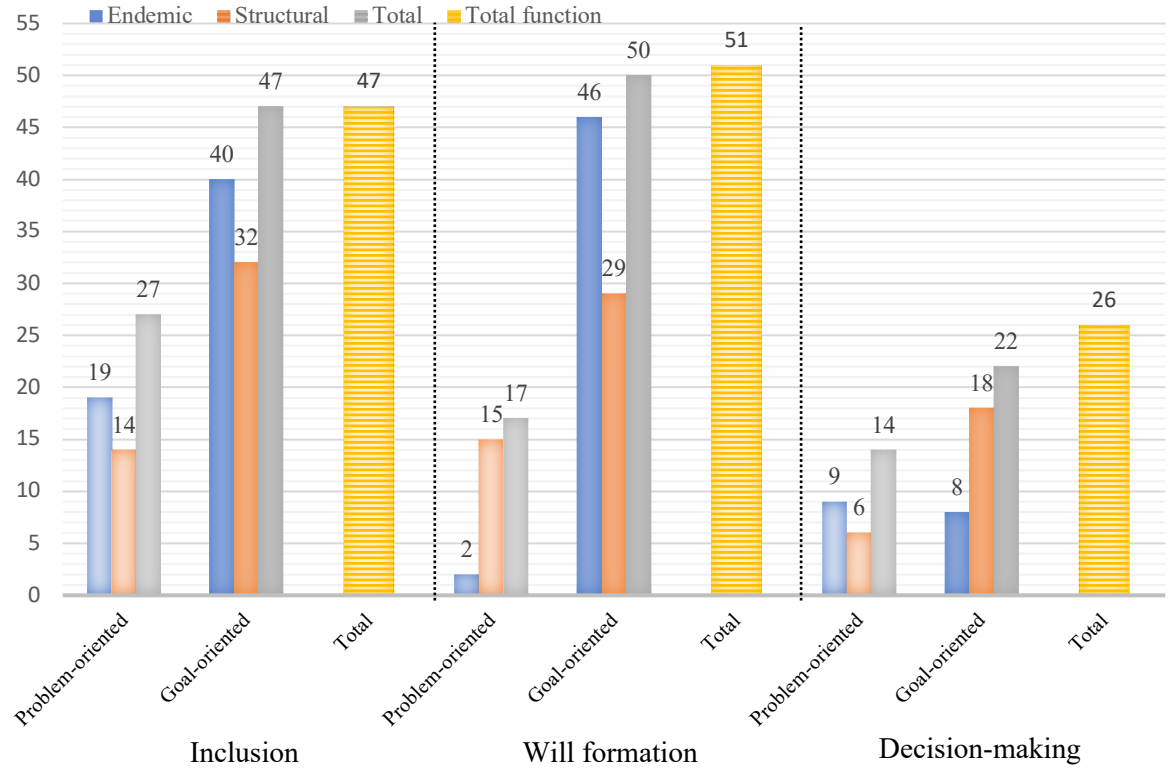
0–5	6–10	11–15	16–20	21–25

There are still a couple of occasional themes on decision-making. Problem-oriented justifications mainly include a political deadlock that minipublics are supposed to end and resolve. This function has been highlighted by some scholars who argued that (11) minipublics can help decision-makers facing political deadlock (Beauvais & Warren, 2019; Goodin & Dryzek, 2006b). The other problem-oriented theme consists of the crisis of democracy, which includes a series of disparate symptoms such as the legitimacy crisis, the disillusionment with representative democracy or the structural incapacity of representative democracy. The last theme is about improving democracy as a whole: organizers present minipublics as a mechanism to reinforce and renew democracy (albeit without elaborating further on what and how), developing a new governance system or building a sustainable community. Again, the literature is careful about associating minipublics with the renewal of the entire system or as the solution to the crisis of democracy. Theorists have also conceived minipublics as a way to (12) help policymaking to deal with complex policy issues (Hoppe, 2011a) or create a new constituency and decision-making arena to deal with global problems whose scope expands beyond national state boundaries (Bächtiger et al., 2014; Dahl, 1989). Whereas the former function does not come up explicitly in practice, the latter is mentioned in two cases at the international and European level. Finally, we also observe a shift in the evolution of the themes: problems of decision-making are first more endemic in nature, referring to specific political deadlock or the scale of a policy problem, but, since 2017, organizers tend to present minipublics as a solution to the broader crisis of democracy.

2.4. The (de)synchronization between theory and practice

The final section of this chapter first presents an overview of the distribution of thematic justifications for the 51 cases, before discussing how the justifications have evolved and how they correlate with the level of authority of their initiators. Organizers predominantly conceive minipublics as a process to help form a collective will and to include citizens, while decision-making remains more peripheral (see Figure 1). This finding partially aligns with the theory on minipublics, which has emphasized that minipublics should not make decisions and should instead help form the collective agenda and will (Warren, 2017). The relation with inclusion is more ambiguous. Several scholars have pointed out that minipublics are more representative bodies rather than actual participatory processes since they only include a miniscule proportion of the population (Lafont, 2019; Pateman, 2012). Most organizers tend to neglect this argument, as they portray minipublics as an institution meant to include the whole citizenry. We also observe that they mainly rely on goal-oriented justifications, and these are more endemic than structural (except for decision-making). As for a problem-oriented approach, organizers present more structural issues for citizen inclusion and decision-making, whereas problems of will formation predominantly deal with endemic problems.

Figure 1. An overview of the thematic analysis' results



On the whole, the analysis reveals a couple of broad trends about the evolution of the minipublics' image. Organizers initially depict minipublics as an innovative process to involve and consult ordinary citizens on a specific policy issue so that their recommendations could help policy-makers adopt better and more legitimate decisions, and, in some cases, also resolve political deadlock. After 2017, they tend to construct a more ambitious image of minipublics,

presenting them as a way to tackle the gap between citizen and politics or the broader democracy crisis. They also describe minipublics as a solution to the structural lack of citizen inclusion and to stimulate the participation of the citizenry. Although this paper does not aim to explain this evolution in detail, we can rely on Vrydagh et al. (2021) to formulate a hypothesis about the role that the iconic G1000 may have played in this shift of narrative. The gigantic citizens' summit has had a profound impact on the development of minipublics in Belgium since it took place in 2011 and it seems to have inspired the next generations of minipublics organizers. Before, the narrative revolves around a governance-driven approach which depicts minipublics as an innovation to improve policymaking. After the G1000, especially after and right before the local and regional elections in 2018 and 2019 respectively, local and regional organizers seem to rely on the narrative developed in the G1000 manifesto, which describes minipublics as a tool of democratization. The new majorities emerging from these elections are responsible for the implementation of numerous minipublics, whose justifications mainly tap into the *democratic crisis narrative*, which presents minipublics as a solution to tackle the democratic crisis and its multiple symptoms, like the gap between citizens and politics or the deficient democratic legitimacy.

The level of authority and the kind of organizers also reveal a couple of patterns (see Table 3 in the appendix, Figures 1 & 2 in the appendix). Organizers at the supranational level, mainly the European Commission, present minipublics as a way to stimulate a public debate and to include citizens who are affected by their decisions but cannot influence them because of the insulation of the European Union's decision-making. The justifications for minipublics at the federal level tend to be more pragmatic: organizers present them as a consultation mechanism to adopt better and more responsive policies. The federal level also entails a diversity of organizers with different conceptions: the public administration wants to open itself to citizens and consult them, but it rarely conceives the functions of minipublics for will formation and decision-making. The government seeks to consult citizens on technical issues (GMOs, the use of DNA, consumption) and diversify policy inputs. Finally, civil society does not show any clear pattern of justifications. Minipublics at the regional level differ depending on whether the government or the parliament initiate them. For the former, minipublics are mainly seen as a process to improve governance and stimulate a debate on a particular issue, while the latter conceives them as a way to open itself, bridge the gap between citizens and politics, educate participants and to reinforce democracy so that it can tackle the crisis of democracy. Minipublics at the local level are mainly initiated by the government and their justifications predominantly rely on goal-oriented justifications whose scope are, in comparison with the other levels of authority, significantly more structural. This seems somehow paradoxical that the lowest level of authority, with its limited capacity, tends to have the biggest ambition. It is also intriguing to observe that almost half of local minipublics are expected to improve social cohesion in the broader population, a herculean objective for minipublics that the literature has not theorized. Finally, one of Belgium's particularities is the institutionalization of minipublics at the local and regional levels. These cases slightly differ from ad hoc processes as they seek to make more problem- and goal-oriented structural contributions. It is also interesting to observe that these purposes principally consist of abstract and very ambitious functions, like addressing citizens' disempowerment and the ineffectiveness of elections, stimulate the

participation of the whole citizenry, or rebuild a participatory and deliberative democracy; or functions that have not yet been theorized, such as the gap between citizens and politics or to generate social cohesion.

Table 5 presents a comparative overview of the organizers' justifications and the most common theoretical functions developed in the literature. The use of percentages for the former and the connection to the latter should not be interpreted as a pretension to 'quantify' my qualitative analysis. The theoretical functions do not come from a systemic review of the literature and the description of the frequencies for the themes from the organizers are also the result of my subjective interpretation. Table 5 must thus mainly be read as an overview displaying the main trends of (mis)alignments between my reading of the literature and my thematic analysis of the public justifications for Belgian minipublics. The main trend emerging from the analysis and captured in the table is that theory and practice diverge more than they coincide. Except for the inclusion of ordinary citizens and improving policymaking, the organizers' justifications tend to partially rely on the literature. For instance, the theoretical functions of diversifying inputs, improving public deliberation or generating legitimacy for public decisions remain occasional in the thematic analysis, whilst several prevalent theoretical functions, like improving descriptive representation, redistributing power, or dealing with complex problems are either rarely or never mentioned by organizers.

Moreover, the literature has not theorized several functions that are common in practice, such as the use of minipublics to bridge the gap between citizens and politics, open an institution to the public, or improve the social cohesion. We also witness an increasing ambition for minipublics which are presented as a solution to large-scale and complex problems, which contradict the consensus in the literature about the incapacity of minipublics to solve structural problems on their own (e.g., Curato et al., 2019; Lafont, 2019). More research is needed to check whether the desynchronization also applies in other countries. The findings are likely to differ in countries which have convened few but high-profile minipublics, like Ireland, because organizers there may arguably have an easier access to scientific inputs when conceiving the purposes of their processes than a organizer at the local level in Belgium. Similar results may, however, be found in other decentralized states, such as Austria, Australia, Germany, Canada or France (OECD, 2020), which are also characterized by a rise in the number of minipublics and their implementation at the local and regional levels. Since Belgium is at the forefront of the "deliberative wave" thanks to the series of institutionalized cases, one could rely on the results of these studies to predict how the functions of minipublics may be conceived in the future. We should nonetheless remain careful about making predictions based on these findings because there is no evidence that the development of minipublics in a country is a linear process, as recently exemplified by the revocation of the 'permanent' observatory of citizen participation in Madrid (Ganuza & Menendez-Blanco, 2020).

Table 5. Comparison between theory and organizers' discourses

Main theoretical functions	Organizers' discourse
Inclusion	
(1) Include ordinary citizens to give them a voice	**Prevalent—**41 (80%) Citizen inclusion; Citizen consultation
(2) Diversify inputs	**Occasional—**19 (37%) Not only experts; citizens' expertise
(3) Improve descriptive representation with random selection	**Rare—**1 (2%) deficient descriptive representation *Variant = ineffective elections (4, 8%)*
(4) Redistribute power	**Absent** *Variants: citizens' feelings of disempowerment, citizens are voiceless (7, 14%)*
Absent or marginally theorized	Experimentation—22 (43%) Institutional opening—19 (37%) Realize a democratic model—11 (22%) Improve systemic participation—9 (18%) Citizenship—4 (8%)
Will formation	
(5) Improve policymaking	**Omnipresent—**46 (90%) Improve policymaking
(6) Educative forum for participants	**Occasional**—12 (23%) To educate participants
(7) Proof of citizens' deliberative skills	**Absent** *Variant: Demonstrate citizens' capacity to participate (2, 4%)*
(8) Improve public deliberation	**Occasional—**17 (33%) Public debate; inform maxi-public; controversial debate
(9) Improve political deliberation	**Rare**—8 (16%) Contribute to a policy debate
Absent or marginally theorized	Gap between citizens and politics—27 (53%) Cohesion among citizens—8 (16%) Create a network of citizen participation—2 (4%)
Decision-making	
(10) Generate legitimacy for public decisions	**Occasional—**12 (23%) *Variant: generate legitimacy for the political system—7 (14%)*
(11) Escape political deadlock	**Occasional**—7 (14%) Political deadlock
(12) Deal with complex & global policy problems	**Rare**—3 (6%) Scale of the problem
Absent or marginally theorized	To improve democracy—12 (24%) Crisis of representative democracy—6 (12%)

2.5. The minipublic bubble

Before discussing the implications of the analysis for the theory and practice of minipublics, we must first discuss a series of caveats. First, I singlehandedly coded the corpus which may result in a lower inter-coder reliability. While one may thus wonder whether the results would have been different with another coder, I am convinced that the three-level taxonomy used in the analysis helped structure and systematize the coding process and would therefore prevent the findings from varying significantly. Second, the analysis focuses on the image of minipublics that organizers project, but we do not know the extent to which these reports contribute to shaping the opinions of the broader public. Regarding public opinion, we neither know the extent to which the public read these reports, nor the public attitudes regarding the numerous purposes of minipublics, since surveys have hitherto investigated the support for general use of minipublics (e.g., consultative or authoritative). More research is needed to analyse how these reports shape the perceptions of the broader public (for an example on voters, see Broghammer & Gastil, 2021). As for the organizers, the report only gives access to the 'front stage', that is the official document from which all uncertainties, ambiguities, and contestation are removed (Sedlačko, 2018). It hence lacks insights on their 'backstage', that is the non-transparent process through which multiple writers and editors with different conceptions produced the document (Callon, 2002; Michels, 2016). Nonetheless, the results from this 'front-stage' analysis are analogous to the empirical results of interviews of organizers conducted in Belgium (Macq & Jacquet, 2021; Rangoni et al., 2021; Schiffino et al., 2019) and abroad (Beswick & Elstub, 2019; Bobbio, 2019; Dean, 2019; Hendriks & Lees-Marshment, 2019), suggesting that examining reports can provide a reliable resource to analyse organizers' conceptions of minipublics.

The analysis revealed an important desynchronization between the theoretical and practical functions of minipublics, which has important implications for organizers and the broader scientific community working on minipublics. First, the analysis indicates that many organizers do not conceive the functions of their minipublics *in media res*, that is "with the social circumstances and especially the governance problems of particular societies as they are" (Fung, 2012, p. 610). Several purposes seem to mismatch the actual potential and capacity of minipublics. Some overly ambitious functions, like bridging the gap between citizens and politics, even hint at a romanticized construct of minipublics among organizers. The context in which minipublics operate also tends to be neglected, as some organizers associate minipublics with numerous issues and functions, suggesting that they conceive minipublics as *a solution seeking problems* rather than *a solution to particular problems*. Researchers—including myself—should not neglect this idealized and free-standing approach to minipublics and be mindful of the following in order to not contribute to this trend. First, researchers working on minipublics are often activists who believe that minipublics are intrinsically propitious. One likely corollary is the intermingling of evaluation and promotion, conflating hypothesis and normative assumptions. However, as Mutz explained, "Hypotheses often turn out to be wrong, but assumptions, by their very nature, cannot be" (2008, p. 524). It is therefore important for researchers to clearly distinguish their activism from their research. Second, we should avoid just focusing on high-profile minipublics and not only monitor cases that take place at the lower

levels but also engage with their organizers, as they are the one deviating the most from the theory.

Third, scholars should also clarify the extent to which minipublics' endemic contributions help solve structural problems or fulfill democratic functions. The taxonomy developed for the thematic analysis can make an interesting theoretical and analytical contribution. Theorists commonly argue that minipublics cannot make long-lasting structural contributions on their own. Instead, the strategy with minipublics amounts to a functional compensation for the low global legitimacy of electoral democracy by generating legitimacy "locally—issue by issue, policy by policy, and constituency by constituency" (Warren, 2009, p. 8). Repairing structural problems will definitely require more than one (if any) minipublics and will likely need additional resources in the form of both non- and institutionalized democratic practices (Curato et al., 2020; Saward, 2021; Warren, 2017). By explicitly distinguishing endemic from structural contributions, the taxonomy provides a clearer and more honest idea of the extent to which minipublics contribute endemically to solving structural problems. Analytically, it captures the scope of contributions and can help grasp the causal relationship between endemic and structural outcomes. For instance, when we add the taxonomy to Beauvais and Warren's case study (2019), we get an even more insightful picture of the contributions of a citizens' panel in Vancouver. The urban policy plan suffered from a lack of inclusion in two ways: a structural element with the electoral system hindering the accountability between constituents and their elected representatives, and a contingent problem due to the ineffective participation plan meant to launch the urban policy plan. Whereas the former is a structural deficit which the citizen panel cannot solve on its own (it can only provisionally alleviate its negative effects on inclusion), the latter is an endemic problem resulting from a failed ad hoc participation plan, with the citizen panel helping to repair its damages (Beauvais & Warren, 2019, pp. 8–9). The taxonomy can thus enable a more explicit assessment of minipublics' contributions: while the citizens' panel has fixed endemic problems, it has mitigated the effects of a systemic deficient inclusion, albeit without solving it.

Finally, we should be prudent when we theorize new functions for minipublics, because these tend to add up and constitute what Diana Mutz would call a 'laundry list' of desired outcomes (2008, p. 530). The profusion of purposes for minipublics both in the theory and in practice ensues a trade-off among them since it is impossible for any minipublics to realize all these functions. Yet, very few studies have theorized and analysed empirically these trade-offs (for exceptions, see Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2016; Felicetti et al., 2016). Moreover, the logical and causal relationships between a minipublic and the intended functions tend to remain fuzzy, and minipublics therefore become some sort of 'black box'—to re-use Mutz' expression (2008, p. 530)—which prevents us from knowing accurately why a minipublic produced specific desired outcomes. Not only do we know very little about the conditions under which minipublics can realize specific functions, but the combination of the 'laundry list' and the 'black box' also enables activist researchers and practitioners to always find a positive outcome to minipublics, even if these were not the initial intended objectives. This combination becomes pernicious when we consider the fact that organizers have recently increased the ambitions for minipublics, advancing them as solutions to systemic problems. The synthesis of these three

factors is the creation of a *minipublics bubble* which inflates their actual potential to solve both endemic and structural problems. Organizers' increased ambition coupled with the lack of genuine scientific understanding of minipublics' contributions results in the projection of a romanticized image of minipublics, presented as a panacea to large-scale problems or as the way to enflesh a deliberative democracy. This minipublic bubble is greatly problematic because it is destined to burst and lead to the discredit of minipublics, as people will witness that society's problems persist and worsen in parallel to and despite the proliferation of minipublics.

2.6. Conclusion

This paper examined how organizers conceived the contributions of their minipublics. Examining the public reports of all minipublics that have taken place in Belgium between 2001 and 2021, the thematic analysis reveals that organizers mainly depict them as a mechanism to include ordinary citizens, improve policymaking, and close the gap between citizens and politics. These findings were then compared to the theoretical literature and showed a series of discrepancies between theory and practice. The theory lags behind on several purposes that are common in the discourses, in particular implementing minipublics to bridge the gap between citizens and politics. Accordingly, some widespread theoretical functions do not find a broad echo in practice. Organizers tend not to conceive minipublics for deliberative purposes or according to a problem-based approach. Instead, their discourses mainly follow a governance-driven approach and depict minipublics as a way to make systemic contributions and tackle structural problems. The chapter finally discussed the implication of the gap between theory and practice and the plethora of desired outcomes associated with minipublics, which contributes to the creation of a *minipublic bubble* that inflates their potential to actually solve problems.

3. Chapter 3. The influences of minipublics on public decisions[10]

This chapter zooms in on one of the most common functions of minipublics in practice: formulating recommendations to influence public decisions. As explained in Chapter 1 (Sections 1.3.3), it is crucial for minipublics to have consequences on policymaking if they are to remain legitimate in the eyes of the public and a sustainable solution to help tackle democratic challenges. Despite its importance, the literature has not thoroughly tackled several key questions that we need to answer in order to conceptualize, measure and assess the influence of minipublics on public decisions. This chapter first offers a conceptualization of influence which emphasizes its sequential and causal nature. Next, I turn to the existing methods that are deployed in order to measure the influence of minipublics. Most of the literature has hitherto relied on a congruency approach, which conducts a comparative textual analysis between a minipublic's recommendations and the public decisions. After explaining the flaws of this methodological approach, I offer the following alternative. First, the Sequential Impact Matrix builds on my conceptualization of influence to consider how recommendations' uptake relates to the expressed initial preferences of decision makers, and the type of public policy component that is translated into public decisions. Second, I propose that empirical studies should triangulate the findings from a congruency approach—which is conducted via desk research—with interviews of key policy- and decision makers involved in the follow-up of a minipublic. I then apply all these methodologies and different calibration settings to a case study in order to see how they affect the empirical findings. The case study consists of the citizens' panel "Brussels—Make your Mobility" which was convened by the Parliament of the Region of Brussels-Capital in the context of the new 10-year mobility plan, the 'Good Move plan'. Based on the findings, I suggest adopting the Sequential Impact Matrix in combination with a mixed method in order to obtain the most reliable and accurate results.

3.1. A Conceptualization

Minipublics can have numerous political-macro impacts which go beyond their influence on public decisions (Felicetti et al., 2016; Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Jacquet & van der Does, 2020a). These impact types vary depending on the source of influence (its recommendations, its entire resolution, the process in itself) and its target (who is the target of influence, and its function in the public or empowered sphere). For instance, the *process* of a minipublic can generate a change of perceptions about citizen participation and deliberation among public officials (Jacquet & van der Does, 2020a; Michels & Binnema, 2018, p. 4) and, theoretically, could instill a deliberative stance among decision-makers (Niemeyer & Jennstål, 2018, pp. 336–337) and even help foster a macro-deliberative culture (Böker, 2017). The *process* and *recommendations* of a minipublic can also generate a deliberative influence, which unfolds in two ways: it can inform people from both the public and the empowered sphere about a specific issue (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Michels & Binnema, 2018), and it can have an epistemic effect

[10] This chapter draws upon two articles. The first one, published in Representation, can be accessed here : https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00344893.2020.1862901?journalCode=rrep20. The second article, published in Policy Sciences, can be found here : https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11077-022-09450-w.

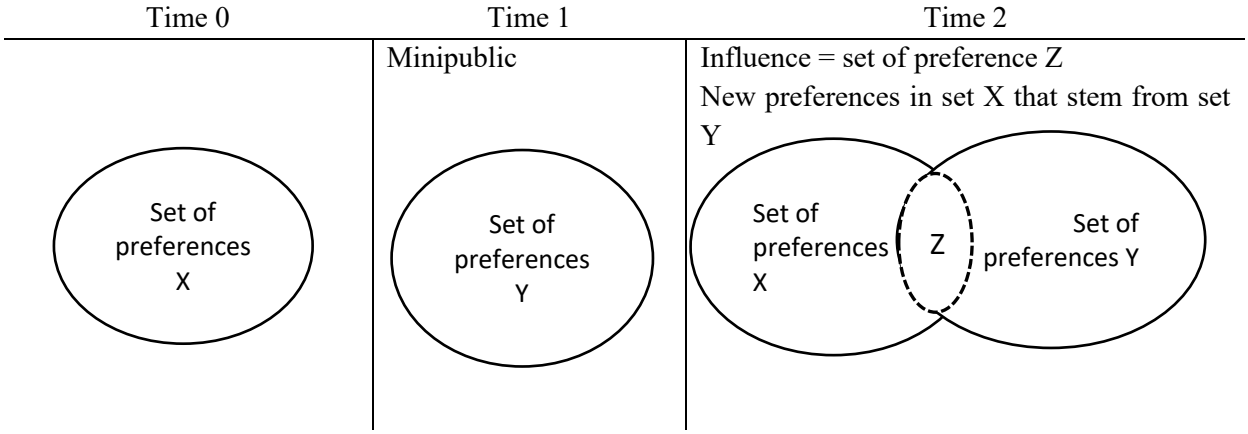
by disseminating sound arguments to the broader public sphere (Niemeyer & Jennstål, 2018). Each type of influence should receive a distinct analytical treatment. In the next two chapters, I focus on the *influence* that *the recommendations* of a minipublic exert on decision makers and their decisions.

Studies on the effects of minipublics on policymaking rely on various terms, such as the policy responsiveness (Pogrebinschi & Ryan, 2018), impact (Bua, 2017b; Michels & Binnema, 2018), fate of proposals (Font et al., 2018), consequences (Jacquet & van der Does, 2020a) or output (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2016; Gastil et al., 2017). I opt here for the term *influence* because it integrates the consultative nature of minipublics: minipublic produce recommendations which must first influence decision makers who, in turn, decide to take them up or not in public decisions.[11] My focus is moreover limited to the influence on *public decisions*, that is the policy output that decision-makers can manage, thereby leaving their implementation out of scope. As I will explain in more detail below, including the implementation complexifies the analytical exercise of measuring the influence of minipublics because it implies controlling the other external factors that may account for an influence.

We can formally conceptualize influence as "that which induces behaviour on the part of the individual at time T1 different from that which might be predicted on the basis of the knowledge of the individual organism at time T0" (March, 1955, p. 438). Minipublics at T1 have an influence to the extent that they induce a change in decision-maker's decisions between T0 and T2 (see Figure 2). Assessing minipublics' influence thus requires a temporally sequential perspective, whereby the effect is measured compared to a null-position, and assumes that decision makers' preferences act as the connecting mechanism between the minipublic and the subsequent public policy. It starts with the target of influence (in this case: decision makers) and its set of preferences at time 0 (T0). Then, the source of influence (in this case: the minipublic) occurs at time 1 (T1) and produces a set preferences Y, which seeks its ways into the set of preference X. The final phase at time 2 (T2) consists of the uptake in the set X of the preferences stemming from the set Y, that is set Z in figure 1, and decision makers lastly make public decisions based on the set of preferences Y.

[11] In some instances, the recommendations are submitted to the maxi-public for approval via a referendum, such as in the case of the Irish Citizens' Assembly (Farrell & Suiter 2019)

Figure 2. The sequence of a minipublic's influence



A key element in the definition is the *inducement of a change of behaviour.* Minipublics exert an influence on public policy by inducing a change of behaviour of decision makers, which implies a causal relationship between the source of influence and its target. Several studies have referred to the importance of decision makers' initial preferences, either implicitly or as an independent variable. Most works rely on a congruency approach—i.e., a desk-based research method which assesses the influence based on the textual correspondence between a citizen-created idea and public policy documents—but they tend to operationalize the influence disparately, looking at different public policy outputs and (in a limited number of cases) applying distinct triangulation strategies. The next section delves deeper into the ways researchers have tried to capture the influence of minipublics on public decisions.

3.2. Measurement: an overview of the literature

Scholars tried to find out whether minipublics have an influence on public decisions via case studies (Alarcón et al., 2019; Barrett et al., 2012; Bua, 2017; Michels & Binnema, 2018; Smith, 2009), larger comparisons (Beierle, 2010; Font et al., 2018; Gastil et al., 2017; Pogrebinschi, 2013) or literature reviews (Abelson & Gauvin, 2006; Geißel & Heß, 2018; Jacquet & van der Does, 2020; Jager et al., 2020; Michels, 2011; Rowe & Frewer, 2004). However, there has been little attention devoted to the actual assessment of influence. Scholars have criticized existing studies' narrow understanding of the impact and public policy (Abelson & Gauvin, 2006; Blondiaux & Fourniau, 2011; Chess, 2000; Mazeaud & Boas, 2012; Rowe & Frewer, 2004), and the focus on exceptional cases (Spada & Ryan, 2017), while others have specifically reflected on the methodological exercise of impact assessment (Font et al., 2016; Font & Smith, 2019; Jacquet & van der Does, 2020a; Richardson et al., 2019). However, these studies tend to reflect on their own methodology or to briefly discuss various approaches, but no research has yet collated them. Reviewing the literature conveys the impression that each study developed its methodological framework in isolation from other works. It is also unclear how these researchers have measured the textual correlation, and that lack of transparency not only prevents the transferability and replicability of their studies, but also undermines their capacity for theory-building (Mutz, 2008). As this research agenda is moving towards larger

comparisons (Ryan, 2019), the absence of methodological standardization is becoming problematic.

The consultative character of minipublics implies that they have an indirect impact, first influencing decision makers who, in turn, subsequently decide whether or not to integrate them into public policy and laws. Such indirect impact clouds the assessment, as it becomes extremely complex to ascertain whether the influence actually stems from the original influence of a minipublic and not from other sources of influence (e.g., lobbies, public debate, or inter-party negotiations). The search for causality creates a tension that separates the two main methodological approaches. The first approach consists of in-depth case studies that seek to capture causal relations between a participatory process and public policy (e.g., Bua, 2017; Johnson, 2015). However, this approach is subject to criticisms because it tends to focus on iconic cases of citizen participation (Richardson et al., 2019; Spada & Ryan, 2017). Studies on high-profile and successful cases such as the Irish Citizen's Assembly (Farrell & Suiter, 2019), the British Columbia Citizens Assembly (Warren & Pearse, 2008), the Participatory Budgeting of Porto Alegre (Smith, 2009) or the Belgian G1000 (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2018) tend to produce idiosyncratic explanations on non-representative cases. Moreover, the search for causality is time demanding and hinders the development of broader comparisons.

As a reaction to the causality challenge, scholars tend to use a congruency approach which compares the content of public decisions with citizen ideas (Jacquet & van der Does, 2020a; Pogrebinschi, 2013; Pogrebinschi & Ryan, 2018). They examine the extent to which citizens ideas correspond to public decisions and, if both coincide, they suggest that the participatory process has an influence. This methodological approach is popular since it enables larger comparisons, which are seen as the next step in the research agenda seeking to escape the criticism of focusing on iconic cases (Font et al., 2018; Geißel & Heß, 2018). The congruency approach however tends to rely only on desk research (i.e., analysis of policy documents) and do not triangulate with additional data like interviews.

This section is an effort to standardize the commonly used congruency approach with a case study to see how different calibration of the congruency approach can produce diverging and more reliable findings. It examines how the operationalization of impact, the moment in policymaking, and the triangulation strategy variously alter the empirical results. I will also propose two methodological add-ons for a more context-sensitive application of the congruency approach, which—as I will argue—can increase the reliability of the findings. The first is the Sequential Impact Matrix (SIM), an assessment framework which considers the preferences of decision makers before a participatory process and the type of public policy that is taken up afterwards. The second suggestion is a mixed method which triangulates the congruency approach with interviews to obtain the contextualized experience of actors involved in the follow-up of the minipublic. The study applies this approach to a typical case of minipublics: the citizens' panel "Make Your Brussels Mobility" which took place in the Brussels Capital Region of Belgium in 2017. The results indicate the importance of adopting a more fine-grained congruency approach, distinguishing different sorts of uptakes and carefully selecting—and justifying—the policymaking stage at which the assessment takes place. More

importantly, they also demonstrate the necessity of adopting a mixed method to corroborate the general trends identified with the policy document analysis. A mixed method can also reveal new insights about the more diffuse political contributions, such as exerting a considerable influence on the political decision-making or leading to the institutionalization of minipublics in the Brussels Regional Parliament.

3.2.1. The congruency approach

The most common methodology used to assess the uptake of citizen ideas is the congruency approach (Jacquet & van der Does, 2020a). In this approach, scholars examine the extent to which citizen ideas textually correspond to public policy documents and laws, and, if both coincide either literally or in intent, they suggest that the minipublic has had an impact (Geißel & Heß, 2018; Pogrebinschi, 2013; Pogrebinschi & Ryan, 2018). The congruency approach is popular because it requires less time and human resources than case studies (see for instance Bua, 2017; Johnson, 2015), thereby making larger comparisons possible. This practical advantage nonetheless comes at the cost of reliability: a simple textual correlation serves as a proxy to indicate an impact. The congruency approach therefore investigates a causal relation—i.e., a citizen idea influencing public policy—with an indicator of correlation, without inferring absolute certainty that this is the result of the minipublic's genuine influence and not from other sources of influence (Richardson et al., 2019, p. 271).

3.2.2. Sequential Impact Matrix

Most studies do not consider the initial policy agenda of decision makers, implying that a participatory process takes place in a political vacuum. In doing so, they overlook the fact that decision makers have policy preferences before a minipublic and that these can affect the uptake of citizen ideas. When addressed explicitly, these initial preferences are examined as an independent variable to explain the uptake. For instance, Font et al. (2018) looked at whether a "proposal challenges the existing practices of an administration" (p. 621) and whether the local administration supports the proposal, and they found out that internal support is the strongest predictor of implementation, whilst "challenging proposals are more often abandoned or substantially modified" (p. 627). Similarly, Bua argues that "coherence with extant policy agendas emerges as an important determinant of policy influence" (2017, p. 169). Although empirical studies show that a minipublic's influence is more limited when its recommendations oppose decision makers' initial preferences or greater when they confirm these preferences, no attention has yet been devoted to the theoretical implication for and the operationalization of the minipublic's influence. Indeed, the minipublic's influence on public decisions will be different if its recommendations change, confirm, or oppose the decision makers' preferences. Likewise, an influence that challenges decision makers' agenda or confirms it have a different democratic value. The sequential approach integrates these initial preferences to investigate the extent to which decision makers cherry-pick citizen ideas—that is, taking up those that coincide with their own agenda and rejecting or partially integrating those that deviate from it, hinting at the instrumentalization of a minipublic (Font et al., 2018; Setälä, 2017; Smith, 2009).

The matrix is sequential because it distinguishes three moments in sequence: the decision-makers' expressed positions before a minipublic, the transmission of the citizen ideas to decision makers, and finally the integration of these ideas in public policy. With Didier Caluwaerts (2020), we differentiated five types of influences that citizen proposals can exert on decision makers based on the assumption that the public policy content can be equal, relatively similar, different or absent across the sequence (see Table 6). On the one hand, democratic innovations have two sorts of aligning influence, that is when the citizen idea roughly corresponds to the initial expressed positions of decision makers. When the content of both is similar, the minipublic exerts a continuous influence. When the citizen idea complements the initial positions, it exerts an enriching influence. On the other hand, democratic innovations can also exercise a diverging influence, that is when citizen ideas clearly depart from decision makers' agenda. Minipublics can bring in a new idea and have an innovating influence, or they can propose something substantially different, which can result either in decision makers changing their positions—i.e., shifting influence—or cancelling their initial policy plan—i.e., inhibiting influence. Finally, when the congruency between a citizen idea and subsequent public policy is not complete but still features similarities, we consider that the uptake is partial, thereby hinting at a limited influence, irrespective of its type.

Table 6. A typology of the influences of a minipublic

T0	T1	T2	Kinds of uptake	Kinds of influence
A	A	A	Uptake	Continuous influence
		a	Partial uptake	Limited continuous influence
		B or o	No uptake	No influence
a	A	A	Uptake	Enriching influence
		a	partial uptake	limited enriching influence
		B or o	No uptake	No influence
o	A	A	Uptake	Innovating influence
		a	Partial uptake	Limited innovating influence
		B or o	No uptake	No influence
B	A	A	Uptake	Shifting influence
		a	Partial uptake	Limited shifting influence
		B	No uptake	No influence
		o	Uptake	Inhibiting influence

[A] = a preference; [a] = part of the preference A; [B] = a different preference; [o] = no preference

An important constraint of the sequential approach is the availability of decision- and policy-makers' initial preferences. It may also be difficult to identify the actors responsible for the uptake and, when these actors are not elected officials, it may not be possible to access their public agenda. Fortunately, most minipublics are commissioned by elected decision makers (Vrydagh et al., 2020, pp. 58–59; Warren, 2009) whose initial preferences can be accessed

through the electoral programs of their political party, their policy agenda, or interviews in the media. For the few cases without these data, one could always resort to investigating the identity of these actors and then interviewing them before the minipublic. For the analysis, I combined the sequential approach with a plural approach to uptake, building a Sequential Impact Matrix (SIM). This methodological add-on helps to standardize the congruency approach and reinforce the reliability of its results. Thanks to its visual overview (see Appendix 7.2.), the SIM transparently displays the political fate of each citizen idea, showing whether it was already being considered by decision makers before the minipublic, what it entails, and how it is taken up in public policy.

The set of preferences at T0 relies on two additional simplifying assumptions. First, it supposes that decision makers' preferences are homogeneous. This is however rarely the case empirically as decision-makers can have no clear policy ideas or even hesitate between contradictory preferences. Second, it can only examine stated policy preferences and not decision makers' true intentions. According to Benoit et al. (2009), political parties hold true preferences which are unobservable and uncertain, because only parties know them. What we have access to is the intended message, which expresses the true preferences in a distorted way for two reasons: either because a party decides to convey a strategic message that differs from the true preferences, or because the writing process is stochastic in the sense that the message intended will vary depending on the author. In both cases, it is important to note that the set of preferences at T0 and T2 only correspond respectively to the stated policy preferences and the legislated policy preferences.

3.2.3. The operationalization of public policy

While all studies must rely on some degree of conceptual untangling, several scholars have criticized the literature on impact assessment for its simplified conceptualization of public policy and policymaking (Boswell, 2016; Richardson et al., 2019). Extant research tends to form a monolithic conception of public policy and does not make any distinction regarding its content (Mazeaud & Boas, 2012), i.e., what the government chooses to do (Howlett et al., 2018, pp. 150–151). Citizen proposals and political uptakes can nonetheless entail different things, either presenting an abstract principle or implementing specific and concrete policy ideas. When relying on the congruency approach, a clearer and more transparent operationalization is needed to assess the exact content of a citizen idea and how it is taken up in public policy. I propose dividing public policy into different components and different levels of abstraction (see Table 7). We can distinguish three generic forms: policy goals; policy means (Jenkins, 1978; Lasswell, 1958; Walsh, 1994); and the framing of the two former elements (Hoppe, 2011a; Michels & Binnema, 2018; Perri, 2018, pp. 276–279). These three policy components also differ depending on the level of abstraction: they can entail broad policy elements at the abstract level; general components at the policy level; or refer to the on-the-ground setting of a public policy (Hall, 1993; Howlett, 2019; Howlett & Cashore, 2009). A differentiated operationalization of public policy allows a more accurate assessment of the textual correspondence of a citizen idea and public policy, as one can explicitly point out when an idea is partially present—i.e., when an uptake remains abstract or shows limited ambition. In the

analysis (see Sections 3.3.2-3), I compare a binary approach—by which a citizen proposal either roughly corresponds to public policy or not (e.g., Pogrebinschi & Ryan, 2018)—with a plural approach, which distinguishes full, partial, and absent uptakes (e.g., Font et al., 2018) based on the correspondence of both the components and levels of abstraction between a citizen idea and public policy.

Table 7. A typology of public policy

	Abstract	Instrument	Setting
Framing	Meta-argument The meta-arguments that explain a whole set of policy	The policy argument Arguments about a specific policy	Arguments about the policy's realization on the ground Arguments about concrete aspects of a policy
Goal	General aims The general aims that a set of policy should attain	The operationalizable policy objectives The formal measurable objective at a meso-level	Specific policy targets The concrete aims and efforts that are required to achieve the policy objectives
Means	The instrument logic The logic of instruments that are used throughout the set of policy	Policy tools choice The specific type of policy instrument that is used to attain the objective	Calibration The specific settings of policy tools required to implement policy program

3.2.4. The policymaking moment

Earlier studies tended not to clarify at what point in the policymaking process the assessment was conducted, but analyses now explicitly mention the phase. They commonly examine a single policymaking moment in order to measure the impact (Jacquet & van der Does, 2020a; Pogrebinschi, 2013), while a few others look at both the agenda-setting and the decision-making stages (Michels & Binnema, 2018; Pogrebinschi & Ryan, 2018) or the implementation stage (Font et al., 2018). Relying on Howlett et al.'s (2009, pp. 12–13) model of a policy cycle, Section 3.3 examines official documents after two key moments: policy formulation and decision-making. As each of these two stages involves different tasks and policymakers—a policy subsystem formulating policies for the former and the government decision makers validating policies for the latter (Howlett et al., 2009; Pogrebinschi & Ryan, 2018)—the uptake of citizen ideas is likely to differ. I do not consider the influence on the implementation phase because it is a long process which considerably extends the temporal scope of any analysis. It can furthermore escape the control of decision makers (Boswell, 2016), making it less relevant to the question of uptake. If practically feasible, it does, however, remain a crucial stage in investigating the final 'fate' of citizen ideas (Font et al., 2018).

3.2.5. Employing a mixed method

Most studies based on congruency do not triangulate their methodology (for exceptions, see Bua, 2017; Font et al., 2018). Impact assessment is often based solely on document analysis, and researchers tend not to compare their results with experience of actors involved in the political follow-up[12]. This lack of triangulation undermines the reliability and quality of their results, because we cannot know whether or not the corresponding public policy is the result of a minipublic's genuine influence (Denzin, 2009; Richardson et al., 2019). One way to address this deficiency is to triangulate methodologies: to decrease the deficiencies and biases of the congruency approach (i.e., context-insensitivity) with the strength of another (i.e., interviews of different actors who have a contextualized experience of the follow-up), thereby constituting a mixed method (Flick, 2004). Either method is not decisive on its own, as both methodologies are mutually supportive. The primary function of this approach is the reciprocal corroboration of each method's findings, thereby generating more reliable results than those produced by each method individually. In taking this approach, one should first conduct a policy document analysis before interviewing actors involved with the citizen ideas' uptake (Natow, 2020). Table 8 provides a summary overview of all the methodologies applied to the case study in this paper. In a nutshell, we find, on the one hand, the methodological strategies and calibrations based on the congruency approach and, on the other, the mixed method which seeks to triangulate the findings of the congruency approach with other methodologies and data (e.g., interviews of policymakers)

[12] For an excellent example of a context-sensitive methodological approach to the assessment of participatory processes, see Falanga and Ferrão (2021).

Table 8. An overview of the methodological approaches

Congruency approach *Impact assessment based on the textual congruency between a citizen idea and public policy*	
Operationalization of public policy	**Binary impact** A citizen idea has an influence when it textually corresponds to public policy **Plural impact** A citizen idea has an influence when it textually fully corresponds to public policy, and a limited one when it partially corresponds
Focus on policymaking	**Policy Formulation** Focus on the stage where policymakers formulate the first version of the public policy **Decision-making** Focus on the stage where decision makers adopt the final legal text
Sequential Impact Matrix	It examines the expressed initial preferences of decision makers in addition to the plural approach to impact
Interviews *To interview actors closely involved to the political follow-up of the minipublic to triangulate the general findings of the congruency approach.*	

3.3. Case study: "Brussels—Make Your Own Mobility"

3.3.1. Data and methodology

This paper will apply these different methodological approaches to one case, the Brussels citizen panel 'Brussels—Make Your Mobility'. It is a typical case for studying minipublics as it did not have the authority to make binding political decisions and its outcome consisted of a series of policy recommendations that were then transmitted to decision makers. The design of a participatory process does not matter for the methodologies as long as it is consultative and involves a series of citizens ideas that decision makers and policymakers can take up. Considering that the research agenda is moving towards larger comparison, it may seem contradictive to conduct a case study. Nevertheless, all comparative studies actually rely on published and grey literature consisting of case studies (Geißel & Heß, 2018; Jager et al., 2020; Michels, 2011; Rowe & Frewer, 2004) or on a large amount of self-conducted case studies (Font et al., 2018).

The citizen panel occurred between October and November 2017 (Vrydagh et al., 2020). The organizers used random stratified selection to recruit 40 ordinary inhabitants of the Brussels-Capital Region. The panel was implemented at the policy formulation stage of the new mobility plan 'Good Move', a ten-year plan defining the regional and municipal mobility policies. The public administration Bruxelles Mobilité and an external consortium (Smartteam) had already set the agenda with a series of transversal sections, after consulting stakeholders and civil society organizations in a series of open and closed meetings, as well as the wider population via an online platform on which citizens could submit ideas. The idea of the citizen panel originated in the Brussels Regional Parliament and its president, Charles Picqué (Parti Socialiste, French-speaking socialist party). Its creation and organization was thus relatively isolated from the actors involved in the elaboration of the mobility plan. The regional parliament did not include the Brussels regional government in the organization, except to inform them about the process. Bruxelles Mobilité contributed to the panel by presenting the main policy directions that they envisioned for the mobility plan. The panel had a mandate to answer the question, "By 2030, in which kind of neighborhood do you want to live and how to you want to move?"

Over four days in the Brussels Regional Parliament, participants engaged in deliberation under semi-professional facilitation and heard from various experts and witnesses. They formulated their recommendations in a citizen resolution on 19 November 2017, which was then presented to a parliamentary commission created especially for the political follow-up. Next, this commission converted the citizen resolution into a one official from the Parliament so that it could be legally transmitted to the minister for mobility, Pascal Smet (SP.a, Socialistiche Partij Anders, Dutch-speaking socialist party). The conversion was ratified by the whole Parliament on 25 May 2018 and the minister for mobility was invited to discuss the resolution on 25 June 2018. Next, Bruxelles Mobilité and Smartteam incorporated the Parliament's resolution into the mobility plan. The first version was transmitted to the minister for mobility, who had it ratified by the whole regional government in April 2019. A public survey was then organized to let people react to the first version of the plan, and regional elections were held in June 2019, leading to the formation of a new government in July 2019. The new minister for mobility, Elke Van den Brandt (Groen, Dutch-speaking ecologist party), took over the mobility plan and had it definitively adopted by the regional government in March 2020. Due to this change of government, the sequential approaches cannot be applied on the final version of the plan because the preferences of decision makers ratifying the plan do not precede the citizen panel and the citizen resolution may have thus influenced the political parties' programs and the new government's coalition agreement.

The primary data source for this study is the citizen resolution produced by the citizen panel, which consists of 74 ideas that form the unit of analysis. For the public policy that followed the citizen panel, I examined two official documents: the first version of the mobility plan adopted in April 2019 for the policy formulation stage, and the final version of the plan ratified in March 2020 for the decision-making stage. Regarding the initial agenda of decision makers, I have relied on the 2014 coalition agreement of the regional government and the 2014 regional election program of the political party SP.a (Dutch-speaking Socialist Party) to which the then

minister for mobility, Pascal Smet, belongs[13]. I used two criteria to detect the congruency of a citizen idea with initial preferences and public policy: a citizen proposal could correspond either literally in the text, or more subjectively in the intent. In the case of the latter, it means that the literal formulation of public policy is not exactly the same but it follows and aligns with the citizen idea's intention. The differentiation of different components and abstraction levels of the public policy, however, helps standardize this exercise of qualitative distinction (see Section 7.2.3 in the Appendix).

Finally, I interviewed actors closely involved with the organization and political follow-up of the citizen panel. There are a variety of different standards regarding the optimal number of interviews; for instance, Font et al. (2016) interviewed at least two actors in order to triangulate the data sources, while Bua (2017) and Michels & Binnema (2018) conducted 75 and 20 interviews, for one and two case-study respectively. With a total of seven interviews, I applied a middle-range standard that comparative studies could realistically meet. When selecting interviewees, I made sure to interview at least one key actor from each of the main institutions involved in the organization or the political and institutional follow-up of the citizen panel (see Table 4 in Appendix, 7.2.1). Interviewees knew their general roles in the institution would be mentioned in the analysis, which may have led some of them to overstate the importance of certain institutions and actors. Yet, I followed a data triangulation strategy (Mitchell, 1986), interviewing actors from distinct institutions. The seven interviews were semi-structured and lasted between 30 and 90 minutes each (see Appendix 7.2.1). I conducted the interviews in person, online, and on the phone between January and March 2021[14]. I had conducted the congruency analysis beforehand, enabling me to compare each method's findings by contrasting interviewees' perceptions with concrete examples from the congruency analysis and, conversely, balancing the general trend of the policy document analysis with their experiences. The interview format does not, however, provide means to check the political fate of all 74 citizen ideas. I analysed the interviews with MAXQDA to code segments that relate to the congruency analysis (impact on the first and final version of the plan, different influences and uptakes). As for the new insights revealed by interviews, I have coded these inductively.

3.3.2. The binary approach

The binary approach captures the influence of the citizen panel in a dichotomous way: either a citizen idea corresponds to something in the mobility plan (indicating an influence) or it does not (meaning a lack of influence). For instance, in the Subsections 1.6 and 2.6 (see 7.2.4. in the appendix), the citizen panel asks decision makers to assign objectives to the public transport company to make it competitive compared with car travel. The final mobility plan mentions that public transport should be competitive compared with cars, albeit without any concrete policy components. A binary approach judges this case to have an uptake because there is a textual correspondence, while a plural approach to uptake would consider it as partial, because

[13] In contrast to Vrydagh and Caluwaerts (2020), this study does not examine the electoral program of all the parties that form the coalition, because this would have taken too much time for a comparative analysis.
[14] The initial interview plan was delayed due to the COVID-19, and one should ideally conduct the interviews sooner after the publication of the policy output.

it is merely quoted as a framing element which does not entail concrete policy objectives and the means to specify and implement it. Figures 3 and 4 show the results for the first and final versions of the mobility plan, respectively. At the policy formulation stage, 48 citizen ideas (64.9%) were congruent while 26 (35.1%) did not have any uptake. The influence seems to be larger at the decision-making stage, where 55 proposals (74.3%) were congruent with the final plan. Hence, according to a binary approach, the citizen panel had a substantial influence on the policy formulation and an even greater impact on the decision-making.

Figure 3. The binary approach at the policy formulation stage

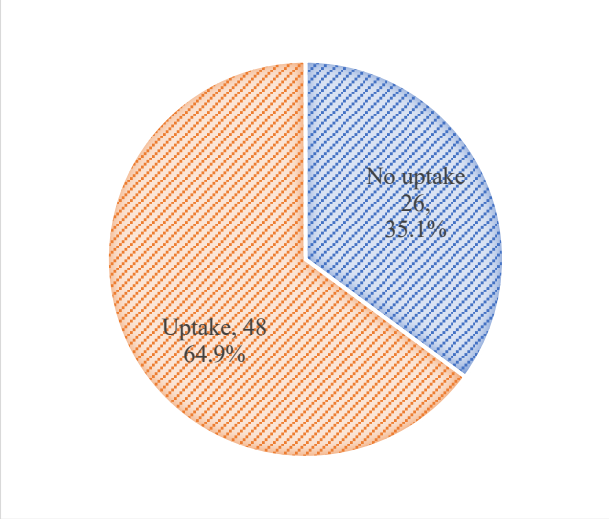
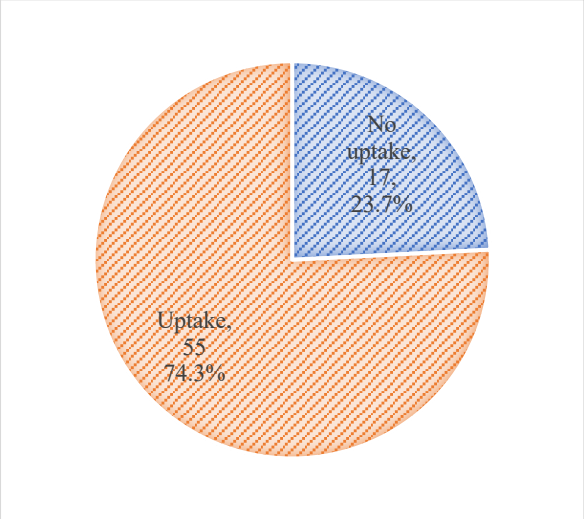


Figure 4. The binary approach at the decision-making stage



3.3.3. The plural approach

The plural approach distinguishes between different uptakes of citizen ideas by looking at the correspondence of public policy components and their levels of abstraction. An uptake is partial when the public policy distorts the citizen idea or when there is a mismatch between the components and levels of abstraction of a citizen idea on the one hand, and the uptake on the

other. The uptake is partial when decision makers refer to a citizen idea without providing concrete policy measures. For instance, the citizen panel wanted to replace parking spots with two trees. This idea was quoted in the first and final version of the mobility plan (see 1.5 and 2.5 in Appendix, section 7.2.4), but the idea is simply mentioned without objectives or means to realize it. Another example of partial uptake is where the mobility plan roughly and incompletely coincides with a citizen idea, which can be captured in the discrepancy between, on the one hand, public policy components and levels of abstraction, and a disjunction within similar types of public policy. On the former, the citizen panel wanted the police to devote more attention to road safety (see 1.10 in the Appendix, section 7.2.4.1) but the mobility plan only mentioned the creation of a bike police unit. Whereas the citizen idea was about increasing police attention to ensure road safety for all means of transport, the mobility plan only focused on the creation of a small bike police unit. We thus observe here a mismatch between an ambitious citizen idea and a policy proposal with limited ambition, indicating a partial uptake. Another example was the citizen panel's suggestion that the Brussels-Capital Region should encourage other regions and the federal authority to build parking around Brussels (see 1.6 in the Appendix, section 7.2.4.1), whereas the mobility plan only recommends the construction of parking without referring to the other authorities' responsibility for building them. The citizen idea and uptake are both included at the policy level but differ in content as the uptake removed the role of other authorities. The plural approach indicates (see Figures 5 and 6) that the citizen panel had less influence compared with the binary approach. At the policy formulation stage, 16 citizen ideas (21.6%) were partially taken up, implying that the full influence only concerns 32 citizen ideas (43.2%). As for the final version of the Good Move plan, we see a larger full uptake with 41 proposals (55.4%) but an identical level of partial uptake, with 16 proposals (21.6%). Partial uptakes thus account for a non-negligible proportion of the total uptake.

Figure 5. The plural approach at the policy formulation stage

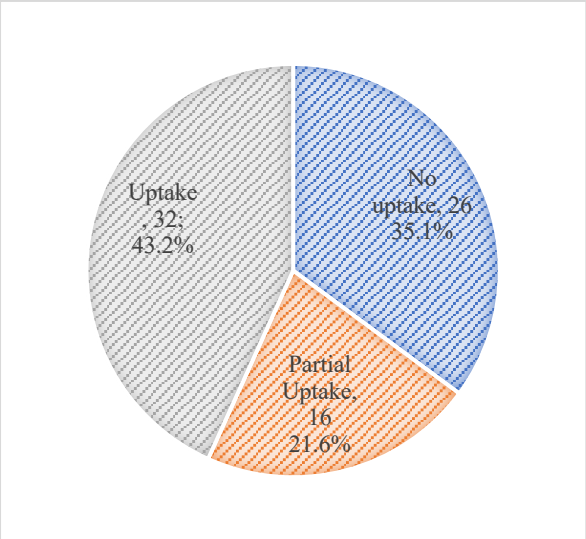
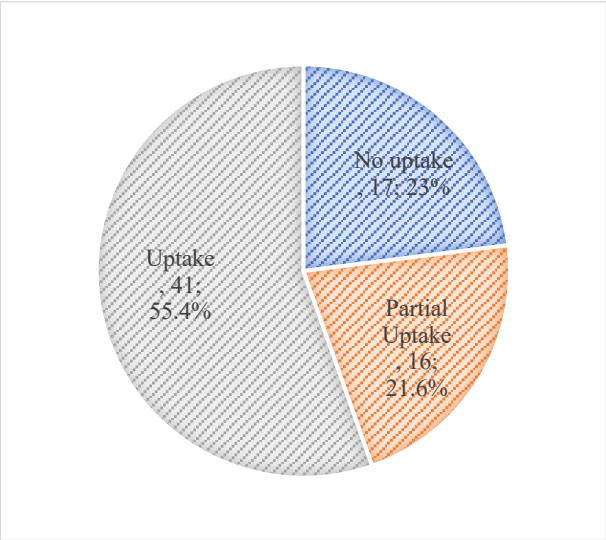


Figure 6. The plural approach at the decision-making stage



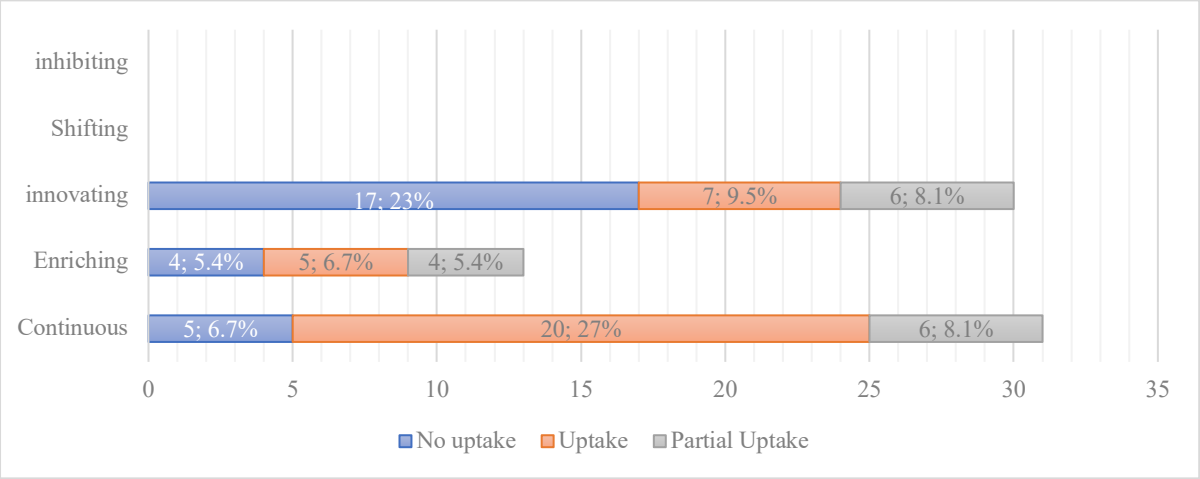
3.3.4. The Sequential Impact Matrix

The SIM considers the expressed initial preferences of decision makers in order to examine the extent to which uptake at the policy formulation stage only applies to citizen ideas that align with the decision makers' agenda. It also relies on a plural approach to influence. Regarding examples of aligning influences (see 1.8 in the appendix, section 7.2.4.1), the citizen panel wanted to increase the visibility of city trains, an idea that was already present in the coalition agreement of the government and which thus suggests a continuous influence. As for enriching influence, the citizen resolution states that information regarding the transport options must be accessible to all citizens. The SP.a shared a similar preference, as its manifesto invoked the importance of communication for public transport accessibility. Both ideas are similar but the citizen idea is more ambitious, stating access to information as a first-order policy objective. The mobility plan's adoption of this idea suggests that this citizen idea enriched the decision makers' initial preferences. As for diverging influences, we can find an example in the section 1.8 (Appendix 7.2.4.1): the citizen panel asked for the creation of a central platform to centralize all information on transport options. This idea was never mentioned in the decision makers' initial preferences, suggesting that this idea exerted an innovating influence.

Figure 7 shows that this approach generates an insightful picture of the fate of citizen ideas. It firstly gives an indication of where citizen ideas stand regarding decision makers' agendas. We can see that most citizen ideas align, with 31 ideas (41.9%) that are continuous and 13 (17.6%) that are enriching. Diverging citizen ideas are less common and only consists of innovating ones—30 (40.5%)—meaning that no citizen idea radically shifted or conflicted with decision makers' initial preferences. This finding is interesting as it indicates that the citizen panel's ideas were largely in line with the decision makers' agenda. When considering the type of uptake per type of influence, we can observe that aligning influences received more full uptakes, with 20 continuous proposals taken up (27%) and five enriching ones (6.7%). Diverging proposals were less integrated into the public policy, as only seven innovating (9.5%) proposals obtained full uptake. These findings suggest that decision makers cherry-

picked to some degree among the citizen ideas, taking up more those that align with their agenda and disregarding those that diverged from it.

Figure 7. The SIM at the policy formulation stage



3.3.5. The mixed method

I conducted interviews with seven key actors closely involved in the political follow-up of the citizen panel to obtain insights into their experiences and perceptions and to see whether they confirmed, rejected or nuanced the general trends identified via the congruency approach.

3.3.5.1. A binary approach to impact

All interviewees agreed that the citizen panel had an important influence on the mobility plan, although they ascribed different meanings to what that influence was. The prominent meaning related to the alignment of the citizen resolution with the policy agenda. For policymakers, the citizen panel had a significant influence on the mobility plan because it showed that a diverse group of citizens supported the plan. They confirmed the large congruency between the citizen resolution and the first version of the mobility plan, as a policymaker explains: "There was an impact on the elaboration of the Good Move plan. Actually (…), it greatly helped Good Move because the stars were completely aligned at that moment. What we saw in the citizen resolution, I mean, we could not have written it better (…). It was a godsend for the process [of creating] Good Move, because it showed that the project team (…) came [up] with conclusions close, if not very close (…) to citizens' expectations."[15]

The substantial congruency was particularly significant for policymakers due to the context in which they elaborated the mobility plan. When the plan started back in early 2016, the political debate on mobility was salient and polarized. A series of controversial issues and policies on

[15] The Project Team is the work group that elaborated the mobility plan. It consisted of Bruxelles Mobilité and the Smartteam consortium.

mobility[16] generated considerable debate about the state and future of mobility in the region (Hubert et al., 2020), in which the role of cars was central: one side wanted to decrease the importance of the automobile, while another was strongly opposed to this. The media treatment gave a lot of coverage to car supporters, which seemed to amplify the magnitude of their group in the eyes of the decision- and policymakers. The Bruxelles Mobilité administration moreover suffered from widespread distrust, with several critical pieces against them in the media and an audit on the entire administration. One member of the consortium explained: "There was really a 'Bruxelles Mobilité-bashing' when we started the Good Move plan, and we had to recreate adhesion, recreate the conviction that Bruxelles Mobilité could launch (…) a master plan." After consulting various stakeholders, policymakers went for a mobility plan that took a clear position against cars despite the sensitive political context. The fact that the citizen resolution—upon which policymakers had little control—was responsive gave them great confidence to stand by their reform project.

The citizen panel's support allowed the policymakers to show that the mobility plan was supported by a "silent majority" and was not the result of a siloed reflection among mobility experts and car opponents. Despite the tense political context, policymakers interpreted the high level of congruency as indicative of wider public support for their ongoing policy project: "With the citizen panel and its resolution, we indeed got the idea that 'yes, we are on the right track', this is something acceptable, even if there are frictions at the political level (…), we can keep [working] in this direction." The citizen resolution also became a resource for them to legitimize their reform: "So say [the impact] is really important because it gave us additional arguments, and, really, a support in a way; something upon which we could rely on to say 'It's not the experts, it's not Bruxelles Mobilité, it's not the people who say "I know everything about mobility", it's also folks, ordinary people who took position.' " Interviews hence corroborated the general trend of the influence identified with the congruency approach.

3.3.5.2. A plural approach to impact

With respect to the plural approach, the interviews questioned the underlying assumption of partial and absent uptakes. These two outcomes may look as if decision makers cherry-picked citizen proposals, adjusting them to fit their own agenda or rejecting those that did not, but the interviews yielded an alternative interpretation. While policymakers admitted the selective integration of citizen ideas into the mobility plan, it seems that the rejection of some proposals was due to the legal and political difficulties of actualizing them, rather than to instrumental purposes. One illustrative example concerns the citizen proposal of implementing a toll around the Brussels-Capital Region, but only for non-Brussels citizens. The uptake was coded as partial because the concrete policy means was translated into abstract ideas in the plan, without mentioning who would be subject to it. The partial uptake is here justified by political and legal reasons. Legally, the proposal goes against the European law, as a cabinet member explains:

[16] Among the salient issues were the 'Tunnel Gate' incident, in which tunnels in the region had to close because of their poor state, provoking many traffic jams in the region; another was the 'Taxi Crisis' provoked by the arrival of Uber in the region, which was tolerated by the government. Regarding the policies, the City of Brussels decided to convert a central lane into a pedestrian throughfare, suddenly and without consultation.

"But yes, only for the non-Brussels citizens, we knew very well that it would never work. But you must understand this (…), a citizen panel gives you an indication, something which has a raison d'être [purpose] as a whole which can be established, but yeah, the details behind like 'non-Brussels Citizens won't pay', there are considerations that you must know. Their propositions should not be dismissed because there are things in there that will never be accepted by [the European Union] or that are technically impossible to elaborate. But this distinction is quickly made."

Politically, two reasons were invoked. First, the toll proposal was discredited by many interviewees because it conflicted with two other citizen ideas, which asked decision makers to put the general interest above particular interests, and to reduce the traffic density. Interviewees highlighted the fact that Brussels motorists still represented an important proportion of car users in the region, and that giving them a free pass for the toll would go against the idea of putting the general interest first and reducing traffic density, as a policymaker described: "We did not exactly respect what [the citizen panel] asked because it is not a toll but an electronic km charge. But this is because everyone should pay and because our data shows that (…) the share of Brussels citizens using their cars is also important, especially for short distances. So, we must act on this. So, yeah, we did not exactly implement what they asked, but in the principles and so on, everything remains intact from [the first to the second version] of the plan." Second, some citizen ideas were politically more sensitive and could potentially jeopardize the whole mobility plan. Of the toll proposal, a cabinet member explained that such proposals pose a high political risk because they can draw all the political attention and compromise the rest of the plan: "A problem like the [toll] is a problem which often serves to bring in new problems or other topics that were already approved (…). Once there is a major problem that crystallizes a new political problem, we let things already approved come back (…) and suddenly, it takes one or two weeks and we end up with not one major problems, but ten problems on the table."

The interviews thus confirm the selective uptake of citizen ideas. However, whereas this may intuitively hint at a potential instrumentalization or a lack of genuine influence, the interviews offered different interpretations. The toll example reveals that this citizen idea exerted an influence even if only partially taken up, as decision makers modified it so that its objective and principles could be realized while respecting the legal constraints and taking the political context into account. Moreover, a lack of uptake may be due to the citizen idea itself, which could be legally or politically difficult to translate into public policy. While further investigation would be required to establish with certainty whether these political and legal arguments are genuine and not a pretext for avoiding an undesirable policy choice, the interviews at least showed that the absence of textual correlation and partial uptakes do not automatically imply a lack of consideration from policymakers.

3.3.5.3. A sequential approach to impact

The desk-based research suggested that citizen proposals succeeded in bringing new ideas into policymaking. The interviews did not, however, corroborate this finding, as policymakers could not remember learning new ideas from the citizen resolution. One of them explained: "Honestly, content-wise I have discovered nothing. Regarding (…) innovating ideas, no I haven't discovered anything, by saying, 'Well, we haven't thought of that, that could indeed be interesting.' " This is not surprising: the policymakers drafting the plan were mobility experts and therefore likely to already be acquainted with the citizen panel's ideas. Although the citizen panel's participants received technical information and heard expert views on mobility, it is unlikely that they could equal—in the four-day process—the policymakers' level of expertise. Moreover, innovating ideas are sensitive to the data collected, which focused on the expressed initial preferences of decision makers. Since policymakers do not publish their policy agenda, I could not consider their initial positions. One should thus keep in mind that the share of innovating ideas is likely to be smaller than that of aligning ideas.

Finally, the desk-based research suggested that the citizen panel exerted no shifting or inhibiting influences. Whereas inhibiting influence did not come up in the interviews, shifting influence actually did in a way that cannot be captured through the policy document analysis: the citizen panel helped to convince decision makers that the mobility plan was supported by a majority of the citizenry, which resulted in its trouble-free adoption via inter-cabinet negotiation and the absence of a fierce political opposition. From that angle, the object of the panel's influence was not the mobility plan but decision makers, and that influence started long before the formal decision-making moment. At the point when the parliament had to convert the citizen resolution into a parliamentarian one, many political parties were hesitant about mobility reform, as a public official from the parliament recalls: "Some parties from the majority and the opposition were not happy (…) [with] of all the [citizens] conclusions (…). So, Charles Picqué actually had a lot of difficulties from a political perspective to get the Parliament's Bureau to accept (…) the transformation of the resolution into a parliamentary resolution." A cabinet member made a similar observation: "What surprised me was that, at the start of the process, several French-speaking political parties were still sheltering [against a new mobility policy] (…). Yet, one year later, when the first version of the Good Move was going to be passed, I have noticed that, and I think this is not because [of] the citizen panel, well the citizen panel contributed because they saw that (…) there is in Brussels a net majority in all social classes which really wants a change on the mobility issue". This has definitely played [a part]."[17] The citizen resolution helped to show decision makers that there was actually no majority in favor of the status quo; rather, a majority of the Brussels citizenry wanted a policy change with respect to mobility. It pushed reluctant decision makers to realize that there was a silent majority in favor of a change, and it gave the minister and his cabinet the means to convince reluctant decision makers of the need to support their mobility plan, as the member of the cabinet mentioned: "the minister could expose some political parties (…) by saying, 'You are wrong, you believe that the Brussels citizens are still attached to this and that, but

[17] By declaring "*I think this is not because [of]the citizen panel*," the cabinet member meant that the shift by reluctant parties cannot be solely attributed to the citizen panel. The cabinet member explained that there was also a broader paradigm shift in public opinion about the need to reform mobility.

look at the [citizen resolution]; the city is open for the discussion on mobility, for a change of mobility. There, you are wrong.'"

3.3.5.4. Policymaking moments

The desk-based research indicated that the citizen panel had a significant influence on decision-making, but the interviews revealed that it is unlikely that the citizen resolution exerted a substantial influence on that stage. The changes between the first and the final version were most likely explained by external factors rather than by the use or a reinterpretation of the citizen resolution. Negotiations at the decision-making stage mainly dealt with technical aspects of the plan, and cabinet of the minister for mobility tried to avoid questioning the core principles and values that were already accepted in the first version of the plan. The citizen resolution consisted mainly of general policy ideas with few technical details, which mainly influenced the elaboration of the plan but were not an appropriate source of input for decision-making, as a cabinet member explained: "So, to convince people around the table, and even more, people that work for Bruxelles Mobilité, the STIB and so on, now we are outside the purely political discussion at the level of head of cabinet and so on, but they are not always really impressed by these [the citizens ideas] because behind these propositions, there is still the technicity (…). Here often, if we don't want something to be realized and that we are already against it, we try to find juridical, technical arguments so that it becomes a huge mountain to climb"[18]. The interviews confirmed that the plan's fundamentals did not change between policy formulation and decision-making, suggesting that the citizen panel influenced the first version of the plan rather than the final one. The difference in impact can be explained by the sensitivity of the congruence approach to the examined document: the final plan indeed featured an extended section to present its motives, resulting in a greater congruency of framing components from the citizen resolution.

3.3.6. Overview of the results

Different methodological approaches can be deployed to assess the influence of minipublics. This analysis has applied them to a single case to see how they alter the findings and identify ways to increase their reliability (see Table 9 for an overview of the results). The table starts with two columns which contain the results for the policy formulation and decision-making. For each, the left column contains the findings from the congruency approach and the right column a sign that either corroborates or disconfirms the results from the congruency approach. Each row entails the result of different methodologies. The analysis shows that the operationalization of the uptake and the selection of the policymaking moment do produce different results. A binary approach to the uptake amplifies the influence, while a plural approach reveals that many citizen ideas are only partially integrated into public policy. The selection of the policymaking moment also alters the findings, as the congruency approach indicates a larger influence at the decision-making phase. As for reliability, the more precise the measurement tool, the more the analysis integrates the context and produces fine-grained

[18] The STIB is the regional public transport operator in Brussels.

results. Using SIM uncovered an insightful new angle on the fate of citizen ideas: a large majority aligned with decision makers' initial preferences, and aligning ideas received considerably more uptake than diverging ones. These results suggest that decision makers have cherry-picked from among citizen ideas, integrating those that chimed with their own political preferences.

The best way to increase the reliability of the congruency approach is to combine it with interviews of actors involved in the citizen panel's follow-up. This mixed method not only produced the most reliable findings but also revealed ways in which the citizen panel exerted a more diffuse influence on decision makers and public policy, something desk-based research alone could not capture (see Discussion section, below). In terms of reliability, the interviews contradicted the congruency approach in two aspects. First, interviewees disagreed that the citizen panel had had a significant influence on the final version of the plan. Decision-making in this case centered on technical aspects and decision makers did not want to amend the core principles and policies of the first version of the plan. Second, the interviewees questioned the innovating potential of citizen proposals, as policymakers explained that they learned nothing new from the citizen resolution.

Table 9. The overview of the methodological approaches

	Policy formulation			Decision-making		
	Congruency approach	%	Mixed method's interview[19]	Congruency approach	%	Mixed method's interview
Binary approach to impact	Impact	64.9	+	Impact	74.3	-
Plural approach to impact	Uptake	43.2	+	Uptake	55.4	-
	Partial uptake	21.6	-	Partial uptake	21.6	-
SIM	Aligning influence & Uptake	36.5	+			
	Aligning influence & partial uptake	12.1	+			
	Diverging influence & uptake	8.1	-			
	Diverging influence & partial uptake	8.1	-			

[19] The sign [+] means that interviews corroborate the desk research findings, and the sign [-] means that the interview rebut the desk research findings.

To standardize the congruency approach and increase the reliability of its empirical findings, I recommend employing both the SIM and a mixed method. The SIM's main added value lies in its effort to make the impact assessment more consistent across cases. Its overview transparently displays the fate of each citizen idea and unveils the qualitative distinction that the researcher must make when capturing the congruency. Its consideration of decision makers' initial preferences—provided that these are available and accessible—also augments the context-sensitivity of the congruency approach and can reveal the extent to which decision makers cherry-pick citizen ideas. It can furthermore uncover the fate of 'exceptional citizen ideas' which could inhibit or shift the decision makers' agenda but risk being undetectable in the myriad of citizen ideas. Regarding the selected moment of the policy cycle, this analysis cannot identify an appropriate generic moment because it depends on the context of each case. It can only call for careful consideration and justification when selecting the phase and policy documents. As for the mixed approach, it is a necessity if the impact assessment seeks to ensure a minimum degree of reliability. The congruency approach on its own only gives an indication of a potential influence, and can thus easily produce a misleading picture. Therefore, the general trends identified via the congruency analysis must always be balanced against interviews of actors involved in the political follow-up. Interviews are extremely valuable because they confirm, nuance and invalidate the results of the congruency approach, and provide a good estimation of whether the congruency stems from the minipublic or other factors. They are not, however, the ultimate way to check the causal validity for each citizen idea: it is practically complicated—if not unfeasible—to discuss all citizen ideas resulting from a minipublic. Regarding who to interview, I recommend interviewing at least one key actor from each institution involved in the follow-up, so that the triangulation of methods can be combined with a triangulation of data.

3.4. Discussion

In this discussion, I reflect on the implications of these different methodological options for the broader theory about the influence of minipublics on public decisions, as well as on how they can help us better understand the contributions of minipublics to policymaking. First, mixed methods should not only be viewed as a validation strategy, as they can add "breadth and depth to [the] analysis" (Fielding et al., 1986, p. 33), and generate valuable insights on minipublics. First, absent and partial uptakes may not be the result of an instrumental or partisan use of citizen proposals by decision makers, who may have sound reasons for amending or rejecting them. This shows the importance for decision makers to publicly justify the absence or partial integration of a citizen idea, so that citizens are aware of the consideration that their ideas received and can understand the reasons for any lack of uptake (Bua, 2019, p. 290), thereby avoiding eventual participatory frustration (Fernández-Martínez et al., 2020). Furthermore, although minipublics are supposed to formulate problem-solving and qualitative policy ideas thanks to information their participants receive (Setälä & Smith, 2018), the case indicates that this may not be sufficient to be perceived as a valuable input for the technical discussions or to generate fresh ideas that are unknown to policymakers. While this finding is contingent on the minipublics' length, a four-day minipublic seems too short to reach the level of expertise of policymakers.

Considering the necessity of triangulating data with—ideally—interviews, which values do research relying on congruency approaches have? I think that they can produce at best an indication of what a minipublic could have influenced and a reliable indication of which recommendations did not exert any influence. In another research, I used the SIM to analyse whether another similar minipublic, the Ouderpanel, was subjected to cherry-picking practices (Vrydagh, Forthcoming). The analysis revealed three clues indicating that the citizens' panel was manipulated. First, the congruency between the citizen's report and the subsequent public policy was lower than what other studies have found (Bua, 2017; Font et al., 2018; Lowndes et al., 2001)[20], thereby denoting that decision makers did not properly engage with citizen ideas. Second, the high proportion of uptake for continuous influence suggested that decision makers took up more proposals that aligned with their own policy agenda and disregarded more those that diverged from it, matching the results of previous studies (Font et al., 2018). Finally, the SIM provided a clue for a potential manipulation *within* the Ouderpanel: the low proportion of shifting ideas suggested that participants may not have had access to alternative perspectives on the education policy. While each of these signs alone is insufficient to claim that the minipublic was instrumentalized, they all together hint at instrumentalization[21].

Second, the case study did not feature any instances of shifting or inhibiting influences. With Didier Caluwaerts (2020), we tried to explain their absence and used the following examples to illustrate them. On the inhibiting influence, its inexistence may be due to the place of the citizens' panel in the policy-making process. This type of influence occurs when a minipublic prevents decision makers from adopting a specific policy because it suggested a different policy proposal. It is thus more likely to happen when a minipublic has to take position regarding a specific policy proposal. For instance, Fishkin (2020; for similar examples, see Dryzek and Goodin 2006, pp. 229-232) described a deliberative poll that took place in Japan in 2011 about the privatization of the pension system. The Japanese government initially supported the privatization but finally retracted its plan after the deliberative poll's participants largely rejected it. As for the shifting influence, we argued that one recommendation could theoretically have shifted the preferences of one political party which belonged to the majority[22]. The citizens' panel argued about the necessity to simplify and harmonize speed limits in Brussels. The mobility plan took up this argument to justify the policy decision to limit speed at 30 km/h. At T0, the Open VLD suggested a contrary policy measure, as it planned to implement flexible speed limit in the capital. The recommendation of the citizens' panel exerted a shifting influence as it fundamentally altered the party's position, at least in theory. Being the only right-wing political party in the government, it is more likely that it has not changed its opinion but instead had to put it aside to partake in the coalition.

[20] While these studies found a proportion of one third of full uptake, one third of partial uptake, and one third without any uptake, the proportions of uptake was lower in the Ouderpanel: a large majority had no textual correspondence with public policy (91, 61.5%), while only 31 ideas (20.9%) were fully congruent and 26 (17.6%) were partially integrated.

[21] The citizens' panel 'Brussels – Make your Mobility' does not feature any recommendations with a shifting or inhibiting influence, but this is the only sign of manipulation that I observed.

[22] In our empirical analysis of the citizens' panel "Brussels – Make your Mobility", we examined the manifesto of all the political parties which belonged to the majority and sat in the government.

Nonetheless, the case study's interviews suggested that the citizen resolution did contribute to transforming the preferences of several decision makers. This contradiction highlights a subtle but important distinction between the impact of a citizen panel on public policy and its influence on decision makers. While a congruency approach assumes that impact can be measured through examining the fate of each citizen idea individually, interviewees instead viewed the citizen resolution as a set of general political directions and principles on mobility. The citizen panel may have been seen as a sort of survey—or a "sophisticated feedback mechanism" as is has been termed by Bächtiger et al. (2014, p. 237)—which gives policymakers an indication of the responsiveness of their policy project to the expectations of a group of informed and diverse citizens. This difference in focus suggests that the citizen resolution exerted an influence on decision makers that the congruency approach alone failed to grasp. The citizen resolution's main political directions seem to have influenced decision makers by showing that a majority of citizens were in favor of reforming mobility, which resulted in an impact on public policy: namely the trouble-free adoption of the mobility plan.

This insight has two implications. It first suggests that the explanatory power of the typology of influence that I developed with Didier Caluwaerts depends on its analytical focus. Not only can this typology give an overview of potential cherry-picking practices, but it can also show how minipublics can provoke changes of preferences among decision makers. These changes are nonetheless not as clear-cut as they imply, either injecting new ideas or causing a preference shift. In line with what Michels & Binnema have coined 'strategic political impact' (2018, pp. 4–5), citizen resolutions can exert a more diffuse influence that weakens or reinforces existing political preferences, thereby connoting that a minipublic creates political winners and losers. The winners are the decision makers whose political program is backed by the citizen resolution, while the losers are those whose programs are challenged. The case study suggests that the winning side used the citizen panel's results to convince the losing faction of the need to reform mobility, serving as a trigger for the losing side to shift their preferences. Had the citizen panel formulated a resolution in favor of the status quo, it is unlikely that policy- and decision-makers would have dared to propose such a reforming mobility plan, and nor is it likely that other political parties would have ratified it.

The second implication refines Lafont's (2019) conception of the political role of deliberative minipublics. She asserts that their added value lies in their capacity to reveal (mis)alignments between public policy, recommendations from a minipublic, and the actual majority in the public opinion. The case study shows that, for decision makers, public opinion is not a given but rather is constructed through what they encounter in the public and political spheres. These encounters can nevertheless fail to channel the citizenry's preferences accurately to decision makers, who end up with conflicting perceptions of what the citizenry wants. This results in political struggles to determine which perception of public opinion comes the closest to reality. By displaying a misalignment between the perception of a majority supporting the status quo and the actual silent majority in favor of reform, it appears that the citizen panel allowed one political side to demonstrate that their perception best resembled actual public opinion.

Finally, the citizen panel also had a diffuse and subtle influence which resulted in a structural impact by changing existing policy and institutional practices (Jacquet & van der Does, 2020a; Michels & Binnema, 2018). As the first experience of citizen participation in the Brussels Regional Parliament, it launched a dynamic which eventually resulted in the institutionalization of deliberative commissions. After the citizen panel, several representatives and public officials were satisfied with this experiment and willing to go a step further. Two years later, the regional parliament modified its internal regulations to institutionalize deliberative committees, in the form of minipublics with randomly selected citizens and members of the parliament (Vrydagh et al., 2021). These insights highlight the importance of conducting case studies of minipublic in parallel to broader comparative studies, as they contain valuable data to obtain a better understanding of the minipublics' functions and embeddedness in the political system and can unveil influences and effects that are subtle and diffuse in their shape but significant in their outcomes.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter has intended to standardize the minipublic's impact assessment and propose ways to increase the findings' reliability. It has compared different variations of the congruency approach and suggested two new methodological add-ons: the Sequential Impact Matrix (SIM) and a mixed method. The SIM takes into account decision makers' initial preferences so as to look how a minipublic's proposal influences public policy. Depending on which preferences decision makers have prior to a minipublic, we can distinguish five types of influences, namely continuous, enriching, innovating, shifting, and inhibiting. The mixed method interviews key actors involved in the follow-up of a minipublic to check whether they corroborate the findings obtained through desk research. It then applies these methodologies to a typical case of minipublics: a citizen panel on the mobility in the Brussels-Capital Region. The results show that different applications of the congruency approach alter the findings and can produce a misleading picture of the citizen ideas' uptake.

To standardize the impact assessment, I suggest adopting the SIM, which features a transparent overview allowing us to trace the fate of each proposal. It also considers the decision makers' initial preferences, revealing the extent to which they only take up citizen ideas that align with their own agendas. To increase the finding's reliability, I recommend a mixed method to balance the general trends identified via the congruency approach with the experiences of actors involved in the political follow-up. A mixed method is also likely to generate insights as to the more subtle influences that minipublics can exert on decision makers and policymaking. The intention of this paper is not to impose an orthodox methodology for impact assessment, but rather to open the discussion on this exercise and inspire other works to develop new assessment techniques that capture the minipublic's genuine political and policy contributions. In parallel to assessing the impact on public decisions, we should explore ways to measure the influence on decision makers, for instance via surveys, interviews, and systematic process-tracing.

Finally, future research should investigate if we can apply a methodological strategy uniformly to all types of minipublics and other consultative processes of citizen participation in different political contexts. Indeed, the mobility plan was exceptional in the sense that it is a single policy document that centralized all the public policies following the minipublic. Other minipublics do not have a clear policy follow-up since decision makers integrate their proposals into multiple policy outputs, which considerably increases the difficulty to trace influence. It is also unclear whether the SIM framework could be applied to all types of minipublics and in all political systems. For instance, the Citizens' Initiative Reviews provide pro and contra arguments to the citizenry on an issue put to a referendum (Knobloch et al., 2019). Future research is thus needed on less successful or more complex cases so as to test the reliability and practical feasibility of the SIM-framework. Finally, I coded all the data on my own and I did not check the inter-coder reliability. While I tried to control the subjectivity of my coding through a more specific and transparent operationalization of public policy, future research should use more than one coder to evaluate the difference between partial and full uptakes.

The SIM's overreliance on proportions should finally remind us that an impact assessment based on the aggregation of all congruent citizen ideas may miss the exceptional political fate of specific proposals. We could for instance imagine a minipublic with a high number of influential continuous ideas and a very low proportion of shifting and innovating ideas. Even though the latter two account for a tiny percentage, they may nevertheless entail substantial policy changes that are more significant than all other citizen ideas combined. In such a case, proportions generated by the SIM should thus as well be seen as a first explorative analysis to spot citizen ideas that potentially have exceptional political fates. To investigate further the 'exceptional' character of those citizen ideas, one could check whether these proposals were indeed new or transformative for decision makers by delving into the decision makers' interventions in public and political debates. One could also consider examining other factors that can make a fate exceptional, such as the citizen idea's implementation costs (Font et al., 2018), the kind of public policy problems they solve (Hoppe 2011) or the policy subsystem they successfully influenced (Howlett et al. 2009, 3:81—88). Moreover, the normative question of how much influence minipublics should have remain unaddressed. Extant empirical studies lack a yardstick against which they can evaluate the influence on public decisions and therefore rely on individual interpretations (Vrydagh, 2022) or the data at hand (Pogrebinschi & Ryan, 2018). Researchers describe the influence as "fairly high" (Bua, 2017, p. 168; see also Vrydagh, 2022), mixed (Font et al., 2018) or negligible (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2016; Michels & Binnema, 2018), but these judgments are based on implicit expectations. The literature has so far avoided engaging theoretical and normative arguments to justify how much influence we should expect, thereby resulting in a confusion between objective measurement and the subjective dimension inherent to evaluation. The next chapter seeks to tackle this research gap.

4. Chapter 4. Managing expectations

Whereas a consensus exists in the literature about the need for minipublics to have an influence on public decisions, scholars have not yet discussed how much influence they should have and there are no yardsticks against which we can assess the success of minipublics regarding their influence on public decisions. We do observe a pattern emerging from empirical studies, with around one third of recommendations taken up, one third partially taken up and the remaining third being disregarded (Arnold & Bächtiger, 2022; Bua, 2017b; Font et al., 2018), but should we therefore argue that the common practice is satisfactory from a normative perspective? Our expectations for minipublics and their influence on public decisions is a complex question, which has kept me thinking for the last three years. I tried to develop a single-outcome scale based on normative democratic theory which enabled me to claim that a minipublic is successful if one third of its recommendations exerted a diverging influence and the half a continuous influence. Nonetheless, I was never really convinced by my argument because I thought it adopted a deterministic and mechanistic approach to the influence of minipublics. For instance, one could think about a minipublic that has only one uptake, but that the recommendation is either an ambitious policy recommendation or a solution to a long-lasting political deadlock. I therefore opted for a different approach, whose results are developed in this chapter.

My contribution is a realist and contingent approach to our expectations for minipublics' influence, which takes as a normative tenet that minipublics should be used to increase the legitimacy of public decisions. My argument is based on two sub-questions: (1) what can we actually expect from minipublics in the light of the constraints inherent to policymaking, and (2) what should we expect from decision makers when they take up a minipublic's recommendations? The first question allows me to engage with an implicit but widespread assumption that minipublics have the potential to generate non-incremental policy changes. I discuss the actual capacity of minipublics to do so in the real-world circumstances of policymaking by reviewing the literature on public policy. My analysis suggests that minipublics can trigger an important policy change, but the probability of that happening is rare and contingent on a configuration of factors. The second question turns to decision makers and how they should use a minipublic's recommendations. Moving the lens on these actors enables me to go beyond the determinism of my previous attempts: since minipublics are consultative, they have a very limited agency, and we cannot expect them to singlehandedly initiate and provoke changes. We must therefore set expectations for those who are responsible for the uptake, namely decision makers. Clarifying our expectations for decision makers has however not reduced the complexity of the task, because it is extremely difficult to set standards on decision makers that remain realist and applicable in different contexts. I tried to navigate this complexity with a modest contribution which discusses the reactions that decision makers should adopt in four different scenarios.

4.1. Authoritative or consultative minipublics?

Existing theoretical works tend to focus on whether or not we should grant minipublics the authority to make binding public decisions. As empirical studies show that minipublics tend to have a mixed or no influence on public decisions, several scholars have therefore proposed to institutionalize minipublics and give them the authority to make binding decisions (Bouricius, 2013; Courant, 2021; Gastil & Wright, 2019; Landemore, 2020). Lafont (2015, 2019) criticizes these theoretical proposals because, she argues, they constitute a shortcut to the broader public deliberation that would end up undermining the legitimacy of the entire political system. There are three essential arguments that underpin her critique (2015, 2019).

First, if we want democracy to be a project of self-government, citizens should not blindly defer to the decisions of others (including minipublics) but should instead be able to own and identify with the decisions. Second, in order to *identify with* a public decision, citizens must engage to some extent in political deliberation so that they can understand the reasons behind that decision. Lafont here departs from an epistemic approach to deliberation, which is supposed to produce better outcomes. She instead argues that political deliberation must enable citizens to 'own' public decisions. Third, the citizenry would have to comply with the public decision adopted by an authoritative minipublic because its participants allegedly represent them thanks to the random selection. Nevertheless, participating citizens are transformed through their participation in a minipublics as they learn about the issue, deliberate, and eventually change their opinions and preferences. At the same time, the broader population does not undergo this epistemic transformation and remains intact. The lack of involvement of the citizenry in the political deliberation would prevent authoritative minipublics from generating more legitimate public decisions. Minipublics should therefore not be used as a shortcut to a defective deliberation in a deficient public sphere, which would directly shape good public decisions without bothering about the reluctant population.

Instead, Lafont argues that minipublics should empower the citizenry by providing an additional resource which can help the political system adopt more responsive decisions, thereby augmenting the legitimacy of the system. Several eminent theorists back her argument, especially following the systemic turn to deliberation (Dryzek, 2010; Mansbridge et al., 2012), and propose to use miniublics to stimulate and contribute to the macro public deliberation (Curato & Böker, 2016; Niemeyer & Jennstål, 2018). For instance, Dryzek (2017, p. 616) argues that minipublics should not substitute public judgments to the attention of decision makers and should instead circulate arguments to the broader civil society. The participatory track thus implies a two-step journey for the influence of minipublics on public decisions: they must first serve as a resource for generating a more considered public opinion and improving the quality of public deliberation which, in turn, must determine the public decision (Curato et al., 2019; Curato & Böker, 2016).

4.2. How much influence: the 'can' and the 'ought'

The discussion on authoritative minipublics enables us to take for granted the consultative nature of minipublics. Not only are there strong normative arguments against authoritative minipublics but there are no signs of a strong political and public majority in favor (Goldberg & Bächtiger, 2022; Jacquet et al., 2020), while existing databases do not list any instances in practice (OECD, 2020; Paulis et al., 2021). The consultative nature of minipublics has an important implication for our expectations: we cannot expect from minipublics that they influence on their own public decisions because they are dependent on decision makers who shape and adopt public decisions. We should therefore distinguish within our expectations (1) the minipublics' capacity to impact public decisions and (2) the way decision makers should engage with the recommendations of a minipublic.

Firstly, we can examine what minipublics' influence can achieve in terms of important policy change. We should differentiate the capacity of minipublics to generate incremental or non-incremental policy changes. The former refers to adjustments within a policy domain while a non-incremental one entails a more radical and fundamental reform or shift of direction of a policy area (Hoppe, 2018, pp. 404–405). Returning to the operationalization of public policy in Chapter 3, non-incremental policy changes entail an alteration of the broad political objectives and the policy instruments that aim to realize these goals (Brown, 1983; Hayes, 2017; Howlett et al., 2009, pp. 135–136). My definition is thus less narrow than Hall (1993) and Lindblom's (1979, 1990), for whom significant policy implies a systemic and structural transformation. Secondly, we can make a normative argument about how a decision maker should engage with the recommendations of minipublics so that their influence is more legitimate. Should we expect them to take up all or most of the recommendations of a minipublic, or should we accept that they sometimes disregard them? If the uptake becomes a question of degree (e.g., a low, moderate, or high proportion of uptake), which weight and value should decision-makers give to the recommendations of minipublics with regard to the public majority or the political opposition?

4.2.1. A realist approach

In this chapter, I want to clarify our expectations for both minipublics and decision makers. My contribution explores the relationship between the *ought* and *can*, between what minipublics can actually hope to achieve and how decision makers should respond to minipublics. The normative expectations that I set in this chapter aspire to formulate expectations that are not too abstract and idealist so that they do not further inflate the minipublic bubble. I here propose a realist theory which takes into account the actual status quo circumstances in which agents operate (Goodin, 1995). Philosophers distinguish a realist theory from an ideal one (Galston, 2010; Goodin, 1995; Valentini, 2012). In a nutshell, whereas the former tell us what we should think, the latter tell us what we should do (Valentini, 2012, p. 657). Opting for either of these perspectives depends on the aim of a political theory (Carens, 1996): do we want standards to evaluate how much minipublics are failing compared to an ideal conception, or do we want to formulate propositions that are likely to be effective given

the real world constraints? In this section, I seek to make a different contribution to the theoretical discussion (Böker & Elstub, 2015; Curato et al., 2019; Hammond, 2020) by proposing an 'action-guiding' political theory that aligns more closely with the current reality within which minipublics operate (Goodin, 1995, p. 39).

I believe a realist approach is what the field currently needs because scholars, practitioners and public opinion tend to blame exclusively decision makers for the lack of influence or the cherry-picking of recommendations. One problem with this interpretation lies in its assumption that decision makers are unwilling to genuinely consider citizen proposals. This is, however, a presumption since we do not know—and cannot access—decision-makers' true intentions (Benoit et al., 2009). Our criticism of decision makers often relies on a distorted vision of policymaking and decision makers that assumes that policies are the result of the conscious choices of decision makers who have full discretion in shaping public policy (Mazeaud & Boas, 2012, p. 14). The literature on public policy has nonetheless challenged this 'naïve attachment to rational policymaking' (Cairney, 2016, p. 124) and has shown that decision makers are restricted by a series of individual, contextual and institutional factors which can account for the lack of or a partial uptake of citizen ideas (see Section 4.3.). Whilst the recommendations come from the minipublics' space where citizens' boundless creativity and criticisms can thrive, these recommendations, in turn, have to re-enter the suboptimal political system, as Robert Hoppe highlighted: "After the deliberate suspension of power differentials, and lifting the constraints on deliberation and debate deriving from 'normal' political strategising, all institutional constraints return in full force to test the robustness of a (minipublics)' results" (2011b, p. 179). A realist theory is however not a compromising theory: my objective here is to discuss the actual potential of minipublics to impact significantly public decisions and to propose normative principles that we can use to evaluate the democratic engagement of decision makers with the recommendations of a minipublic. My overarching goal is to offer a more accurate account of the minipublic's capacity to produce important policy changes and a set of normative principles by which we can hold decision-makers accountable.

4.2.2. Embracing contingency

These expectations and principles must also depart from a model-based approach to democracy and minipublics. Extant normative theories about the purposes of minipublics rely on a model-based approach to democracy (Warren, 2017), that is they expect minipublics to realize specific democratic values and political objectives that are anchored in a canonical conception of democracy. For instance, minipublics are expected to inject new ideas into policymaking to improve the quality of governance and make it more participatory (Papadopoulos & Warin, 2007), question power structures and curb power inequalities to realize a critical and emancipatory conception of democracy (Böker & Elstub, 2015; Hammond, 2020; Pateman, 2012), or generating a deliberative stance among decision-makers that would flow from the deliberative qualities of minipublics (Dean et al., 2019, p. 706; Dryzek, 1994, 2002, 2009, p. 1381; Mansbridge et al., 2010, p. 78). The problem with these approaches is their assumption that minipublics are the appropriate or optimal institution to achieve these goals. It is, however, unlikely that minipublics are necessary and/or sufficient to fulfill one of these purposes. In

some contexts, these functions may indeed be realized by other participatory processes (Curato et al., 2020), while their realization probably requires a combination of multiple participatory institutions (Saward, 2021). Normative criteria should not stem from a particular model of democracy and its set of expectations, but rather seek to embrace the contingent context in which minipublics operate.

I therefore propose to develop a contingent, problem-based, approach to minipublics which sets expectations based on the issue(s) that a minipublic is supposed to solve. Our expectations should not stem from a particular theoretical democratic model but rather from a normative common denominator that applies to all minipublics but can be adjusted for different contexts. A contingent approach implies that we go beyond a mechanistic and aggregative approach to minipublic's influence, that is for example to expect that 50% of a minipublic's recommendations should have an aligning influence and 25% a diverging one. In previous conference papers, I proposed normative standards that could be operationalized into a yardstick against which we can evaluate the influence and that helped standardize further the measurement and assessment of minipublics' influence on public decisions. After several attempts, I presented a single-outcome scale which relied on the idea that minipublics should exert both a consequential and transformative influence on decision makers in order to be successful. Thanks to the SIM and its quantitative approach to measurement, it was technically possible to apply this scale on two empirical cases and to claim that the citizens' panel "Brussels—Make your Mobility" had a high influence and the Ouderpanel a moderate one (Vrydagh, 2020). While I initially believed that this scale would improve the way the field measured and assessed the influence of minipublics, I now realize that we should not expect all minipublics to achieve the same level of influence because the specific context in which each minipublic operates matters too much. Looking at an aggregate score of all proposals from a minipublic risks dissimulating the fate of one exceptional and influential proposal under a myriad of effete recommendations. A single-outcome scale was hence not only misapplying a more contextualized approach to minipublics but also inauspicious due to irresolvable incoherencies. The question becomes the following: in the light of the policy and political circumstances, what can we hope minipublics to realize in terms of influence on public decisions, that is beyond counting the number of uptakes of a minipublic's recommendation, and how should decision makers engage with these recommendations?

4.2.3. The normative common denominator: The legitimacy of public decisions

Following these considerations, how should we further proceed? Realism and contingency mean that normative expectations should apply to—ideally—all minipublics irrespective of the context. We should thus seek to answer the following question: in light of the policy and political circumstances, what can we hope minipublics to realize in terms of legitimate influence on public decisions? Whereas the focus lies on two different objects—the minipublic and decision makers—our expectations for both should stem from a normative common denominator about what we can minimally expect from minipublics. I argue that the ultimate purpose behind the use of a minipublic is to increase the legitimacy of public decisions. I follow Lafont's approach (2019): minipublics should help enforce some degree of democratic control,

that is effectively influencing policymaking and decision making so that public decisions become more responsive to interests and needs of the citizenry. The effective influence should not only help decision makers to know what considered public opinion could be, but also the public opinion and actors in the public sphere to become more considerate and, in case of a divergence between public policies and public opinions, to offer a resource to compel decision makers to adjust their policies.

Accordingly, we should expect from decision makers that they "are willing to *shape their political actions* in response to *the output of* [minipublics'] scrutiny, even if they are disappointing, instead of simply ignoring or bypassing them" (Lafont, 2019, p. 150; my emphasis). Decision makers must not engage with minipublics in a tokenistic way. Tokenism refers here to the use of a minipublic's recommendations to legitimize an already-decided public decision or to silence or disregard public opinion.[23] Numerous scholars have pointed out the risk that minipublics can be used as "useful legitimating devices for an already-decided policy" (Pateman, 2012, p. 9; see also Bherer et al., 2017, pp. 7–8; Gourgues, 2013; Niemeyer, 2014, p. 177; Smith, 2009, p. 18; Walker, 2014, p. 205). Minipublics are subordinate to and reliant on public authorities, their instrumentalization by decision makers is presumptive (Fung 2006; Bächtiger et al. 2014). As Graham Smith puts it, "In institutional designs where power lies so heavily in the hands of public authorities, the potential for manipulation and co-option of citizens is high" (2009, p. 18). Such window-dressing uses boil down to the activation of citizens to help elites achieve their ends (Böker & Elstub, 2015; Hammond, 2020) and shows a thin understanding of citizenship revealing a blatant and utter disrespect for citizens who devoted time and energy to participate in the minipublic. It not only generates frustration among participants but also erodes the public trust in political elites, thereby widening further the gap between citizens and politics (Fernández-Martínez et al., 2020; Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013) and discrediting other minipublics and participatory processes (Fung & Wright, 2001; Gundelach et al., 2017; Jacquet, 2017; Pateman, 2012; Van Dijk & Lefevere, 2022; Wampler, 2008).

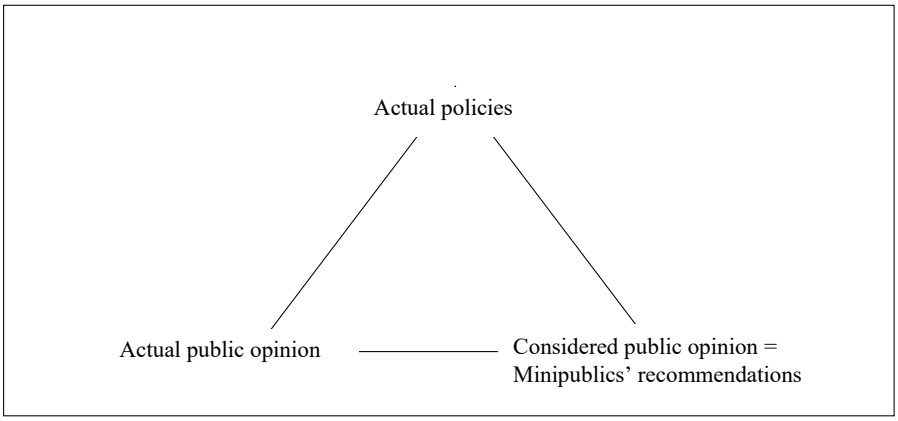
4.2.4. Building upon Lafont's model

To structure my argument, I develop a theoretical model that relies on the work of Lafont (2019), to which I add two key building blocks consisting of the *policy* and *political* circumstances in which minipublics operate. This model helps clarify what we can expect in terms of uptake of minipublics' recommendations and their influence on public decisions and untangle how decision makers should react to a minipublic in different settings. Cristina Lafont's triangular model seeks to capture the interactions between a minipublic, public policies, and public opinion (see Figure 8). It relies on the idea of deliberative democracy which posits that policies should continuously align with the actual public opinion and the considered

[23] I acknowledge that minipublics can be subject to different forms of manipulation, for instance their design can be moulded in a way that orientates their political outcome or they can be implemented with specific policy and institutional goals (Dryzek & Tucker, 2008; Felicetti et al., 2016; Gherghina, 2019; M. Walker, 2003).

public opinion. Ideally in a functioning representative and deliberative democracy, the minipublics' recommendations align not only with the public opinions but also with the public decision. In practice, nonetheless, misalignments can emerge between each end of the triangle. Lafont therefore proposes three participatory uses of minipublics—contestatory, vigilant, and anticipatory—that make the public opinion more considered and improve the alignment between the latter and public policies.

Figure 8. Lafont's model



Source: Lafont, C. (2019). *Democracy without shortcuts: A participatory conception of deliberative democracy*. Oxford University Press.

In the following sections, I enrich Lafont's model by zooming in on the upper end of the triangle and examining the circumstances in which minipublics and decision makers operate. Whereas Lafont uses her model with a citizen-centered perspective (2019, p. 139), my contribution is instead centered on decision makers and their use of minipublics' recommendations. Moreover, the model I develop below does not take the deliberative poll as reference but rely instead on more generic models of minipublics (e.g., citizens' panel, citizens' assembly) which tend to formulate policy recommendations or to give preferences on a series of policy ideas.[24] As a result, I do not assume like Lafont that the recommendations of a minipublic correspond to a considered will supported by a small majority of the population (2019, p. 139), but that the final recommendations are adopted and supported by a vast majority of a minipublic's participants. I should finally mention Bächtiger and Goldberg's (2020) article in which they problematize public opinion, considering the "heterogeneity of citizens' preferences seriously" to propose the concept of semi-blind deference by which citizens use a minipublic's recommendations as a signal to check for additional arguments and information.[25] In my model however, I consider public opinion at a macro-level and not at the individual and psychological level like in Bächtiger and Goldberg's article.

[24] Conversely, a deliberative poll's output consists of pre- and post-survey results on one or a couple of policy proposals, which measures the extent to which participants have changed their opinions through their deliberative experience (J. Fishkin, 2011).

[25] Bächtiger and Goldberg (2020, p. 35) argue that (1) minipublics should deal with issues worthy of attention, i.e., technical or complex with long-term implications such as climate change, with risks of political collusion like electoral reforms, or deadlocked issues; (2) the strength of an opinion and whether it is ambivalent or inexistant; (3) the direction of a recommendation and whether it confirms or challenges one's prior attention; (4) the level of consensus behind a recommendation, and whether it enjoys a large majority (e.g., 70%) or not (e.g., 52%).

As with any model, mine "provides a necessarily simplified and schematic picture of a real-world process or phenomenon that is useful for a particular purpose" (Toshkov, 2016, p. 57). As I highlight the role of the policymaking and political contexts, other relevant independent variables 'stand still'. I acknowledge the plethora of factors that can account for the influence of minipublics, which include their design features (Bua, 2019; Font et al., 2018; Fung, 2006b), the prior institutional commitment of decision makers (Geißel & Heß, 2018), the type of policy problem they deal with (Hoppe, 2011b), the level of authority where they operate (Bua, 2017, 2019; Worthington et al., 2013), the media coverage, the issue saliency, the support from civil society organizations (Pogrebinschi & Ryan, 2018), the proximity of elections (Bua, 2017, p. 171) or their coupling to the political system (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2016; Hendriks, 2016). The reality in which minipublics operate is extremely complex while any process leading to a public decision is inherently stochastic (Hoppe, 2018) and one must thus read the following analysis and its conclusions keeping in mind other things being equal.

Furthermore, the model relies on a series of assumptions. First, it presupposes that the minipublic is properly conducted (Farrell et al. 2019) and not decoupled from the decision-making arena (Hendriks, 2016), and does not feature mixed deliberation with both citizens and elected representatives (Harris et al., forthcoming). Moreover, I assume that the minipublic is initiated top-down and not bottom-up (Bussu, 2019) and that the minipublic is convened on a salient issue. Finally, I presuppose that the content of the minipublic's report is supported by a large majority of its participants. In the discussion, I return to these assumptions and their implications for my argument.

The rest of the chapter is structured as follows: I first present the capacity of minipublics to have a significant influence on public decisions considering the constraints inherent to policymaking. After describing the general context and the policy cycle model upon which I rely, I discuss the policymaking circumstances at the agenda-setting, policy formulation, and decision-making stages. I then turn to the political context which I examine through the reactions that decision-makers should adopt towards a minipublic if it is to influence public decisions in a way that generates legitimacy. I conclude the chapter with a reflection about the limits of my argument as well as a series of recommendations that can help minipublics have a significant and legitimate influence on public decisions.

4.3. The 'can': The policymaking circumstances

The term 'actual policies' hides different types of policy actions: decision-makers can use a minipublic to set the agenda, formulate policies, or make a decision. For each stage of a policymaking cycle, decision makers have to decide about different aspects of a public decision and are constrained by a series of particular factors inherent to each phase, while minipublics are expected to deliver specific kinds of outcome. Although the policymaking context plays an essential role in enabling minipublics to have an influence on public decisions, only a few studies have examined them (e.g., Abelson & Gauvin, 2006; Bua, 2019). My analysis is based on the policy cycle model, which divides policymaking into five stages: agenda-setting, policy

formulation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation (Colebatch, 2009). Each stage refers to a specific phase of policymaking which involves a specific set of actors and requires distinctive decisions to be taken. Despite its limits (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993), it offers an operational model to pinpoint the main activities and outcome at each stage (Jann & Wegrich, 2007). Since the focus is on public decision, the discussion only covers the three stages that precede it, i.e., agenda-setting, policy formulation and decision-making.

When setting the agenda, decision makers identify and frame a public issue and decide to spend more attention to try to solve it (Howlett et al., 2020, pp. 100–101). Minipublics can here highlight a specific problem to decision makers with the hope that it becomes public and reaches the institutional agenda, i.e., where these problems receive direct attention from decision-makers to be solved (Cobb & Elder, 1983). After an issue has reached the formal agenda, decision makers have to formulate policy solutions to solve the issue (Howlett et al., 2020, p. 132). Minipublics are here commonly implemented to either formulate policy proposals to tackle an issue or to appraise different policy options that public authorities submit to them (OECD, 2020). Finally, minipublics are rarely used to make decisions. Instead, they can either be used as a deliberative poll that measures the epistemic transformation of participants on a specific public decision (Fishkin, 2018) or formulate arguments pro and contra a public decision like the Citizens' Initiative Review in Oregon (Knobloch et al., 2019), sometimes coupled with a preference for one public decision among others.

I also consider another element that is of paramount importance in the literature on public policy, namely policy subsystems. A policy subsystem refers to "an encompassing aggregation of all possible international, state, and social actors and institutions that directly or indirectly affect a specific policy area" (Howlett et al., 2009, p. 81). As Howlett et al. further explain, "policy regimes tend to form in most policy areas, and these regimes entrench both policy subsystems (the configuration of actors involved in decision-making) and policy paradigm (the ideas they carry into the policy process), limiting the ability of new actors and new ideas to penetrate these processes" (Howlett et al., 2020, p. 188). This means that when a subsystem is stable and hermetic, it forms a monopoly with a homogeneous set of core policy ideas which makes it more difficult for new or diverging ideas to emerge. Conversely, a more open and competitive subsystem is more amenable to new ideas and policy changes. The posture of the subsystem which a minipublic seeks to influence will greatly determine its capacity to impact public decisions and reveal valuable insights into how decision makers should react. The nexus between the openness of a subsystem and the ambition of a proposal—be it from a minipublic or any other external policy or political actors—greatly determine the chances to see that proposal be translated into public decisions (Dowding, 2018; Howlett et al., 2009; Schmidt, 2001). In the next three sections, I review other factors conditioning minipublics' influence that the literature on public policy has highlighted. It follows the order of a policymaking cycle, that is starting with agenda-setting, then policy formulation, before finishing with decision-making.

4.3.1. Agenda-setting

Agenda-setting is an essential stage of policymaking where problems become recognized by the government and which preclude and shape the subsequent public decisions about these problems (Howlett et al., 2009). We must distinguish the minipublics' direct influence on agenda-setting and the later effects on public decisions. I first examine the chances of minipublics to influence agenda-setting before discussing its potential to impact public decisions. We can differentiate two types of agenda: an informal one where problems are discussed and an institutional one where these problems receive direct attention from decision-makers to be solved (Cobb & Elder, 1983). Minipublics commonly have access to the informal agenda when their recommendations are transmitted to decision makers. Their access to the institutional agenda is, however, more complicated, especially when the issue initiation happens outside the government (Howlett et al., 2020, pp. 101–102). Whereas the deliberative credentials of minipublics theoretically enables them to claim that their recommendations come close to the 'force of the better argument', the literature on public policy has shown that the merit of a problem or an idea is not the decisive factor giving access to the institutional agenda (Howlett et al., 2009, p. 98).

The probability of influencing the agenda is contingent on the posture of the policy subsystem. When the subsystem is stable and hermetic, it forms a monopoly with a homogeneous set of core policy ideas which 'locks' the agenda in a specific policy frame and excludes new actors and perspectives (Baumgartner & Jones, 2010; Cobb & Ross, 1997; Howlett et al., 2020, p. 127). If a minipublic seeks to bring in a new issue to the agenda or a different framing of an existing one, it is unlikely to have any non-incremental impact in a monopolistic policy subsystem, as decision makers are likely to take up recommendations as long as these remain enfolded within their policy paradigm. The monopoly could be challenged in two ways: excluded groups mediatize the problem and mobilize other public forces so as to pressure the government to resolve it, or actors within can change the institutional arrangement of a policy subsystem in order to expand or restrict the membership (Baumgartner & Jones, 2010). In theory, minipublics could contribute to both strategies, helping stimulate a public debate (Felicetti et al., 2016; Niemeyer, 2014) and being implemented as part of the strategy to open policymaking (Fung, 2006b; Papadopoulos & Warin, 2007). Yet, to my knowledge, no empirical studies have yet demonstrated that minipublics opened a monopolistic policy subsystem.

If the policy subsystem is more open and competitive, a minipublic with incremental recommendations is more likely to have a broader uptake as "nothing more than proposals for modest changes to the status quo are likely to be raised to the institutional agenda" (Howlett et al., 2009, p. 107). When its recommendations aim at a policy change, a minipublic can potentially help realize a paradigmatic transformation with an influence on the institutional agenda. It remains, however, dubious whether a minipublic on its own can cause such policy change (see for example Richardson et al., 2019). Public policy scholars have highlighted the importance—and infrequency—of "policy windows" to allow a substantial agenda change (Kingdon, 1984). The opening of a window depends on a complex configuration of factors

relating to problem (e.g., sudden events), policy (e.g., experts coming up with policy proposals) and political streams (e.g., elections, public opinions, interest groups). This literature highlights that changing the agenda is often the result of a long process, in which scientific knowledge (Jones & Baumgartner, 1993) and media play a decisive role (Baumgartner et al., 2008). The potential for minipublics to bring a new issue on the institutional agenda or a different framing of a public problem thus depends on a constellation of variables, and only when the stars are aligned can they hope to contribute to realizing such an influence on agenda-setting.

Let me now discuss the minipublic's capacity to impact the final public decision. A minipublic implemented at the agenda-setting can conceivably have an important influence on the final public decision. If it influences the institutional agenda, it is a necessary—yet insufficient—first step for the government to rely on the particular framing of a problem to seek solutions (Howlett et al., 2009, pp. 92–93). Indeed, setting the agenda is not only about the framing of a problem but also about the solutions to that problem, since the former connotes some understanding about the solution: "problem understanding and problem resolution are concomitant to each other … the problem can't be defined until the solution has been found" (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p. 161 in Hoppe, 2011 p. 78). Agenda-setting is a social construction in which we build a causal story that tells who and what is responsible for the problem, which agents are legitimate and which instrument appropriate to tackle it (Edelman, 1988; Goldstein & Keohane, 1993; Stone, 1989). Minipublics can therefore seek to highlight one public issue or frame it, which implies setting a political direction.

Whereas it can have an important but more diffuse influence setting the agenda, it is unlikely to have a clear, i.e., tractable, influence on the final decision. Reaching the institutional agenda does not guarantee that decision-makers will ultimately act, as many unforeseen events can distract their attention or prevent them from tackling the issue (John, 2018). Second, although setting the agenda connotes some policy solutions, these are unlikely to be directly 'implementable' as such: decision makers formulating policies have to translate these more abstract or embryonic solutions into policy options, which may distort the initial content of a minipublic's recommendation. As Bächtiger and Parkinson (2019, p. 97) point out, recommendations can basically be seen as 'memes', which "will evolve and take different shapes depending on competing goals and strategic action, especially as they pass through a system and need to adapt in order to pass successfully through different settings". What is more, other constraints inherent to the subsequent stages of policy formulation and decision-making will also diminish the intensity and blurs the tracks of a minipublic's genuine influence on public decisions.

4.3.2. Policy formulation

After an issue has reached the formal agenda of public institutions, policymakers have to generate options about how to solve that problem (Howlett et al., 2020, p. 132). Policy formulators thus have to identify a selection of policy options from the 'market of ideas', before appraising these options and to narrow them down and categorize them into policy bundles, which are then submitted for decision-making. Minipublics are commonly implemented to either formulate policy proposals to tackle an issue or to appraise different policy options that public authorities submit to them. Their outcome hence consists of policy recommendations or their opinions and preferences about different policy options. There are at least five main constraints that determine the chances of minipublics to influence policy formulation: psychological, substantial, procedural, political, and the nature of the policy subsystem.

First, public policy scholars have demonstrated that policymakers do not rationally engage with evidence and are instead constrained by beliefs and a "bounded rationality" (Braun, 1999; Dowding, 2018). Lakatos (1978) differentiates three elements of the human belief systems which condition the potential of decision makers to consider evidence with a genuine open mind (Dowding, 2018, p. 222; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). The *deep core beliefs* consist of the strongly held and stable beliefs, such as ideology. The *policy core beliefs* relate to the fundamental policy positions, such as the role of the state that can be either interventionist or laissez-faire. Finally, *secondary beliefs* stem from both deep and policy core beliefs and entail their views of the more concrete aspects of a policy. Whereas the first two types of core beliefs are stable and difficult to change, secondary beliefs are more amenable to transformation. These three kinds of beliefs have important implications for the potential influences of minipublics. When decision makers appraise evidence and seek to integrate it in their formulation of policies, they are likely to dismiss the recommendations that challenge their core beliefs (Kahan, 2015).

Furthermore, the literature on bounded rationality lists a series of psychological mechanisms that constrain how policymakers engage with policy input (Cairney, 2016; Simon, 1990). The confirmation bias and the availability heuristics are particularly relevant because they indicate that policymakers are unlikely to consider ideas that question their beliefs or knowledge (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009). In his book about the challenges to evidence-based political decision-making, Hubert Heinelt explains that "thinking 'is bound to being' ('seinsgebunden'; Mannheim, 1964, p. 619) and that 'facts' are assessed by actors concerning their influence on their respective 'realities' (see McIntyre, 2018, p. 13). Therefore, evidence has to fit the actors' choice of interpretation; otherwise it will not be converted into knowledge guiding actions" (Heinelt, 2019, p. 40). This resonates as well with the 'field of possibilities' that is delineated by political ideologies: there are limits to what is politically acceptable in a given context, and beliefs and perceptions of decision makers determine what they deem as unworkable or unacceptable, as Howlett et al. argued: "perception is just as real as reality itself" (2009, p. 112). As a result, if a recommendation challenges decision-makers core world views, they are likely to reject it with a pretext or what they believe to be a genuine reason. The capacity of minipublics to exert a shifting influence on decision makers seems thus limited, a hypothesis

which tends to be corroborated by empirical evidence (see Chapter 3; Bua, 2017; Font et al., 2018).

Second, policymaking is also subjected to various political pressures. Whereas policy formulation is more diffuse and politically less visible than decision-making, it is a contentious process subject to various and intense pressures and therefore inherently political (Howlett et al., 2009, p. 13). Decision-makers must also seek to accommodate the values, interests and preferences of a multitude of actors, including the members of their own political party, other parties in the coalition and those in the opposition, the various stakeholders and civil society organizations and public opinion (Brown, 1983; Parkinson, 2006). Irrespective of their qualities, policy options that are ambitious or seen as contentious may be disregarded because they are unlikely to receive sufficient political and public support. Decision-makers, especially elected ones who need political support for their (re-) election, may also pursue political interests when formulating policies, seeking political gain and avoid blame instead of developing policy options aiming primarily to solve the issue (Hood, 2010; Howlett et al., 2020, pp. 139–140). Minipublic forms thus just one source of policy input among the myriad of interests, preferences, and values that decision makers have to consider and seek to satisfy.

Third, substantive constraints relate to the nature of the problem and the technical and implementation feasibility of policy proposals. When appraising policy options, policymakers have to consider the government capacities to formulate or implement them (Wu et al., 2015). Policy options may be unfeasible because a government does not have the financial or human resources to implement them, or even the analytical capacity to formulate the option (Howlett et al., 2020, p. 137). Problems like climate change can be sprawling and have endless ramifications that require gigantic analytical resources to study the consequences of policy options, and may therefore deter policymakers from trying to elaborate on these options.

Fourth, procedural constraints refer to "limitations placed on governments by the process that is required to adopt an option and carry it out" (Howlett et al., 2020, p. 136). Beside the well-known constitutional provisions, the separation of power, or the federal or central nature of a political system, we also find complex issues often fall under the domain of competences of different public institutions at different levels of authority, each with their own institutional culture (Howlett, 2007; Howlett et al., 2020, pp. 169–170). These factors imply that some options are disregarded because of the coordination costs and logistical difficulties of carrying it out, or simply because the branch of government receiving a recommendation is not legally responsible for it.

Fifth, the posture of the policy subsystem is also a key factor. When a policy subsystem is clannish and hermetic, a reformist minipublic is unlikely to have an important shifting influence, especially if that subsystem is responsible for existing policies that the minipublic seeks to reform. For, as Dowding explains, "The policy core attributes of a government programme in a specific jurisdiction will not be significantly revised as long as the subsystem advocacy coalition that instated the programme remains in power within that jurisdiction" (2018, p. 229). Therefore, a minipublic with incremental policy options are more likely to

receive more uptake, albeit within the paradigm of the subsystem. Conversely, a reformist minipublic is more likely to exert a shifting influence when the subsystem is open and allows new ideas and actors in policymaking. Yet, the openness of a subsystem and the coincidence between their agenda and the recommendations may not be sufficient. In all likelihood, non-incremental policy options need a broad public and political support, which a minipublic cannot offer or substitute. The influence is thus seemingly contingent with the alignment of the recommendation with the agenda of an instrument constituency, that is a coalition of various policy advisors that promote a specific set of policy options (Simons & Voß, 2018).

Hence, many factors condition the capacity of minipublics to influence policy formulation. Exerting a shifting influence or instilling ideas for non-incremental policies seem difficult to realize, and minipublics are more likely to see their recommendations taken up when these remain enfolded in the existing policy paradigm. The observation of the influence of these incremental recommendations is more clear-cut because minipublics formulate recommendations that are more easily translated into public decisions, as illustrated by the case study of the citizens' panel 'Brussels—Make your mobility'. A minipublic with non-incremental recommendations is unlikely to impact public decisions on its own, as such policy changes result from a series of external factors, such as the openness of the subsystem or the support of an instrument constituency. Finally, both incremental and non-incremental recommendations remain dependent on the circumstances inherent to decision-making, which I will develop hereafter.

4.3.3. Decision-making

Decision-making refers to the process by which decision-makers make "an authoritative decision to commit government resources and prestige to a certain course of action expected to attain some desired outcome" (Howlett et al., 2020, p. 176). Decision-makers must usually choose among a few alternative sets of policy options that have been selected at the end of the policy formulation. Decisions can be positive, that is altering to some extent the status quo, but they can also be negative when a government decides to do nothing and leave the problem unaddressed, thereby arresting the policy cycle (Howlett et al., 2020, pp. 187–188). A third variant consists of 'non-decisions' which refer to the avoidance of certain policy options in the two previous stages of agenda setting and policy formulation (Zelditch Jr et al., 2015). The literature in the fields of citizen participation and public policy still widely assume that decision makers are some sort of omnipotent, rational actors (Mazeaud & Boas, 2012). In reality, decision makers do not have full discretion to decide, and rational decision-making is commonly constrained by procedural and cognitive constraints (Forester, 1984).

First, decision-making is increasingly characterized by urgency. The number of decisions is increasing but the time to make them shrink (Forester, 1984; Heinelt, 2019, p. 101), meaning that decision makers often lack the possibility of appraising the best policy options. This context spurs irrational decision-making. The old 'garbage-can model' already highlighted the irrationality that can characterize decision-making: decision makers do not always have precise goals and they sometimes run after a contingent and unpredictable public agenda upon which

they have little or not control at all (Cohen et al., 1972; Mucciaroni, 1992). In addition to the aforementioned cognitive biases, we can point out the difficulty of knowing the costs and implications of public decisions. The decisions characterized by high degree of uncertainties, ambiguities and unpredictable ramifications (Kwakkel et al., 2010) are unlikely to be adopted because decision makers tend to give more weight to losses than gains when they evaluate the risks (Cairney, 2016; Grin, 2018). They indeed rely on multiple heuristics "to compensate for limitations in knowledge and to achieve some initial winnowing of alternatives to a set of "feasible" or "acceptable" one" (Howlett 2020, p. 200).

Moreover, bounded rationality also partly explains why incremental public decisions are more common: a non-incremental decision requires redistributing resources, thereby generating more uncertainties about the costs and benefits of the new policy arrangement. It is therefore easier to adjust such resource distribution, deviating incrementally from the current situation (Lindblom, 1979). Accordingly, while only few actors actually validate the decision, it would be wrong to assume that decision makers have full discretion to decide anything important on their own (Jenkins, 1978), as many actors therefore seek to influence decision-making through various lobbying routes (Howlett et al., 2009, p. 140). Decision-making is the most political stage, because the decision creates definitive political winners and losers. Non-state actors therefore seek to influence the outcome by lobbying, advocating, and pressuring decision makers to adopt a specific policy set or reject another.

Institutional procedures can also account for the absence of significant policy changes. The standard operating procedures of bureaucracies also make decision-making procedures routine, circumscribing the adoption of innovating decisions. These procedures form action channels that decision-makers must comply with, explaining "why so much of government's decision-making is routine and repetitive in nature" (Howlett et al., 2020, p. 190). Decision-makers must also deal with multiple actors and procedures resulting from the horizontal and vertical dislocation of the state (Howlett et al., 2009; Smith, 2021). Each institution has its own culture and set of rules, and any public decision overlapping with another department implies important coordination costs and reaching a compromise (Howlett, 2007). Accordingly, a public decision can be made by accretion, meaning that it results from a series of small pieces of decisions that have been previously adopted in various venues with different actors in multiple rounds and multiple arenas, creating a path dependency limiting decision-makers' autonomy (Howlett, 2007; Weiss, 1980). All these elements also have to be considered with the crisis of legitimacy which operates in the background and put an intense pressure on decision makers, especially in democracies (Heinelt, 2019, p. 104; Hoppe, 2011a, 2018, p. 414).

Finally, the policy subsystem will again determine the chances for a minipublic generate incremental policy changes. The logic remains the same: hermetic subsystems are likely to result in an influence on the adjustment of existing policies, while contested or relatively open subsystems increase the chances for a shifting influence leading to non-incremental policy changes. Minipublics are however insufficient for a non-incremental policy change in an open subsystem. The literature highlight the role of 'policy entrepreneurs' who can match "solutions

to problems, proposals to momentum, and political events to policy problems" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 182). When confronted with a closed subsystem, minipublics need to look beyond decision makers and hope that its recommendations align with an advocacy coalition framework, which may develop enough leverage and support to pressure decision makers to revise the given belief system of a subsystem (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993, p. 214). Accordingly, changing a policy paradigm requires a broad social learning movement, with both top-down state actors and actors from the public sphere doubting the existing knowledge order and converging around one alternative (Hall, 1989; Heinelt, 2019, pp. 43 & 93). External shocks can also contribute to non-incremental policy, but these also require the synergies of other factors, such as public opinion, political attention, agenda change, redistribution of a coalition's resource, and opening new policy venues (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014).

All in all, minipublics can hope to exert an influence on public decisions as long as its recommendations do not challenge the existing policy paradigm. When they do, the literature on public policy suggests that its impact is contingent on other external factors, meaning that minipublics are neither necessary nor sufficient. Despite its deliberative and participatory qualities, a minipublic is unlikely to generate enough 'communicative power' and 'public support' to convince decision makers to change opinions when adopting important decisions. Moreover, decision-making is firmly rooted in the previous policymaking stages, which means that minipublics deliberate on an issue and policy options that they have not decided. Despite being so close to a public decision, a minipublic organized at the decision-making stage may nevertheless have the least significant influence upon it.

4.3.4. Discussion

The review of the literature on public policy and policy changes reveals a complex picture of policymaking. Minipublics are likely to have an influence as long as their recommendations align with the agenda and preferences of decision makers, while they may transform decision makers' opinions as long as they do not challenge their core beliefs. The 'communicative power' that emanates from a minipublic's reasoned and inclusive deliberation is unlikely to overcome the psychological, substantial, procedural and political obstacles that condition decision makers. Moreover, it seems chimerical to expect that a minipublic on its own can be responsible for a large-scale policy change. Whereas some see in minipublics a way to address the inaction on climate change, pension reform or the growing polarization, the literature on public policy reminds us that any non-incremental public decisions require a delicate and rare 'alignment of the stars'. Not only must problem, policy and political streams converge in a policy window that must, in turn, be converted into public decisions by policy entrepreneurs (Ritter & Lancaster, 2018), but such policy changes are the result of long-term processes (Hall, 1989; Hoppe, 2018) that involve a multitude of individual and collective agents in advocacy coalition frameworks. Minipublics are thus neither necessary nor sufficient for such outcomes.

Yet, it does not mean that they are useless: they can either contribute or trigger a policy change, helping open a policy window or giving that extra resource to policy entrepreneurs to spur the reform. One may think for instance about the Irish Citizens' Assembly that led to the adoption

of same-sex marriage (Farrell & Suiter, 2019). It would, however, be wrong to induce from such cases that a minipublic singlehandedly effected a change (for a discussion of equifinality, see Richardson et al., 2019). Many other actors and organizations set the stage for this groundbreaking decision to be adopted by referendum. Minipublics' contributions to non-incremental public decisions must hence always be assessed in the light of the broader political and policy context, as well as in combination with the other actors and organizations setting the stage both in the long (e.g., scientists, civil society organizations) and short-term (e.g., elected representatives).

4.4. The 'ought': what about legitimate influence?

After examining the circumstances of policymaking in which minipublics operate, I now turn to the way decision makers should engage with minipublics' recommendations. This is an essential question in order to clarify the legitimacy of a minipublics' influence on public decisions. Let me first repeat the normative common denominator, i.e., that minipublics should empower the citizenry and make public decisions more responsive to their interests and needs in order to increase the legitimacy of these decisions. Minipublics on their own cannot increase the legitimacy of public decisions because they have no power or control on how their recommendations will be taken up in the public and empowered spheres. Minipublics have a limited agency to spread recommendations or pressure decision makers to take them up. Beside a series of internal factors that are necessary to guarantee the procedural legitimacy of a minipublic (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2016; Curato & Farrell, 2021), the capacity of minipublics to increase the responsiveness and legitimacy of public decisions mainly depend on the reaction of decision makers. An uptake of a recommendation does not automatically lead to a more legitimate public decision, as it instead depends on how that recommendation relates to the preferences of the broader public.

Before doing so, I must first clarify my normative position regarding the concept of responsiveness. In line with other theorists, Lafont assumes that a democracy should be responsive to the citizenry's needs and interests (Goodin, 2008; Lafont, 2019; Warren, 2017). However, Chambers (2012) rightly points out that public opinion may not always reflect the interests and needs of the citizenry, and it is based on this observation that many deliberative democrats make a strong case about both the need to consider the quality of the public opinion formation and the ideal objective that public decisions should stem from considered public opinion, that is after citizens had the chance to deliberative and learn about the public issue at hand (see Floridia, 2017, p. 108). This normative tenet, nevertheless, collides with a realist account of our expectations for minipublics and decision makers. On the one hand, public decisions should be responsive to public opinion, but it may be the object of various manipulations, resulting in a public opinion that does not reflect the interests and needs of the broad public. On the other hand, public opinion should be considered to influence public decisions but how often does public opinion qualify as considered?

This debate is crucial for clarifying our expectations because it touches upon another question of whether decision makers should seek to align their decisions with the public majority or the

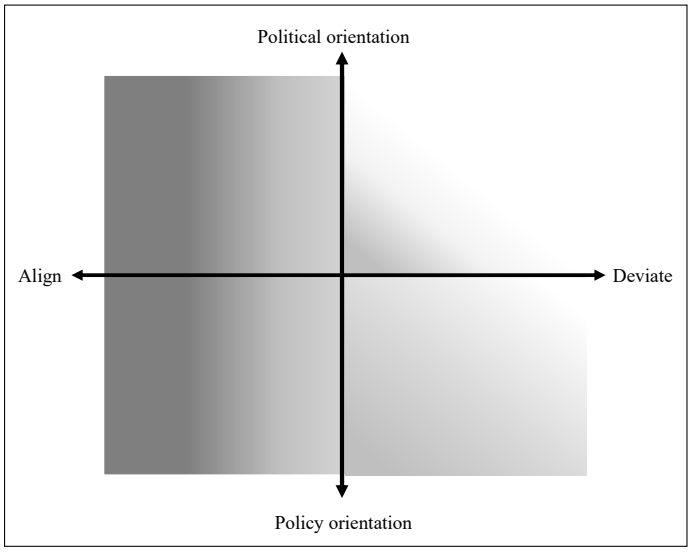
recommendations of a minipublic. For instance, decision makers may decide to deviate from public opinion and adopt a minipublic's recommendations because they believe that the preferences of the public majority go against the public interest or that the majority is subjected to the manipulation of undue influences. While I do not seek to offer an exhaustive and definitive answer to these questions (for an attempt, see Chambers, 2012), I here propose one line of argument to navigate through them. My starting point returns to the normative common denominator: if minipublics are meant to empower citizens, they cannot be used by decision makers to bypass the citizenry. As Lafont (2019) puts it, if decision makers adopt a public policy because it aligns with the recommendations of a minipublic but diverges from the public opinion, the population is not able to own and identify with it and will therefore be unlikely to consider it legitimate. Since legitimacy is always partial, aspirational, and is generated by plural sources (Mansbridge, 2020, p. 16), decision makers should make decisions that seek to integrate both the preferences of a minipublic and the public opinion (Chambers, 2012, pp. 69–70). This is not a binary issue of following the public opinion or the considered public opinion but rather a question of degree: to which extent can decision makers deviate from public opinion to adopt decisions that rely on minipublics' recommendations (or other sources of influences)?

One way to deal with this question lies in the distinction on the (mis)alignment between the broader political orientation or the more particular policy preferences. The case study of the citizens' panel "Brussels—Make your Mobility" highlighted a difference between the influence of specific recommendations and the broader political orientations of a minipublic's report. Not only were the recommendations used individually to inspire specific policy measures, but the general political orientation of the report helped decision makers to convince other political actors that their policy agenda had the support from the public. These findings coincide with Michels & Binnema's (2018, pp. 4–5) study, in which they argue that minipublics can have an instrumental and a strategic political impact. The former refers to the translation of specific recommendations in public decisions while the latter is about the use of recommendations by decision makers to strengthen their political position over other actors. These empirical observations find several echoes in political theory, which has examined the different aspects of a public collective judgement—be it from a minipublic or the public opinion—that decision-makers need to follow. For instance, Christiano (2008) proposes a division of labor between citizens and political experts: citizens should set the broad political aims while experts should formulate the best means to implement these goals. Likewise, Felipe Rey (2022) reviewed the literature on responsiveness and suggested a typology of systemic representation that is built around two discriminatory axes: the degree to which decision makers seek to align their decisions with the preferences of the public, on the one hand, and whether the alignment revolves around broad political objectives or more specific policy means on the other.

We can distinguish preferences on the broad political orientation from the preferences on the more specific policy means, which imply that minipublics can exert a policy and a political influence. The kind of preference has different implications for the legitimacy, and deviations from policy preferences seem less problematic than from political preferences. I see at least

two reasons why we may want to give more leeway to decision-makers regarding policy preferences. First, as Mansbridge (2003) pointed out, representatives can *anticipate* what the public wants or, with a *gyroscopic representation*, have more autonomy to show leadership and decide based on their own beliefs and principles of what they deem good (for a similar argument, see Pitkin, 1967; Rey, 2022). Furthermore, it is difficult to conceive a political system in which decision-makers can systematically follow the policy preferences of the public and translate them into public decisions. The same applies for a minipublic as shown in the case study in Chapter 3: policymakers were not impressed by the technical insights of a minipublic and they disregarded several recommendations because they were not feasible, proposing instead other policy means to realize the demand of the citizens' panel. A deviation from political preferences is however more problematic. For instance, if decision-makers refuse to reduce the CO2 emissions or to sufficiently fund the health system while a public majority and a minipublic are in favor of these political goals, it is difficult to conceive reasons to support these public decisions if these are to be legitimate. One exception may be allowed though when a political preference goes against fundamental rights. Figure 9 below offers a visualization of the degree of legitimacy that public decisions can enjoy depending on the extent they deviate or align with political and policy preferences of the public. The darker the color, the more legitimacy a public decision is likely to have. Ideally, public decisions that align with both political and policy preferences enjoy a great legitimacy. In the upper right corner, a public decision that deviates from the political preferences of the public will have a low legitimacy. In the right lower corner, public decisions about policy means can still enjoy some legitimacy, especially if they tackle technical and on-the-ground settings. However, the difference between political and policy orientation lies on a continuum. When policy orientations become political, public decisions should then more closely align with public opinion.

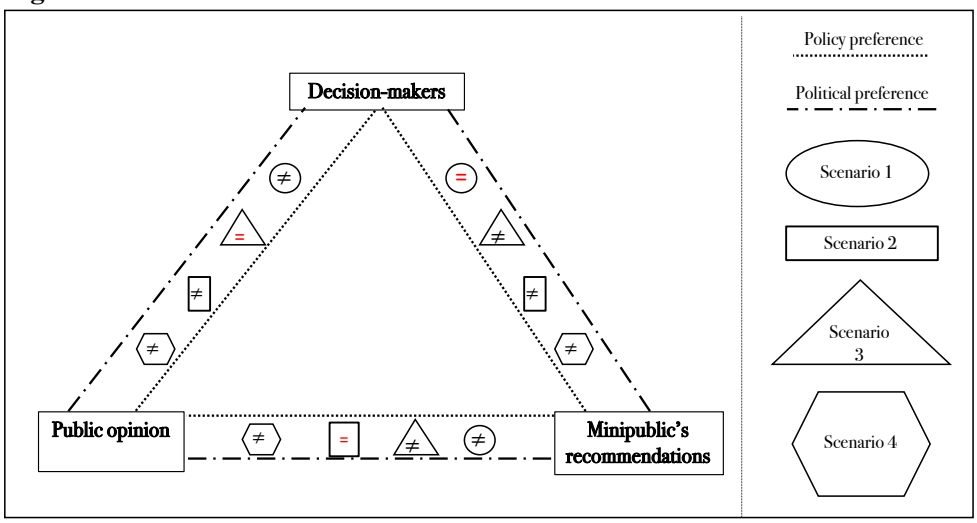
Figure 9. The legitimacy of public decisions



Again, my argument here does not have the ambition of settling the debate on responsiveness and the dilemma between public opinion and considered public opinion, but I believe it help to better understand and clarify how decision makers should use the recommendations of a minipublics in the light of the public preferences. In the following section, I consider four

theoretical scenarios stemming from the configuration of Lafont's model (see Figure 10). These scenarios are ideal-type situations that do not capture accurately and exhaustively the real-world complexity. My very modest contribution lies in a new stepping stone in the embryonic literature, launched by Lafont's pioneering work, about how decision makers should engage with minipublics' recommendations, with the hope that scholars, practitioners, decision makers and citizens can better understand the legitimacy of minipublics' influence on public decisions.

Figure 10. The four scenarios



Inspired by Lafont, C. (2019). *Democracy without shortcuts: A participatory conception of deliberative democracy*. Oxford University Press.

4.4.1. Scenario 1: Minipublic and decision-makers align

Decision-makers are likely to see in a minipublic's conclusions a green light to go ahead with their plans, but as previously argued, this risk undermining the legitimacy of public decisions. To understanding why, it is important to clarify the difference between the recommendations of a minipublic and the public opinion. As Lafont aptly argues, a minipublic does not capture the public opinion but rather a snapshot of what the people would think had they the chance to learn and deliberate about an issue. It is a snapshot because it captures a proxy of what the public considered opinion could be at a specific moment. A minipublic's report hence does not mean the end of the formation of public opinion. In this scenario, it actually signals the need for decision makers to engage with the public. Minipublics' recommendations, understood as a proxy for considered public opinions, should then be used as a means for responsive decision makers to "set the frame for the range of what the public of citizens would accept as legitimate decisions in a given case" (Habermas, 2006, p. 418). Yet, it does not imply that decision makers could use the recommendations as a crystal ball to predict how the public opinion will evolve and where it will land. According to Habermas (2006), the formation of public opinion is a fluid, dynamic and unpredictable process constituted by iterations between a myriad of deliberative sites, actors, and publics, and neither do we know how it will evolve nor its final destination. Indeed, the formation of public opinion is unlikely to follow the same epistemic itinerary: the public sphere in which the debate unfolds suffers from many deficiencies, while

many unforeseen events may alter the configuration around a public issue, potentially undermining over time the relevancy of a minipublic's conclusions.

Decision-makers should conceive these recommendations as *one possible destination* where public opinion could stand had it the chance to engage in public deliberation, but they cannot just adopt the recommendations against the public will and claim that the population will eventually agree with them. Decision-makers should instead rely on a minipublic's report to engage with the citizenry and explain the reasons why their political plans receive the support of a minipublic, ultimately seeking to make public opinion more informed and considerate. When do decision-makers know that the public opinion has become a considered public judgement? Habermas (2006, p. 418) emphasizes the need for a reflexive process, that is the public sphere should reflect on the existing positions in the public opinion, which result in, as Chambers describes, "published opinions communicated through the mass media, and (…) polled opinions that measure aggregate preferences of ordinary citizens" (2012, p. 69). These resources should shape public decisions, not a minipublic's recommendations. Decision-makers should follow the political orientation of a minipublic only after they have circulated them in the public sphere and if the considered public opinion shifts and aligns with the minipublic. Accordingly, we should be careful about celebrating a large uptake of a minipublic without considering how the recommendations relate to the public majority, at least if we want minipublics to generate more legitimate public decisions instead of conceiving them as a means to advance our own political agenda.

4.4.2. Scenario 2: minipublic and public opinion align

In this second scenario, the recommendations of a minipublic align with public opinions, but decision makers have different preferences. This alignment has an important implication since it indicates that public opinions are or come close to considered public opinions, captured here through the proxy of a minipublic. For Lafont, (2019, pp. 152–156) this configuration signals to the public and the opposition the need to scrutinize the political system, which is not responsive to citizens' needs. But what should we expect from decision-makers in this situation? They should follow the political orientation sketched by the minipublic. There are no legitimate reasons for decision makers to deviate from it because it is unlikely that the considered collective judgement of a minipublic collides with fundamental rights. If decision makers dismiss the minipublic's report and go for an alternative political project, it raises the question about the initial motives behind the use of the minipublic and hints at tokenism. Overall, we should also expect decision makers to closely align with a minipublic's policy preferences, but they have more flexibility in the case of a minipublic formulating a series of policy proposals. As I argued in the section on the policy context, it is unlikely for a minipublic to take into account all the substantial and procedural constraints affecting policymaking. Decision-makers may therefore have sound reasons for opting for other policy means. Yet, these deviations do not apply if a minipublic is asked to give their preferences of different sets of policies, because any deviations indicate that decision makers are deceived by the results and wanted the minipublic to validate their initially preferred choice.

4.4.3. Scenario 3: Public opinion and decision-makers align

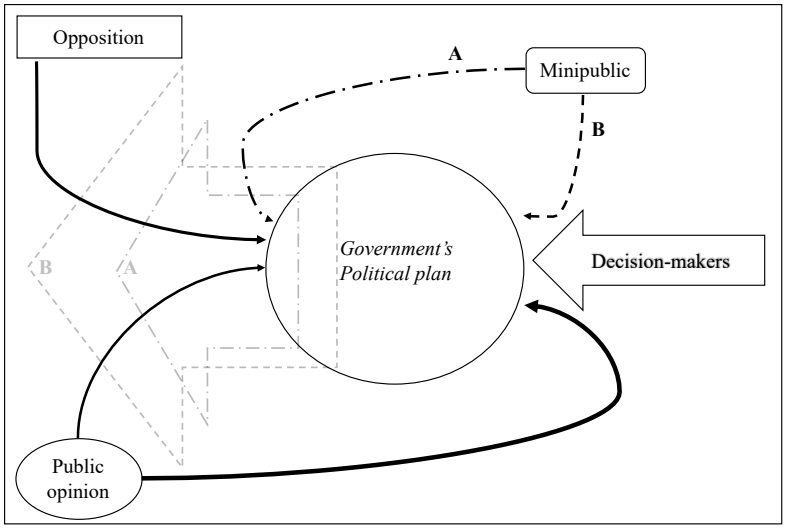
In the third scenario, decision makers are likely to disregard the minipublic's recommendations and follow the public opinion. Such a reaction, however, indicates a tokenistic use of a minipublic because its recommendations would remain unexploited, arguably due to the deception about the outcome. Decision-makers should instead disseminate the results to the broader public and political actors to see whether these pick up on the minipublic's recommendations. The public and political opposition then have the opportunity to signal potential problems in the government's plan and propose amendments. Decision-makers should listen to these reactions and integrate in their plan those that receive important public support. This means for a minipublic that maybe none of its recommendations are taken up. The political and public opposition may come up with new and different suggestions to the attention of the government, while the time for the consultation to happen may diminish the relevancy of the minipublic's recommendations. In this scenario, we may thus be careful and not condemn too quickly decision makers for a lack of uptake if they actually engage with the opposition.

Such a situation actually reveals a new insight into the ways minipublics influence public decisions: whereas minipublics may have a low or an inexistent policy influence, with few recommendations translated into public decisions, they can actually have an important political influence on decision-makers. Minipublics not only signal to the public and opposition that the issue at hand deserves more attention, but they also tell decision makers that they may want to slow down with their plans. This political influence resonates with the idea of an inhibiting influence (see Section 3.2.2.) and with Felipe Rey's (2022, p. 7) reflection on the billiard ball metaphor proposed by Philip Pettit (2012, pp. 209–210). Rey suggests conceiving the general political direction of a government as a gigantic billiard ball, whose direction and speed are determined by everybody: "through its formal and informal representatives within the system, each person can push the ball in the direction he or she thinks appropriate" (2022, p. 7). The government has the lead to push the ball in a certain direction, but the speed, degree and final destination of the ball depend on the opposition it meets on the other side. A large and cohesive minority will temper the enthusiasm of the government, which may reduce their political ambition. In other words, decision makers decide about the general direction of public decisions, but the speed and degree of that orientation depend on the minority.

Let me use Figure 11 to illustrate how the metaphor works with minipublics. We can see that the government is pushing for a project which goes to the left. That project is not only supported by decision makers but also by a significant part of the public opinion. The ball is at the same time faced with a push back from the right direction: a minority in the public opinion and the opposition—consisting of various political parties, civil society organizations or stakeholders—disagrees with the government's plan. In this model, a minipublic opposing the plan of the government (see Arrow A) indicate to decision makers that they may want to reconsider the speed and degree of their project. A minipublic opposing the government's plan may result in a lack of uptake, but that does not mean that the minipublic did not exert any influences on decision makers. Quite the opposite: it fulfilled a key function which may result

in more legitimate public decisions provided that decision makers adjust their policy plans in a way that accommodates the opposition. Alternatively, a minipublic whose recommendations align with the plan of the government, like in the first scenario (see Arrow B), will give a boost to decision makers' project.

Figure 11. Minipublics within the billiard ball metaphor



4.4.4. Scenario 4: total misalignment

In this final scenario, a desynchronization applies to all ends of the triangle. Decision-makers should here use the recommendations of a minipublic to launch a broader public debate on the political directions. The recommendations, again, should not constitute an end to public consultation but rather a start for a larger public debate. It means that decision makers should either stall or even return to a prior stage of policymaking. For agenda-setting, decision makers should open a large and inclusive discussion about whether and how an issue should be dealt with. When formulating policies, a minipublic indicates to decision makers that their ongoing policy plans are likely to be jeopardized later by the public and political opposition. We should therefore expect them to prorogue the policy formulation and organize a larger consultation process involving the larger public and, ideally, the opposition. Finally, at decision-making, decision makers should adopt a negative decision and return to prior stages of policymaking where the source of discord lies, for example at the agenda-setting if disagreements arise abound the framing of the issue or the actual need to deal with it; or policy formulation if the set of policy options is problematic.

4.4.5. Discussion

These four scenarios are meant to highlight specific reactions that we should expect from decision makers. The triangle model elaborates on Lafont but it still leaves aside a series of factors that are likely to alter decision makers' ideal reactions to a minipublic. Without discussing all the relevant variables in different configurations, I want to briefly reflect on the implications of three of them. First, if a minipublic is invented and not invited (Bussu, 2019), that is bottom-up initiated, decision makers are more likely to disregard the results because they tend to distrust processes do not involve them in the design and implementation, as exemplified with the G1000 citizens' summit in Belgium (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2018). Does it mean that we should refrain from organizing bottom-up minipublics? If the objective of the minipublic is to generate more responsive public decisions that are more likely to receive a broad public support, I think that a bottom-up minipublic may not be the right participatory process. Instead, top-down minipublics conceived and organized according to a governance-driven approach (see Warren, 2009) are more likely to result in decision makers changing their plans so that they align more with public preferences.

Second, the mixed-member minipublics, i.e., randomly selected citizens and elected representatives (Harris et al., forthcoming), blurs the clear relationship of (mis)alignment between decision makers and minipublics' recommendations. On the one hand, it risks creating a too tight coupling and a domination of the citizen deliberation by the political elites (Harris et al., forthcoming). On the other, Harris et al. argue that it can increase the visibility of the recommendations within empowered institutions and the feeling of ownership and trust among decision makers to engage with the recommendations. Yet, it is unlikely that citizens are able to formulate recommendations to propose a strong shift of political orientation because participating elected officials are likely to dominate the discussion due to their authority and political expertise and therewith dismiss new or different political goals.

Finally, the model assumed that the issue was salient, but a lot of minipublics are implemented on public issues that remain under the radar of the broad public and for which decision-makers want to tap into the 'local knowledge' of participants (Drury et al., 2021). For these less salient issues, should we blame decision makers for adopting a minipublic's recommendations that do not receive the support of the population? There exist interesting arguments supporting an epistemic function for minipublics (e.g., Landemore, 2012). Even Lafont opens the door and accepts the uptake as long as citizens have the possibility to contest the decision post hoc and the policies are technical and administrative and do not conflict with constitutional rights and freedoms: "For low stakes issues that are technical in nature or serve a merely administrative purpose there may be no need at all for citizens to even form an opinion on the policies in question" (2019, p. 157). Moreover, decision makers sometimes do not know how to interpret public opinion, especially regarding policy preferences. For instance, the case study of the citizens' panel suggests that decision makers do not know accurately the preferences, values, and views of public opinion, and they therefore use the minipublic as a sort of elaborate survey to reveal which of politicians' representations of the public opinion comes the closest to the actual public opinion.

This, nonetheless, raises the question of the primary purpose of minipublics: should they help formulate the best decisions or find out what the public wants, or do we want them to help us adopt the decisions that are seen as legitimate for the public? One may argue that the minipublic is one stone hitting two birds: not only decision makers learn what a diverse group of ordinary citizens want, or which decisions are allegedly the 'best', but they can also obtain a resource for improving the legitimacy of their policies. Nevertheless, I believe that such a two-fold purpose of minipublics risks inflating minipublics' actual potential, because the organizers of a minipublic can always claim that it helped to elaborate better decisions or to make them more responsive to the citizenry. Yet, considering the unique deliberative and inclusive credentials of minipublics, realized through a complex and costly design, I am wondering whether we do not waste their unique and genuine potential for more legitimate public decisions by implementing them for functions that a poll or a focus group could equally fulfill. For instance, if we want to obtain the 'best decision', one could convene a large focus group with not only local citizens but also foreigners so that the diversity of participants and their ability to 'trump ability' becomes even greater (Hong & Page, 2004; Landemore, 2013). Future research could further develop an equivalent to Warren's (2017) problem-based approach to democratic theory, that is a pragmatic approach to minipublics and democratic innovations which first carefully consider the problem at hand before opting for the suitable participatory solution (e.g., Fung, 2007; Saward, 2021)

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter aimed to clarify the expectations for the influences of minipublics on public decisions. Considering the consultative nature of minipublics, I distinguished our expectations for both the capacity of minipublics to produce large-scale policy changes and decision-makers and their uptake of minipublics' recommendations. I sought to propose a realist and contingent account of the prospect for minipublics' influence and I therefore discuss the role of minipublics in the light of the constraints of policymaking, as well as their potential for legitimating public decisions in different political configurations. My conclusion highlights the small spot that minipublics occupies in the gigantic constellation of policymaking and politics. Minipublics are on their own unlikely to produce large-scale policy changes. Such outcomes rarely happen and when they do, they are the result of an infrequent alignment of the stars. My examination of decision-makers' reaction also emphasizes the need to depart from a mechanistic understanding of the minipublics' influences on public decisions. A lack of uptake may dissimulate a great political influence on public decisions, while a large uptake of recommendations may end up undermining the legitimacy of public decisions.

In the remainder of this conclusion, I would like to propose a series of recommendations on the design of minipublics which, I think, may help them produce legitimate non-incremental policy changes. First, the size of a minipublic matters. The more participants it has the more likely it can have a 'life of its own', becoming more salient and gaining more political traction. As Bächtiger and Parkinson pointed out, "The 'news' about a minipublic is often the fact that it is happening at all, not the substantive issues on which participants are deliberating" (2019,

p. 119). Second, the duration matters as well. The longer its process, the more information it can process and the more time it has to deliberate. As a result, a long minipublic is likely to consider the substantive and procedure constraints of a policy problem, which may force decision makers to justify the (absence of) uptake with political reasons, thereby stimulating a genuine debate about principles and values instead of technicalities. Conversely, a smaller and shorter minipublic is more likely to remain under the public radar and to be instrumentalized by a policy subsystem to help them adjust existing policy instruments.

Third, the agenda of a minipublic is pivotal. When the deliberation is thematically unrestricted, participants are likely to formulate recommendations that apply to multiple institutions at different levels of authority. As we have seen, these recommendations are likely to be rejected or watered down in intra-institutional negotiations (Font et al., 2018; Torfing, 2012). There are at least two options to increase the chances of a legitimate influence. The agenda could be framed in a way that matches well the policy issue, so that the receiving institution can carry them out on its own. Yet, this does not apply to most public issues, and designers could therefore anticipate which other institutions may be called forth by a minipublic, and invite them early on in the organization of that minipublic to help develop some commitment at their end.

Fourth, the format of recommendations matters as well and should be adapted to the needs of the policymaking stage where it takes place. For agenda-setting, participants must be encouraged to frame policy problems, building narratives about the importance of the issue and causal stories between problems and solutions. Recommendations here need not to be specific, because technicalities are insignificant for getting a problem on the institutional agenda. At the stage of policy formulation, citizens should propose policy options and justify them. One factor to consider is the fact the number of proposals can undermine the influence of minipublics, because the more recommendations the more difficult for decision makers to properly engage with them and to integrate them in public policy (Geissel, 2013, p. 18; Smith, 2009, p. 37). Finally, at the decision-making stage, minipublics should not seek to formulate policy recommendations because they would come too late in the process. Instead, they should offer 'argumentative' resources for decision makers, the public opinions and other actors and organizations affected by a decision to either oppose or support a decision. In line with the citizens' panel review in Oregon (Gastil, 2014) or deliberative polls (Fishkin, 2011), minipublics should deliberate the implications of a potential public decision, presenting the pros and cons.

Fifth, the traditional transmission between a minipublic and decision makers may not always be the right target for a legitimate influence, especially if its recommendations aim at a non-incremental policy change in a closed policy subsystem. In that case, a minipublic should rather aim at disseminating arguments across the public sphere in the hope of joining and strengthening an already existing advocacy coalition. Opting for a more participatory and public track of influence also implies extending the horizon of a minipublic's influence, which may not influence public decisions in the short-term but contribute to realizing a broader shift of policy paradigm in the long-term. Finally, the importance of policy subsystems raises a

series of questions about the capacity of institutionalized and hybrid minipublics (i.e., with both lay citizens and elected representatives) to generate or call for non-incremental policy changes, because they both risk becoming part of a policy subsystem and integrating the norms, culture and routinized standard operating procedures.

All in all, I believe the true democratic potential of minipublics can only be fulfilled if we opt for less but grander minipublics. Convening a long and large minipublic is more likely to capture the public and political attention, attracting media and public opinion, taking the time to involve stakeholders and political parties, so that its recommendations are likely to find a broader public influence and be used as a resource by the actors outside the policy subsystem to question and change existing power structures and policy decisions.

5. Chapter 5. Conclusions

As representative democracies are confronted with a series of challenges, minipublics are put forward as one solution to help tackle them. Their potential to make these contributions depends however on their capacity to influence public decisions. Despite its importance, little was known about the influence of minipublics, and it remained until recently enfolded in a black box. Alongside other studies (in particular, Font et al., 2018; Jacquet & van der Does, 2020; Michels & Binnema, 2018), this PhD research sought to unravel the mystery surrounding the influences of minipublics on public decisions. The demystification implies that I would have made the question easier to understand, but in the end, I am not sure to have simplified it overall. I started this PhD thesis five years ago with the objective of opening one single door for research: understanding the conditions under which minipublics have an influence on public decisions. Yet, I quickly realized that I had first to open a couple of additional doors in order to answer that research question. I therefore took a step back and delved into the conceptualization and measurement of the influence of minipublics. I spent a lot of time investigating a couple of cases, trying to make sense of the data I was observing. This immersion led me to open other research doors, and I thus started considering how much influence we should expect from minipublics and questioning their genuine democratic purpose. These questions, in turn, brought me to new areas of investigations, such as the potential implication of a romanticized approach to minipublics or how decision-makers should ideally cope with minipublics' recommendations. As the end of my PhD research was nearing, I had to offer answers to these numerous questions and close all these open doors. Nevertheless, I do not claim that this PhD manuscript convincingly or definitively answered all these open questions, quite the contrary. For a couple of them, I am already thinking about delving again into it. For instance, the model developed in Section 4.3 needs to consider the size of the public majority as well as the legitimacy of the government and the formation of the public opinion. And for all the questions that I think are closed; I sincerely hope that researchers will reopen them and challenge or refine my contributions. The following limitations could be great starting points to do so.

First, even though I formulated conclusions that relate to the whole theory on minipublics, these stem from two empirical studies whose results are definitely molded by the Belgian context. My case study of the Citizens' Panel 'Brussels—Make your Mobility' happened in the peculiar Region of Brussels, allegedly one of the most complex institutional territories one can find, while my thematic analysis of public justifications relies on minipublics in Belgium. My theoretical reflections also partly stem from my observation of minipublics and talks with actors involved with them in Belgium. This country is however atypical as it is one of the pioneers in the development and implementation of minipublics. As a result, the conclusions of my PhD research may be more context-sensitive than I acknowledged. The organizers' public justifications, the ways minipublics influence public decisions and how to measure them, or my scenarios illuminating the right reaction of decision-makers; all these research contributions were conditioned to some extent by the Belgian context, and I can only

acknowledge the fact that these contributions are likely to be different if I had done my research in another country.

Another important limitation, and maybe my main regret from my PhD research, is the fact that I coded single-handedly all the data for Chapters 2 and 3. I tried to diminish the risks of a low inter-coder reliability by developing a more detailed and multidimensional operationalization of my concepts (e.g., public policy, influences, a minipublic's contributions) and applying them transparently on the data (see Appendix). These nevertheless neither replace another human coder nor compensate for the low inter-coder reliability. Had I a chance to redo this PhD research, my first change would be to involve other people in the coding process. It would not only increase the reliability of my findings but also make the Sequential Impact Matrix less complex and more 'user-friendly'.

It is always risky to study a case whose ramifications are still ongoing. My case study of the citizens' panel took place in 2017 and the final policy Plan of Good Move was adopted in 2020. However, the implementation of that plan is still ongoing and the least we can say is that it has recently captivated the media attention. Around the end of October in 2022, some inhabitants of the neighborhood of the Cage aux Ours in Schaerbeek went on the street to oppose the implementation of the mobility plan, in particular the creation of a 'Quartier appaisé', i.e., a quiet district with fewer cars and more space for other transport means.[26] The manifestation gathered around a couple of hundred people and eventually became violent, as several demonstrators vandalized the traffic signalization and two police officers and one fire fighter were injured.[27] Demonstrations also took place in other municipalities in the Region, for example in Anderlecht, Molenbeek, Forest, and the City of Brussels.

These recent events highlight three limitations of my PhD research. First, they show the importance of considering the implementation of public decisions when examining the influence of minipublics. While my case study suggested that the panel's recommendation to appease neighborhoods was consequential, the examples reveal that these public decisions may possibly remain on the shelf and the need to consider the output, outcome, and impact of public policy (Biermann & Siebenhüner, 2009). My research focused on the output, that is the decisions that result from the activity of decision-makers and upon which they have a direct control, but it neither looked at the policy outcome, i.e., the observable changes in the population targeted by the public policy, nor at the policy impact, that is the effects of a policy outcome on economic, social, or ecological parameters. As I previously argued, expanding the time frame of the analysis implies taking into account more factors that could actually influence the policy outcome and impact of a minipublic's recommendation. This may nonetheless be a necessary step for future research if we want to measure and assess the influence of a minipublic in its entirety.

[26] See Appendix 7.2.4.2., 'Public space back to the citizenry' and 'Renovate the Public Space'
[27] See for example https://www.lesoir.be/473763/article/2022-10-27/good-move-six-personnes-ont-ete-arretees-lors-des-protestations-schaerbeek or https://www.lalibre.be/belgique/mobilite/2022/10/26/good-move-se-heurte-a-la-protestation-citoyenne-Q234BGQPQFDVHI5Y26HRHY4ETY/

Second, these events emphasize the importance of studying the use of minipublics within their broader context. Most studies, including mine, focus on one instance of minipublics to argue that it generates positive or negative contributions to the system. Yet, this is problematic because it assumes that the system pivots around the minipublic since it does not consider if other external factors cancelled the positive systemic contributions of a minipublic. For instance, the alleged positive effects of the citizens' panel on the inhabitants of the aforementioned municipalities are likely to be cancelled by the poor mechanisms of public consultation that the local authorities used for the implementation.[28] Future research on minipublics' influences should adopt a more contextualized and problem-based approach to democratic innovations (Fung, 2007; Jäske & Setälä, 2020; Saward, 2021). Second, the opposition to the Good Move Plan challenges my argument that an alignment between public decisions and policy preferences matters less than with political preferences. These incidents highlight the need for a more nuanced discussion of the implications of a misalignment between political and policy preferences.

The distinction between policy and political preferences also illuminates another limitation of the Sequential Impact Matrix. The case study of the citizens' panel reveals that decision-makers do not only look at specific proposals but also consider the broader political orientation that emerges from the entire report of a minipublic. In a similar vein, my discussion of responsiveness in Section 4.4 draws attention on the distinction between policy and political influences. The Sequential Impact Matrix however fails to trace the political influence of a minipublic because it focused on the fate of individual proposals and the typology of public policy components mainly sought to capture the type of uptake and whether decision-makers only took up recommendations that are easily implementable. I believe that political influences are key to understand the political and democratic contributions of minipublics, as they can weaken or strengthen the political positions of actors involved in decision-making, thereby shaping the orientation, speed, and ambition of the final public decision. It would be interesting to analyse if and how the typology of influences (see Section 3.2.2.) should be modified depending on the political or policy preferences.

Finally, I would like to clarify the motivation behind my argument on the minipublic bubble developed in Chapter 2. For, this reasoning comes early in the PhD manuscript, but it actually corresponds to my mindset at the end of my PhD research. In order to publish this paper, I adopted a somewhat provocative approach which may read as if I criticized the scientific community for not properly studying minipublics and practitioners for not understanding 'the' genuine democratic function of minipublics. My argument is instead a call for caution against the celebration of the so-called 'deliberative wave', because I am afraid that the euphoria around the mushrooming of minipublics risks backfiring and undermining minipublics' true democratic potential. My hypothesis is that minipublics risk becoming associated with the existing political system and the status quo because the increase of minipublics mainly consists

[28] The public consultation occurred during COVID, which meant that it mainly happened online and was not visible and accessible for many citizens.

of ad hoc processes implemented on non-salient issues and with little or no clear influences on public decisions (OECD, 2020; Vrydagh et al., 2020). Many people hold high hopes for minipublics: policymakers and decision-makers may think that they are making policies and decisions differently, the public believes this radical democratic innovation will significantly change current political humdrum, and the participants think they can change the world. Most minipublics in reality tend to be implemented for governance-driven functions and do not really aim to change significantly the policies and the political system, but rather to legitimate the ones that already exist, and which is being challenged and questioned by many. I am afraid that this disappointment may lead to the overall discredit of minipublics, therewith eviscerating their considerable potential for reforming in a legitimate way our political system and policies. I believe that we, as scholars, have a responsibility to ensure that minipublics do not become a public-relation gadget to help decision-makers implement their political agenda and bypass the citizenry. And we are in the front line because no other actors involved with minipublics enjoy the same privileged dispositions of independence, time, and theoretical insights to evaluate the extent to which minipublics actually help empower the citizenry and make public decisions more legitimate. I sincerely hope that future research and practice will confute my pessimist hypothesis and that the rise of minipublics will result in political systems that are more democratic. In the meantime, I think we may be better safe than sorry.

6. Reference list

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7. Appendix

7.1. Chapter 2.

Table 1. An overview of the data used for the thematic analysis.

minipublics	date	Documents consulted	Authors	Items coded	Total
Quel brabant wallon pour demain ?	2001	Official report	The organizors (Fondation pour les Générations Futures)	20	20
Burgerpanel on GMOs	2003	Official report	The organizers (het Vlaams Instituut voor Wetenschappelijk en Technologisch Aspecten Onderzoek (viWTA))	15	15
Lire dans mes gênes ?	2003	Official report	The organizers (Fondation Roi Baudouin (FRB)	4	4
Panels citoyens sur les OGM	2003	Official report	The organizers (FRB)	24	24
Panel citoyen sur la consommation	2004	Official report	The organizers (FRB)	5	5
Panel citoyen sur la sécurité alimentaire	2004	Official report	The organizers (FRB, Federaal Agentschap voor de Veiligheid van de Voedselketen, Federale Overheidsdienst Volksgezondheid)	7	10
		Official meeting report for the follow-up	The organizer (Federaal Agentschap voor de Veiligheid van de Voedselketen)	3	
Meeting of Minds	2005	Official report describing the methodology of the minipublic	The organizers (FRB)	19	33
		Official report of the Belgian minipublic	The organizers (FRB)	7	
		Information flyer distributed to participants	The organizers (FRB)	6	
		Official Report	The organizers (viWTA)	1	
IBGE	2006	Official news report	The organizers (l'Administration de l'Environnement et de l'Energie de la Région Bruxelles-Capitale)	6	12
		Official report	The organizers (Service Education permanente Question Santé asbl, DG Culture — Ministère de la communauté Française)	6	
Nos Campagnes demain en Europe	2006	Official Report of the European process	The organizors (Fondation pour les Générations Futures)	35	42
		Official report of the Belgian minipublic	The organizors (Fondation pour les Générations Futures)	7	
Panel Citoyen Plan IRIS	2006	Public parliamentary question	The initiating minister (Ministre chargé de la Mobilité et des Travaux publics de la Région Bruxelles-Capitale)	3	4
		Public report of the parliamentary commission	The initiating minister (Ministre chargé de la Mobilité et des Travaux publics de la Région Bruxelles-Capitale)	1	
Burgerconventie - Auto & smog	2007	Parliamentary meeting report after the minipublic	The organizers (viWTA)	4	6
		Official report	The organizers (viWTA)	1	
		Executive summary of the official report	The organizers (viWTA)	1	
Citizens' perspective on the future of Europe	2007	Press report	The initiators (European Commission)	8	17
		Official report for the Belgian minipublic	The organizers (FRB, Athanor Médiations, Momentum, Cyrnao)	5	
		Official Report of the European process	The organizers (FRB and other European partners)	4	

Burgerconventie COP 15	2009	Official report of the global process	Organizers (Danish Board of Technology and other partners)	15	35
		Press report	The initiating minister (Ministre chargé de la Mobilité et des Travaux publics de la Région Bruxelles-Capitale)	9	
		Official report	The organizers (viWTA)	8	
		Information flyer distributed to participants	The organizers (viWTA)	3	
Civisti	2009	Official Report of the European process	The organizers (viWTA, Danish Board of Technology and other partners)	15	27
		Official report of the Belgian minipublic	The organizers (viWTA)	10	
		Magazine reporting the minipublic	Organizers (Danish Board of Technology)	2	
European Citizens' Consultation in Belgium	2009	Offificial evaluation report	The organizers (FRB)	10	12
		Official report	The organizers (FRB)	2	
Radioactive Waste Management Plan	2010	Official report	The organizers (FRB)	5	5
G1000	2011	Official report	The organizers (the G1000)	45	45
Notre Futur	2013	Official report	The organizors (Fondation pour les Générations Futures)	20	24
		Official report	The organizors (Fondation pour les Générations Futures)	4	
BurgerLabo	2014	Official report	The organizers (FRB)	13	28
		Information flyer distributed to participants	The organizers (FRB)	11	
		Executive summary of the official report	The organizers (FRB)	2	
		Final official report of the whole consultation process	The organizers (FRB)	2	
G100 Grez-Doiceau	2014	News article	Quote of the head organizer (a citizen) in the newspaper Le Soir	5	10
		News article	Quote of the head organizer (a citizen) in the newspaper La Dernière Heure les Sports	3	
		Official website	The organizers	2	
Climacteurs	2015	Official press report on the website	The initiators (Bruxelles Environnement)	4	7
		Public Speech (found on the website of the then Minister)	The initiator (Ministre régionale bruxelloise de l'Environnement, de l'Energie et du logement de la Région Bruxelles-Capitale)	3	
ouderpanel	2015	Official report	The organizers (FRB)	2	4
		News article	Quote of the initiator (minister in charge of the education for the Flemish Regional Authority) in Belga	2	
Parlement Citoyen climat	2015	News article	Quote of the initiator (deputy in charge of sustainable development) in the newspaper L'Avenir	3	8
		News article	Quotes of the initiator (deputy in charge of sustainable development) and a scientist accompanying the process, in the newspaper La Meuse	3	
		News article	Quote of the scientist accompanying the process, in the newspaper L'Avenir	2	
Canal Citoyen !	2016	Official report of the process	The initiators and organizers (Particitiz)	7	8
		Official report with recommendations	The initiators and organizers (Particitiz)	1	
Pacte d'Excellence — Conférence citoyenne sur le redoublement	2016	Official report	The organizers (FRB)	6	6

Pacte d'excellence — Panel citoyen	2016	Official report	The organizers (FRB)	7	7
Gents Burgerkabinet	2017	Evaluation report	The municipality	6	9
		Council meeting report	The initiator (the mayor)	3	
LLN—Panel citoyen pour l'Esplanade	2017	Final report	The organizers (l'Assemblée Générale des étudiant.e.s)	30	30
Make Your Brussels Mobility	2017	Parliamentary meeting report after the minipublic	The Parliament of the Region of Bruxelles-Capitale	5	12
		Parliamentary report of the minipublic	The Parliament of the Region of Bruxelles-Capitale	2	
		Final policy document	The public administration in charge of the follow-up (Bruxelles-Mobilité)	3	
		Final report	The organizers (Particitiz)	2	
Panel citoyen sur la petite enfance	2017	Final report	The initiator (the president of the parliament of the German-speaking Community)	6	14
		Public bid	The initiator (the Parliament of the German-speaking Community)	8	
Panel citoyen sur les enjeux du vieillissement	2017	Official meeting report to launch the minipublic	The initiator (the President of the Parliament of Wallonia)	4	10
		Official website	The initiator (the Parliament of Wallonia)	4	
		News article	Quote of the initiator (President of the Parliament of Wallonia) in Le Soir	2	
Parlement Citoyen — Quelle Europe pour demain	2017	Official report	Newspapers (La Dernère Heure-Les Sports & La Libre Belgique) in partership with the supporting scientific committee (Université Libre de Bruxelles) and the initators (the Bureau of the Parliament of the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles)	23	30
		Official news report	The initiators (Parliament of the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles)	5	
		Final report	The organizers (public officials from the Pariament and the scientific committee from the Université Libre de Bruxelles)	2	
Verviers— Fabrique de liens citoyens	2017	Official press report to launch the minipublic	The municipality	7	10
		Official press report for the second meeting	The municipality	2	
		News article	Quote of the organizer (Periferia) in the newspaper Le Soir	1	
We Are Molenbeek	2017	Evaluation report	The organizers (Particitiz)	4	4
Make My Administration	2018	Final report	The organizer (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)		7
Mon ADN, tous concernés	2018	Final report	The organizers (FRB)	5	9
		Press report	The initiator (federaal Minister voor Volksgezondeheid and Scoial Zaken)	2	
		News article	Quote of the initiator (federaal Minister voor Volksgezondeheid and Scoial Zaken), Radio 1 website	2	
Pacte d'excellence — Conférence du Consensus	2018	Final report	The organizers (Atanor)	2	4
		Launching report	The initiators (the minister of education of the French-speaking community)	2	
Panel citoyen sur la propreté à Enghien	2018	News article	Quote of the initiator (the mayor of the municipality) in Nord Eclair	5	8
		Magazine of the municipality	The initiator (the municipality)	2	
		News article	Quote of the initiator (the mayor of the municipality) in Nord Eclair	1	
Panel citoyen sur les jeunes en Wallonie	2018	Official website	The organizers (Parlement de Wallonie)	10	14
		Official meeting report to launch the minipublic	The initiators (the president of the Parlement de Wallonie)	4	

Agora Citoyenne sur la forêt	2019	Report	The organizers (Uliège, SEED) in the magazine Forêt.Nature	18	20
		Official report	The organizers (Uliège, SEED)	2	
LLN— SOL panel ciotyen	2019	PowerPoint Presentation of the first meeting,accessible on website of the minipublic	The organizers (Impact)	6	6
Ostbelgien— Burgerdialog	2019	Official website	The organizers (the Parliement of the German-speaking Community)	4	7
		The law which institutionalizes the minipublics	The initiators (elected representatives of the Parliament of the German-speaking Community)	3	
Agora—Assemblée citoyenne	2020	Manifest of the political party	The organizers (the political party Agora)	18	23
		Website of the citizens' assembly	The organizers (the political party Agora)	5	
Auderghem — Assemblées citoyennes	2020	The rule book	The organizers (the municipality)	14	14
Brussels City— Neighborhood councils	2020	The charter of participation	The initiators (the municipality)	19	29
		The rule book	The initiators (the municipality)	5	
		Official website	The initiators (the municipality)	5	
Burgerpanel— Mechelen -	2021	Official website	The initiators (the municipality)	7	9
		News article	Quote of the initiator (Alderman of citizen participation) in Belga	2	
Etterbeek — Neighborhood Councils	2021	Rule book	The initiators (municipality)	3	6
		News article	Quote from the initiator (the alderman of citizen participation) in La Capitale	2	
		News article	Quote from the initiator (the alderman of citizen participation) in Le Soir	1	
G100 Oud Heverlee—Zout Water	2021	Official website	The organizers (the municipality)	26	27
		Official website	The funder (The Flemish Regional Authority)	1	
Overijse tax shift	2021	Official website	The organizers (the municipality)	2	5
		Official website	The funder (The Flemish Regional Authority)	3	
RBC & COCOM— Commission Délibérative	2021	Bill	The initiator (the President of the The initiator (the Parlement Francophone Bruxellois)	9	17
		Rule book	The initiator (the Parlement Francophone Bruxellois)	7	
		Report of the first deliberative committee	The initiator (the President of the Parliament of the Région Bruxelles-Capitale)	1	
Saint Gilles— Conseil Citoyen	2021	Rule book	The initator (the municipality)	9	13
		Official website	The initiator (the municipality)	1	
		Final report of the first procecess	The organizers (Particitiz)	1	
		News article	Quote of the initiator (the mayor) in Bruzz	2	

Table 2. Endemic or structural; problem- or goal-oriented: illustration of the coding

	Endemic	**Structural**
Problem-oriented	Organizers explicitly connect the use of a minipublic to a specific problem relating to the lack of inclusion. 1. LLN — Citizens' panel for the extension of the Esplanade (final report, p. 8): Only inhabitants of the municipality will be consulted in a referendum to allow or not the extension of the Esplanade. That is why the citizens' panel also includes the workers and students who do not have a voice. 2. Citizens' Panel on the GMO, 2003 (final report, p. 4): The technological and scientific evolution attracted the society's attention. It is therefore essential for the Foundation pour les Générations Futures to give a voice to citizens on a question that is traditionally dealt with by experts. 3. WWViews, 2009 (policy report, p. 5): Also, there was a clear need to involve ordinary people in a debate otherwise heavily dominated by scientists, politicians and powerful interest groups.	Organizers expressly associate the use of minipublic to address the structural lack of inclusion in society. 1. Commissions Délibératives, 2020 (vade-mecum, p. 4): De facto, venues for direct and formal dialogue between representatives and constituents are missing. 2. Panel citoyen sur la propreté à Enghien, 2018 (interview in Nord Éclair): Philosophically and politically, it is about answering a demand. The citizen does not want anymore to wait six years before giving his/her opinion on the policy in the municipality. We realize that there is a real misunderstanding of the democratic procedures. The population has the impression that we do not move forward, also because they do not understand the constraints. 3. Quelle Europe pour demain?, 2017 (final report, p. 4): bringing democracy to life by involving the citizenry in the public debate is a challenge nowadays.
Goal-Oriented	Organizers want to give an opportunity to citizens to participate in the elaboration of a public decision/policy. Initiators here do not acknowledge that there is a problem with or a lack of inclusion. 1. G100 Zoute Waters, 2000 (website of the project): With this project we want in the municipality to learn how we can implement a true co-creation process to the definition of a public question 2. Ouderpanel, 2016 (Einderapport p. 30): The minister wants to learn and integrate in her policy	Organizers do not couple a minipublic's contribution to a problem. The contribution is associated with the broader system and macro-effect on the whole population, or the minipublic is conflated with the whole citizenry. 8. Brussels City's neighborhood councils, 2020 (règlement, p.1): The neighborhood councils seek to encourage and ease the access to democratic participation of all inhabitants or users from a neighborhood and to stimulate an active and direct citizenship in connection to daily life.

	the worries, considerations, ideas and recommendations of informed parents about the future of high school 3. Citizens' panel on the future of rural areas, 2006-2007 (final report, p. 4): its aim: to encourage a contribution from European citizens to the discussions on the public policies which affect rural areas	9. Agora Citizens' Assembly, 2019-2020 (webpage describing the citizens' assembly): The citizens' assembly is an opportunity for citizens to make their voices heard and have a place in the decision-making of their own region 10. The European Citizens' consultation, 2009 (evaluation report, p. 15): The European citizens' consultation is citizen participation as a policy instrument of the future: mainstreaming trend-setting and long-term oriented citizens' consultation at the European level.

Table 3. The distribution of minipublics based on the type of initiators and the level of authority

	Executive	Parliament	Public administration	Civil society	**Total**
Supranational	4			1	**5**
Federal	3		4	3	**10**
Regional	9	10	1	1	**21**
Local	12			3	**15**
Total	**28**	**10**	**5**	**8**	**51**

Figure 1. An overview of the thematic analysis' results

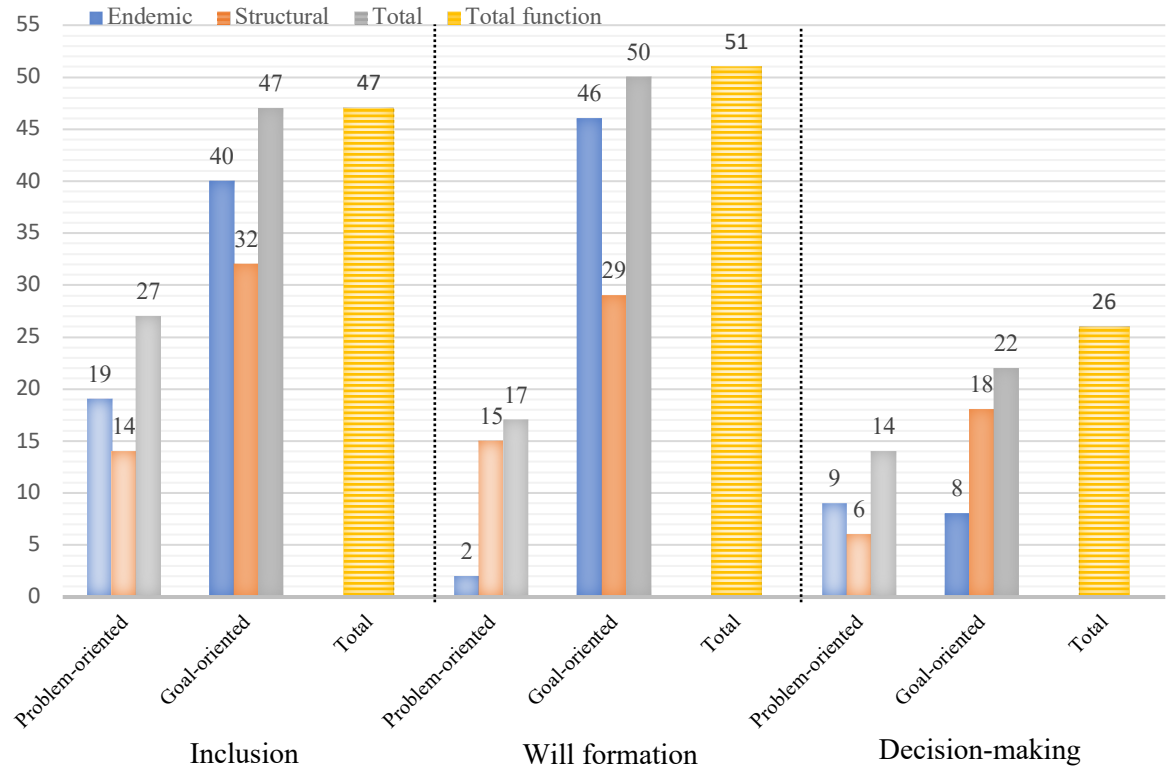
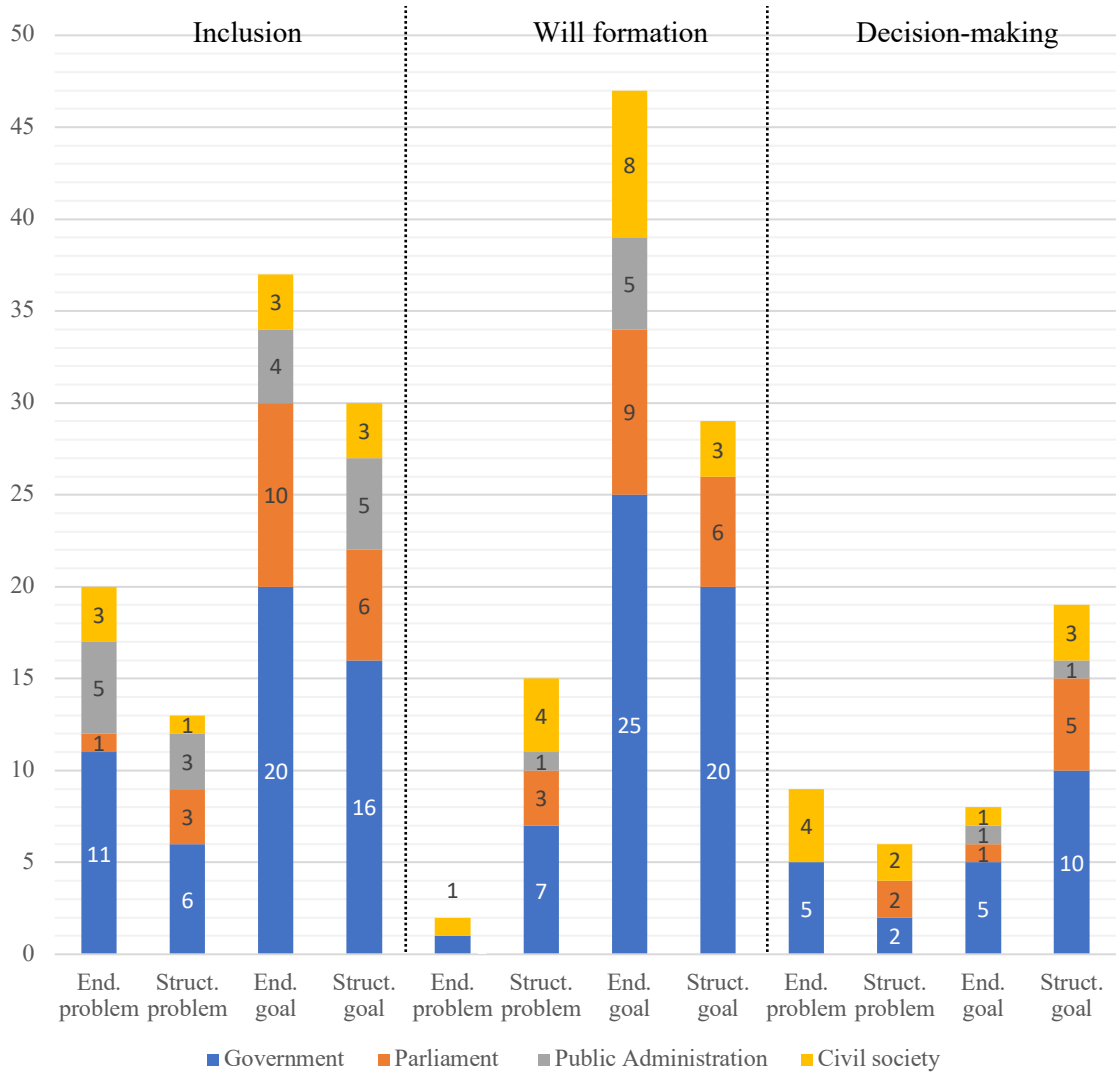


Figure 2. An overview of the minipublics and their function based on the organizers.



7.2. Chapter 3

7.2.1. Interviews

Table 4. The overview of the interviewees2/23/23 10:50:00 AM

Policy-maker 1	Online	Member of the public administration Bruxelles Mobilité, closely involved in the integration of the citizen resolution in the first version of the mobility plan
Policy-makers 2	On the phone	Member of the public administration Bruxelles Mobilité, closely involved in the integration of the citizen resolution in the first version of the mobility plan Key member of the cabinet of the Minister of mobility of the Brussels Region (2019—…)
Policy-maker 3	Online	Key member of the external consortium Smartteam, which assisted the public administration Bruxelles Mobilité and the elaboration of the mobility plan.
A cabinet member	Online	Key member of the cabinet of the Minister of mobility (2014-2019), closely involved in the political follow up of the mobility plan
A public official of the Brussels Regional Parliament	Online	Public official closely involved in the initiation, organization, and institutional follow-up of the citizen panel.
An organizer of the citizen panel	In person, on the phone	Key member of the organization of the citizen panel.
Key member of the Brussels Regional Parliament	In person	Elected member of the Brussels Regional Parliament, played a key role in the initiation, organization and institutional follow-up of the citizen panel.

Script of the semi-structured interviews

Goal: to hear your opinions on the citizen panel and help me understand how the citizens ideas were used for elaborating and ratifying the mobility plan.

- Brief introduction of the research
- General opinion on the citizen panel and the citizen resolution
- Opinion about the impact of the citizen panel. Description of its extent.
- Describe the use and usefulness of the citizen ideas to elaborate & ratify the plan
- Describe the different influences of citizen ideas.
- Describe the use and impact of citizen ideas for the first and final version of the mobility plan.
- Discuss the lack of and partial uptake of citizen ideas
    - If no clear response, mention the citizen idea on the toll and on the debate on the mutualization of private parking

7.2.2. An introduction to the SIM overview.

The SIM can be displayed in an overview which consists of three temporal dimensions: the decision makers' initial agenda (T0), the citizen ideas (T1), and their uptake in the subsequent public policy (T2). The citizen ideas at T1 occupies the central role around which T0 and T2 are built. This overview serves as an overview to enhance the transparency and standardization of the congruency analysis. It consists of a summarized translation of the original documents. You can find the codes used in the overview under the first SIM matrix (see Section 2). The two indicators to enhance the standardization of the congruency approach are the distinction of levels of abstraction and components of public policy (see Section 3). I illustrate hereafter each category with examples from the SIM.

7.2.3. Illustration of the coding of public policy

I illustrate the different public policy components with the matrix 1.2 on the institutional context. The citizen panel suggests two abstract objectives: to put the general interest above the particular and to seek more collaboration for a coherent and efficient mobility policy. These two objectives stem from a series of abstract framing elements, ideas that present the context and the reasons behind these two objectives, which include the unsuccessful existing mobility policy that fail to meet citizens' expectations, the institutional complexity of the Belgian state from which citizens suffer. As a result of these framing ideas and to contribute to the realization of the two objectives, the citizen panel asks for the creation of a new institution to ensure a functioning coordination between the various actors and institutions involved.

As for the levels of abstraction, we can examine the citizen ideas at T1 in the matrix 1.5. The citizen panel recommend an abstract means—reduce parking to improve the public space. Parking reduction is indeed a general policy instrument, and it remains unclear which policy tools can be deployed to realize it and it is not possible be measured as such. The resolution provides two means at the policy level: to force the mutualization of the parking of companies and public authorities and to state a debate about the mutualization of the private parking. These two ideas are categorized as policy instrument that belong to the broader and more abstract means of parking reduction to improve the public space. Finally, the panel formulates a series of ideas that relate to setting on-the-ground, such as considering the people with a reduced mobility and various delivery services when reducing the parking or increasing the parking for bikes.

7.2.4. The SIM of the citizens' panels "Brussels—Make your Mobility"

7.2.4.1. At the policy formulation stage

1.1 The speed limits[29]

T0	T1	T2	Uptake	Influence
Government coalition (GVT) A	**Reduce pollution**	A	Uptake	continuous
GVT A	**Increase security**	A	Uptake	continuous
GVT A	**Decrease traffic**	A	Uptake	continuous
⌀	*Necessity to Simplify and harmonize speed limits*	*A*	Uptake	innovating
SP.a a = 30 km/h in city centre	Speed limit at 30 km/h, except 50 on main lanes	A B = Exceptions for streets with Public Transports (PTs) A = Concrete road arrangements A = Clear and understandable traffic signs A = Awareness campaign A = Reinforced control	Uptake	enriching

In italic: *policy frame*
In bold : **policy goals**
Normal : policy means

Abstract level
Policy level
Program level

A = congruent idea
a = partially congruent idea
B = different idea
⌀ = no congruency

1.2 The institutional context

T0	T1	T2	Uptake	Influence
⌀	*Failure mobility policy*	⌀	No	No influence
⌀	*Fail citizens' expectations*	⌀	No	No influence
⌀	*Fail environmental demands*	⌀	No	No influence
⌀	*Citizens suffer from institutional context*	⌀	No	No influence
⌀	*Belgium's Institutional complexity*	⌀	No	No influence
⌀	*Myriad of actors involved*	⌀	No	No influence
⌀	**General interest above particular**	⌀	No	No influence
GVT a = Interregional collaboration for buses and beltway a = Federal collaboration for new train line	**More collaboration for a coherent and efficient mobility policy**	**A = Brussels government leads to carry a coherent vision at national scale** *A = Necessity of interfederal cooperation for mobility* A = formalize and reinforce interfederal cooperation, also at administrative level	uptake	Enriching
⌀	Create coordinating entity to supervise coordination and ensure the follow up of policies	A = Metropolitan Council of mobility with regions and federal, follow up implementation B = administration responsible for implementation	Partial	Limited innovating

[29] T0 refers to the expressed initial preferences of decision-makers, T1 to the report of the consultative democratic innovation, and T2 the uptake in subsequent public policy. A legend below the first Matrix explains the coding. When the letter A is stated as T0 or T2, it means that the citizen proposal was identical to the policy components at T0 and T2. All policy content was translated from French to English by the author and summarized so as to be able to feature in an overview.

1.3 The public space back to citizens

T0	T1	T2	Uptake	Influence
GVT/SP.a **A**	**Public space back to citizens**	**A = Recover public space**	Uptake	continuous
		A = Reinforce quality of use and urban activity in main public spaces		
		A = Renovate famous public spaces A = Support living labs to recover public space		
		A = use citizen participation in urban renovation		
⌀	*Move safely and quickly*	⌀	No	No influence
GVT A = Programme AVANTI (increase STIB's speed at surface)	*High car density slowing down PTs*	A = Reduce car space and create lanes for PTs and carpool **A = Improve performance of PTs at the surface**	Uptake	continuous
GVT/ SP.a **A**	**Fight air pollution**	A = *transport causes air pollution with disastrous consequences for public health*	Uptake	continuous
		A = diminish thermal vehicles		
GVT **A**	**Fight sound pollution**	**A = Diminish sound pollution**	Uptake	continuous
		A = Arrange main lanes against sound pollution		

1.4 Renovate the public space

T0	T1	T2	Uptake	Influence
GVT A = widen pedestrians and improve materials to give the public space back to citizens	Renovate pedestrians to enable mobility of all its users	A = **Improve network for pedestrians** a = Create a continuous pedestrian network ➔ make an audit ➔ launch a project call	uptake	continuous
GVT A = Reinforce crossing safety		A = Evaluate existing crossing segment A = Create large pedestrian lanes		
GVT/SP.a A	Renovate pedestrians for PRM	A = all urban project must respect the PAVE-plan	uptake	continuous
GVT a = Separated bike lanes	Renovate main lanes with separated space for each transport	A = **Re-establish a balance between cars and other Transport Means (TMs)** A = with qualitative improvement for active TM and PTs A = Develop a strategy for multimodal lanes with a structured network for all TMs	uptake	Enriching
SP.a A GVT a = increase funding for bikes and walk	Priority to pedestrians, bikes, PTs	A = Review Vision plan to improve transport conditions of bikes, pedestrians and PTs a = Reduce car space and create lanes for PTs and carpool	uptake	continuous
⌀	Create parking lots only after considering the two previous points	*A = Quoted*	Partial	Limited innovating
⌀	In residential areas reduce road space for cars to decrease their speed	A = adapt street arrangement to enforce 30 km/h speed limit	uptake	Innovating
All **A =Implement and finish the regional network for bikes**	Create coherent, continuous and safe bike lanes	A = Improve and increase structured bike network	uptake	continuous
GVT/SP.a A = Precise network plans and measures		A = Increase by 10 million EUR the bike budget to implement network		
GVT A = Each new urban renovation foresees a bike lane		A = Finalize, evaluate and adapt existing network A = Create 'bridges' for bikes for network's continuity		

1.5 The parking policy

T0	T1	T2	Uptake	Influence
GVT A = Use parking as a tool to liberate public space in the city	Reduce parking to improve public space	A = Reduce parking to recover public space	Uptake	continuous
GVT a = Transfer parking to periphery GVT periphery parking cheaper GVT Create parking in transport hubs		A = Review objectives of Parking.Brussels to ensure this vision A = transfer parking to the periphery A = Develop parking as a service to reduce parking		
SP.a **B = build underground parking**		A = Review parking policy to discourage parking in residential area ➔ adapt price, rules ➔ limit number of parking authorization ➔ review compensation system A = Consider parking in each urban renovation		
a = PRM	➔ considering People with Reduced Mobility (PRM), deliveries, home services	⌀	No	no influence
⌀	➔ increase parking for shared TMs and bikes	a = Adapt parking for shared TMs and professionals a = Assign bike's parking to a single contractor	Partial	Limited innovating
⌀	➔ Two trees per parking spot	*A = quoted*	Partial	Limited Innovating
GVT/ SP.a **A = make private and public parking availab**le GVT A = Force mutualization for any urbanistic permit's demand	Force mutualization of companies and state's parking	*A = quoted*	Uptake	Limited continuous
GVT a = force mutualization in urbanistic permits a = Create parking in new house building	Start debate about mutualization of private building's parking	B = Operationalize opportunities to mutualize periphery parking	No	no influence

1.6 Alternative to cars and reduce traffic density

T0	T1	T2	Uptake	Influence
GVT a = **Reduction of cars is main priority**	Encourage alternatives to cars to decrease traffic	A = **Reduction of cars**	Uptake	continuous
GVT a = PTs as principal policy means to decrease it		A = Fiscal means to discourage cars use and encourage alternative TMs		
GVT a = stimulate active transport modes		A = Mobility coaches in companies		
GVT a = finish RER		A = increase assistance for and visibility of shared TMs		
SP.a A = Encourage shared mobility (cars, bikes…) with awareness campaigns and new infrastructure		A = Renovate main lanes for alternative TMs		
		A = Develop at national or European level a flexible and progressive tax for car use. A= defend a federal reform against leasing cars		
∅	Encourage home working and the staggering of the work schedule in all public institutions	*A = Quoted* a = Adapt working time in dense working areas	Partial	limited innovating
GVT A = interregional collaboration to build transit parking lots	Encourage regions and federal to build uphill transit parking lots	*A = Quoted* a = Create parking uphill	Partial	limited continuous
∅	*Non-Brussels inhabitants do not contribute fiscally to Brussels*	∅	No	No
∅	*Professionals lose time and money in traffic*	∅	No	No
GVT/SP.a **A**	**Decrease traffic density**	**A**	Uptake	continuous
GVT A	Augment PTs' frequency to make them more attractive	A = Reinforce PTs frequency in existing network A = **Improve speed and frequency of PTs at the surface**	Uptake	continuous
SP.a a = **PTs and bike must become the quickest TMs**	assign objectives to STIB to be competitive regarding cars	*A = Quoted*	Partial	Limited Enriching

1.7 The toll

T0	T1	T2	Uptake	Influence
⌀	Create a toll for people outside Brussels.	*A = Quoted*	Partial	Limited Innovating
GVT a = create transit parking lots	with transit parking lots	*A = Quoted* a = create parking lots in the periphery (with precise locations)	Partial	Limited enriching
GVT a = connect to RER SP.a A	Connect transit parking to performing PTs	a = increase intra-Brussels trains a = Bus on the beltway	Partial	Limited continuous
⌀	Free parking if paying PTs	⌀	No	No influence
⌀	guarded and equipped car parks	⌀	No	No influence

1.8 Communication

T0	T1	T2	Uptake	Influence
⌀	*Wide transport exists but remains unknown*	⌀	No	No influence
GVT a = improves collaboration between TMs providers	*Each TM has its own communication channel*	⌀	No	No influence
⌀	*Transport option is constantly evolving*	**A = Goal is to support the new transport option**	Uptake	Innovating
SP.a *a = importance of communication for PTs' accessibility*	**Information about transport option must by accessible to all citizens**	A = **Everyone must have access to MaaS** **A = improve and facilitate access** A = create contact points with 'mobility coaches' A= Evaluate all PTs' ticket offices to develop synergies	Uptake	Enriching
GVT a = about carpool and taxi	Awareness campaigns about transport option	A = increase regular awareness action to increase visibility and credibility of pooled and new TMs A = increase visibility of all TO, regardless of operators A = mobility coaches	Uptake	Enriching
⌀	Create a service to centralize all information	A = Develop MaaS as centralizing platform, under the leading of Brussels' mobility administration	Uptake	Innovating
GVT A	**Increase visibility of city trains**	*A = Quoted* **Increase visibility of PTs and networks**	Uptake	Continuous
SP.a A	**Increase visibility of inter-modality in PTs**	A = Double budget to increase visibility	Uptake	Continuous
⌀	**Increase visibility of transit parking lots**	A = Double budget to increase visibility	Uptake	Innovating

1.9 The Mobib Card

T0	T1	T2	Uptake	Influence
GVT Budget to Improve communication between transport services	*Transport services are capable of optimal communication*	⌀	No	No influence
⌀	*Mobib best support*	⌀	No	No influence
GVT **a = Integrate all regional PTs in one offer** SP.a a = all TMs via a single card	**develop Mobib Card to offer all transport services**	*a = Quoted* a = develop MaaS which integrates all transport offers **a = Improve and facilitate access to T's option**	Partial	Limited enriching
⌀	Create a centralized Mobib platform	*A = Quoted* A = creation of a MaaS Platform	Uptake	Innovating
SP.a *A = transport's choice to rely on live info*	with live information, prices, itinerary planning, all TMs options	*A = Quoted* a = itineraries for bikes a = concrete factors in itinerary (weather…)	Partial	Limited continuous
GVT A = Study to how to diversify access to transport option	Accessible via various supports	*A = Quoted* A = Create selling/info points and MaaS Platform	Uptake	Continuous
GVT Study to diversify the paying options for TMs	Prepaid option	A = MaaS includes booking and payment	Uptake	Continuous
⌀	Preferential price for the type of use (green, frequency)	A = Adapt price to the transport use *A = Each profile has own use* **a = Encourage the user's rational choice for transport**	Uptake	Innovating
GVT A = Study to include MBT in STIB subscription	Only MBT[30] subscription	*A = Quoted*	Partial	Limited continuous
SP.a A	**same price as STIB**	⌀	No	No influence
GVT/SP.a A	Preferential price for specific groups	a = Inclusive price for PTs	Partial	Limited Continuous
O	**Ease administrative procedures**	⌀	No uptake	No influence

[30] The MBT subscription includes all public transports that operate in Brussels, that is the federal train company, the regional companies TEC, De Lijn and STIB.

1.10 Safety

T0	T1	T2	Uptake	Influence
SP.a A	*Safety is a fundamental right*	⌀	No	No influence
SP.a a = communication campaign to improve road courtesy	*Good citizenship is a duty*	⌀	No	No influence
GVT/SP.a *A = Feeling of insecurity decreases; but needs to do better* SP.a A = **give PTs back to those afraid of PTs**	**Need to change the vision on PTs and create safe environment**	⌀	No	No influence
⌀	Increase security budget for PTs	⌀	No	No influence
SP.a A = More security agents in PTs	increase police attention to PTs	⌀	No	No influence
SP.a a = improve bike safety on roads	increases police attention to road safety	a = Bike police	Partial	Limited enriching
SP.a A = Actual sanction for misconduct in PTs	Effective application of laws and sanctions	**A = Ensure respect of the law** ➔ Partnership with police and justice ➔ Deploy network of control (radar, permanent controls)	Uptake	Continuous influence
⌀	Civic formation at school	⌀	No uptake	No influence

7.2.4.2. At the decision-making stage

2.1 The speed limits

T1	T2	Uptake
Reduce pollution	**A**	Uptake
Increase security	**A**	Uptake
Decrease traffic	**A**	Uptake
Necessity to simplify and harmonize speed limits	A	Uptake
Speed limit at 30 km/h, except 50 on main lanes	A B = Exceptions for streets with PTs	Uptake
	A = Concrete road arrangements A = Clear and understandable traffic signs	
	A = Awareness campaign A = Reinforced control	

In italic: *policy frame*
In bold : **policy goals**
Normal : policy means

Abstract level
Policy level
Program level

A = congruent idea
a = partially congruent idea
B = different idea
⌀ = no congruency

2.2 The institutional context

T1	T2	Uptake
Failure mobility policy	*a = Ambitions of the previous mobility Plan (Iris II) were disconnected from the implementation capacity of the Region*	uptake
Fail citizens' expectations	⌀	No
Fail environmental demands	*A = mobility policy fails to respect environmental standards*	Uptake
Citizens suffer from institutional context	⌀	No
Belgium's Institutional complexity	*A = Belgium is characterized by a very complex institutional context*	uptake
Myriad of actors involved	**Need to improve the governance to create synergies and avoid internal and external blockages**	uptake
General interest above particular	*a = quoted (without concrete public policy)*	Partial
More collaboration for a coherent and efficient mobility policy	A = Measures to reinforce structural coordination with other levels of authorities A = create an organ in charge of the coordination between mobility actors	Uptake
	A = Governance is a major challenge. Region must take proactively the lead on mobility	
	A = Reinforced cooperation with other regions for trains	
Create coordinating entity to supervise coordination and ensure the follow up of policies	A = Metropolitan Council of mobility with regions and federal, follow up implementation A = create an organ in charge of the coordination between mobility actors A = Legal obligation to follow-up the plan's implementation every 30 months.	Uptake

2.3 Public space back to the citizenry

T1	T2	Uptake
Public space back to citizens	**A = Reclaiming public space is necessary if the Region wants to realize its mobility objectives** **A = Redistribute the public space for all users**	Uptake
	A = Renovate famous public spaces A = use citizen participation in urban renovation	
Move safely and quickly	∅	No
High car density slowing down PTs	A = Reduce car space and create lanes for PTs and carpool- **A = Improve performance of PTs at the surface**	Uptake
Fight air pollution	A = *transport causes air pollution with disastrous consequences for public health*	Uptake
	A = diminish thermal vehicles. By 2030, at least 50% of cars CO2 emission free.	
Fight sound pollution	*A = Sound pollution affects the citizens' health*	Uptake
	A = Diminish sound pollution	
	A = Arrange main lanes against sound pollution	
	A = Reduce speed limits	

2.4 Renovate the public space

T1	T2	Uptake
Renovate pedestrians to enable mobility of all its users	A = encourage walking by renovating pedestrians and create a continuous network	uptake
Renovate pedestrians for PRM	**A = principle of universal accessibility as a transversal principle of the mobility plan**	uptake
Renovate main lanes with separated space for each transport	A = quoted	uptake
	A = **Re-establish a balance between cars and other TMs**	
	A = with qualitative improvement for active TM and PTs	
	A = Develop a strategy for multimodal lanes with a structured network for all TMs	
Priority to pedestrians, bikes, PTs	A = Quoted	Uptake
	A = clear strategy to give distinct spaces to all transport means a = Reduce car space and create lanes for PTs and carpool	
	A = Create a public space promoting walking and active transport means, and reducing cars and parking	
Create parking lots only after considering the two previous points	*A = Quoted*	Uptake
	A= Ambition is to reduce parking and augment quality of public space	
In residential areas reduce road space for cars to decrease their speed	A = street arrangement and decisions thereupon must contribute to limit the traffic speed	Uptake
	A = creation of quiet residential areas ("Réseaux Quartier")	
Create coherent, continuous and safe bike lanes	A = Improve and increase structured bike network A = Creation of bike lane networks Vélo Plus and Vélo Confort	Uptake

2.5 The parking policy

T1	T2	Uptake
Reduce parking to improve public space	A = Parking policy is a leverage to reclaim the public space	Uptake
➔ considering PRM, deliveries, home services	A = integrate better parking for users that add value to the Region (deliveries, health sector, construction sector) A= integrate better PRM parking in the policy parking	Uptake
➔ increase parking for shared TMs and bikes	A = integrate better parking for bikes, shared TMs,…	Uptake
➔ Two trees per parking spot	*A = quoted*	Partial
Force mutualization of companies and state's parking	*A = quoted*	Partial
Start debate about mutualization of private building's parking	⌀	No

2.6 Alternative to cars to reduce traffic density

T1	T2	Uptake
Encourage alternatives to cars to decrease traffic	A = **Reduction of cars**	Uptake
	A = Fiscal means to discourage cars use and encourage alternative TMs A = Mobility as a service to offer alternatives	
	A = Mobility coaches in companies	
	A = increase assistance for and visibility of shared TMs A = Encourage cycling	
	A = Renovate main lanes for alternative TMs	
	A = Develop at national or European level a flexible and progressive tax for car use.	
Encourage home working and the staggering of the work schedule in all public institutions	*A = Quoted* *a = Work is evolving towards more flexible schedule, need to reflect on mobility and the rush hour.* a = Strategy Go4Brussels 2030	Partial
Encourage regions and federal to build uphill transit parking lots	*A = Quoted* A = Create uphill parking in concertation with other Regions	Uptake
Non-Brussels inhabitants do not contribute fiscally to Brussels	⌀	No
Professionals lose time and money in traffic	⌀	No
Decrease traffic density	**A**	Uptake
Augment PTs' frequency to make them more attractive	A = Reinforce PTs frequency in existing network A = **Improve speed and frequency of PTs at the surface** A = Creation of networks TP PLUS and TP CONFORT	Uptake
assign objectives to STIB to be competitive regarding cars	*a = General ambition of improving the competitivity of PT, but no clear indication of competitivity regarding cars specifically.*	Partial

2.7 The Toll

T1	T2	Uptake
Create a toll for people outside Brussels.	*A = Quoted* *a* = Review the fiscal policy to discourage the personal use and ownership of cars	Partial
with transit parking lots	*A = Quoted* a = create parking lots (for 25.000 spots) in the Brussels' metropolitan area	Partial
Connect transit parking to performing PTs	a = create uphill parking that are coherent with the PTs' network	Partial
Free parking if paying PTs	a = ensure the attractivity of parking by offering prices that integrate the use of PTs or other mobility services.	Partial
guarded and equipped car parks	a = parking lots conceived as a pool of services (but not shops mentioned)	Partial

2.8 Communication

T1	T2	Uptake
Wide transport exists but remains unknown	⌀	No
Each TM has its own communication channel	*A = observe a lack of synergies between private and public mobility offer.*	Uptake
Transport offer is constantly evolving	*A = mobility offer is evolving* **A = Goal is to support the new transport offer**	Uptake
Information about transport offer must by accessible to all citizens	A = **Everyone must have access to MaaS** **A = improve and facilitate access**	Uptake
	A = Study the profiles of users of information points A= Evaluate all PTs' ticket offices to develop synergies	
	A = Information and signage are the leverage to deal with the challenge of transversal accessibility to all.	
	A = Access to information and signage must be uniform to all PTs and be accessible to people with disabilities or that do not speak one of the official languages.	
awareness campaigns about transport offer	*A = Quoted* **A = Ambition is to ensure a global approach to information, formation, persuasion, initiation and assistance to support the new mobility plan**	Uptake
	A = actions to inform and initiate to the mobility offer.	
Create a service to centralize all information	A = Develop MaaS as centralizing platform, under the leading of Brussels' mobility administration *A = Quoted*	Uptake
Increase visibility of city trains	*A = Quoted* **A = Increase visibility and valorise the train offer**	Uptake
Increase visibility of inter-modality in PTs	**A = reinforce the intermodal mobility by improving the clarify of the transport connections**	Uptake
Increase visibility of transit parking lots	⌀	No

2.9 Mobib Card

T1	T2	Uptake
Transport services are capable of optimal communication	⌀	No
Mobib best support	⌀	No
develop Mobib Card to offer all transport services	*a = Quoted* a = develop MaaS which integrates all transport offers **a = Improve and facilitate access to PTs offer**	Partial
Create a centralized Mobib platform	*A = Quoted* **a = Integration of mobility services numerically and physically** ***A = MaaS must create a unique interface for the user.***	Uptake
with live information, prices, itinerary planning, all TMs offers	*A = Quoted* *a = citizens choose their mobility based on the climate, professional and private constraints, physical aptitudes and financial capacity. MaaS must be developed considering these aspects.*	Partial
Accessible via various supports	*A = Quoted*	Partial
Prepaid option	⌀	No
Preferential price for the type of use (green, frequency)	⌀	No
Only MBT subscription	*A = Quoted*	Partial
same price as STIB	⌀	No
Preferential price for specific groups	*a = Crucial that mobility services do not create exclusion* a= important to consider social criteria when determining the prices.	Partial
Ease administrative procedures	⌀	No

2.10 Security

T1	T2	Uptake
Safety is a fundamental right	**A = mobility policy must ensure the safety of all**	Uptake
Good citizenship is a duty	⌀	No
Need to change the vision on PTs and create safe environment	A = Reinforce the feeling of security in public spaces and transports and implement instruments to decrease criminality	Uptake
Increase security budget for PTs	⌀	No
increase police attention to PTs	⌀	No
increases police attention to road safety	A = Reinforce police controls A = Bruxelles Prévention and Sécurité to ensure a partnership with munipalities, police and the justice	Uptake
Effective application of laws and sanctions	**A = Ensure respect of the law** A = Reinforce police controls A = Bruxelles Prévention and Sécurité to ensure a partnership with municipalities, police and the justice	Uptake
Civic formation at school	a = develop instrument of information on and awareness to mobility and road safety	Partial