Roads to minipublic success: Exploring pathways to uptake based on a new dataset of deliberative minipublics in Europe

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Abstract: Not only is the public use of deliberative minipublics on the rise around the globe, some have claimed that this is accompanied by increasing consequentiality. But the issue of minipublic consequentiality is contested and under-researched. In this paper we introduce a new dataset based on the Participedia platform, enhanced by an "observer survey" updating missing information. The databank comprises around 150 minipublic cases conducted at the national and regional level in Great Britain, Germany, France, Ireland, Italy, Denmark and Finland as well as the European level (2000-2021). Using a multilevel logistic regression analysis, we explore whether there is a "top-down" or "bottom-up" road to minipublic success, i.e. whether minipublic uptake – defined as full, partial or no implementation of recommendations - only happens when minipublics are organized top-down, are designed for policy appraisal and do not contest the preferences of political elites ("top-down" road) or whether uptake also happens when some procedural features are more bottom-up (bottom-up organization, allowance for policy development and non-alignment with elite preferences). Our findings clearly point in direction of a top-down road of success, putting some question marks on (participatory and emancipatory) democratic aspirations of involving citizens in minipublics.

Not only is the public use of deliberative minipublics (involving citizens via (stratified) random selection) on the rise around the globe, there are certain hopes associated with the implementation of deliberative minipublics. This involves their public value, for instance helping to tackle difficult policy choices, counteract polarization and disinformation (see Dryzek et al. 2019; see Grönlund et al. 2015), make governance more inclusive as well as to empower citizens (see Knobloch et al. 2019) (OECD 2020, 26). However, in order not to undermine the democratic value of minipublics, the recommendations of the participating citizens have to be carefully considered by public authorities and must have a chance of being implemented. Empirical research shows that use of minipublics might even lead to an aggravation of political dissatisfaction among the public when recommendations are not adopted (Van Dijk and Lefevere 2022). Therefore, minipublic consequentiality is a crucial topic.

However, the issue of minipublic consequentiality – defined as policy impact understood broadly - is under-researched and contested. The OECD, for example, reports a successful implementation of a majority of the minipublics' recommendations in most of the cases (OECD 2021). Other studies describe minipublics' overall political impact as "relatively modest" (Grönlund et al. 2014, 3) or "remaining vague" (Setälä 2017, 846). Likewise, the antecedents of minipublic success have not been sufficiently examined. Despite a flourishing field of research, we know comparably little under what conditions minipublic uptake happens. The question of uptake is connected with a normative debate about the democratic value of minipublics. There is a risk of the strategic uses of deliberative minipublics by elected officials, initiating them top-down to provide legitimation for the government and their policy priorities (Setälä 2017, 851; Bua and Bussu 2021). When this aligns with a "cherry-picking" of recommendations (Font et al. 2016), the use of democratic minipublics might just be mere "window-dressing" and undermines their role in social critique as well as providing emancipation against illegitimate authority (Hammond 2018, 6, see also Böker 2017). Without bottom-up and contestatory uses, minipublics might be a vehicle to reinforce and reproduce the existing political and social order, instead of offering a critical corrective thereof. As Bua and Bussu (2021) note, bottom-up uses of minipublic may help to bolster democracy by transforming, reclaiming or inventing new spaces of participatory governance. Hence, when studying minipublic consequentiality, it is important to examine whether this occurs on a top down or bottom-up road.

Empirically, a few pioneering studies have addressed the issue of minipublic consequentiality in a systematic way. Font et al. (2016), for instance, found that minipublic recommendations are indeed "cherry-picked" by the public authorities. However, the findings are limited to Spain and it is not clear how the characteristics of the country context influence minipublic uptake. Similarly, Smith et al. (2015) found out of the Participedia database that the more deliberative minipublics are, the less policy effects they create; again this result is based on a limited number of crowd-sourced cases in Participedia. The OECD (2020), in turn has compiled an extensive database on deliberative minipublics from 1979 until 2021 in current OECD member countries. Despite an update in 2021, information on the uptake of minipublic recommendations is limited and fairly scattered across different contexts. Moreover, the OECD database does not include antecedents of mini-public success or failure and the analysis conducted by the OECD is limited to simple statistical methods. Finally, a considerable amount of studies focuses on policy

congruence with the recommendations put forth by a minipublic (Jacquet and van der Does 2021); most of them, however, represent in-depth analyses focusing only on one or a small number of cases. Notice further that these studies might be biased toward successful cases, since the latter receive more attention and are also more represented in academic studies than unsuccessful cases (Spada and Ryan 2017). Overall, existing large-N studies "remain relatively rare" (Font et al. 2016).

To fill in the gap in the exiting literature, we explore in a more comprehensive way under what conditions minipublic uptake happens and whether this happens on a top-down or bottom-up road, even though it is possible that it happens on both roads (Bussu and Fleuß 2023). To do so, we introduce a new dataset based on the *Participedia* platform, enhanced by an "observer survey" complementing missing cases and updating missing information in *Participedia*. The databank comprises around 150 minipublic cases conducted at the national and regional level in Great Britain, Germany, France, Ireland, Italy, Denmark and Finland as well as the European level in the period from 2000-2021. By focusing on a wide-range of potential antecedents of minipublic uptake, ranging from process design (e.g. initiative, purpose, size, composition), issue type (complexity and salience), political support (especially alignment of recommendations with preferences of political elites), and characteristics of the country context (e.g. open vs closed political systems), the dataset provides a new springboard for exploring the antecedents of minipublic uptake in a more comprehensive way than existing studies. We will provide first results exploring whether there is a "top-down" or "bottom-up" road to minipublic success, i.e. whether minipublic uptake – defined as full, partial or no implementation of minipublic recommendations - only happens when minipublics are organized top-down, are designed for policy appraisal and do not contest the preferences of political elites, or whether uptake also happens when some procedural features are more participatory (bottom-up organization, allowance for policy development and non-alignment with elite preferences).

In the following, we will first describe the state of the art, including a short description of existing studies and findings. Second, we will develop an explanatory framework under which conditions policy uptake of minipublic recommendations is most likely. Then, we will introduce our new data set, followed by the operationalization of the variables, the statistical methodology and the results. We end with a discussion of our findings.

State of the Art

As mentioned before, the uptake of recommendations put forth by deliberative minipublics is still an under-researched area in the field of democratic innovations. The bulk of existing studies focus on the outcomes internal to deliberative events, such as deliberative quality or opinion formation of participating citizens (Michels and Binnema 2019: 750). Despite an increased research interest in the policy-making consequences of deliberative minipublics (Jacquet and van der Does 2021: 133), there are still comparably few empirical studies on the topic and those are mostly case studies focusing on small-scale, local-level experiments (Pogrebinschi 2018: 95). Large-scale examinations remain rare. One reason for this are the advantages of small or single number case studies – where it is possible to gather a huge amount of background knowledge

and for example not only look at policy changes desk-based but also interview the involved actors to gain insights about their motives etc. Among other methodological add-ons this is also what is suggested by Vrydagh (2022). As valuable this approach might be, it poses a challenge to large scale studies – especially with cases across several countries.

Nonetheless, several larger-scale projects have been conducted in recent years. As mentioned in the introduction, the OECD (2021) has compiled an extensive dataset on deliberative minipublics from 1979 until 2021 in current OECD member countries. However, they exclude cases *without* a direct link to power in the form of an authority which could implement the recommendations made by a minipublic in question (OECD 2020: 20). The OECD dataset does not consider academic experiments, but also excludes any form of bottom-up initiated cases. Thus, the database is not useful to analyse the political impact of deliberative minipublics that are not initiated top-down. Moreover, the information on uptake is fairly scattered in the data and since it proved difficult to obtain information, the first report was based on 55 observed cases in 13 OECD countries over a 40-year time span. After the database update in 2021, the OECD reported implementation of at least half of participants' recommendations by public authorities in around two-thirds of 88 cases in 16 OECD countries. According to the OECD report and database minipublics are therefore quite successful regarding uptake. However, the information on the implementation is only available for a fraction of the cases in the databank. There could also be bias in the sense that the data for cases that received little public and scholarly attention are those with minor political impact. Besides, there is no information included on certain antecedents of minipublic success or failure, such as characteristics of the country context and political support in the OECD database and report that would allow to conduct the analysis planned in this study.

Another dataset of deliberative minipublics is the POLITICIZE dataset. It contains information on 105 deliberative minipublic cases from 2000 to 2020 (updated versions available) in 18 different European countries. Information on the composition, format as well as their role (e. g. what is the topic) are provided (see Paulis et al. 2020). However, it does not include more bottom-up initiated cases but concentrates on case where public authorities were the organisers of a minipublic. The LATINNO dataset (Pogrebinschi 2021), in turn, represents an extensive data collection available of democratic innovations in 18 Latin American countries from 1990 to 2020 (see also Pogrebinschi 2023). The dataset also includes deliberative events that are not based on (stratified) random selection.

A pioneering large-scale study with regard to policy uptake of deliberative forums comes from Font et al. (2018) and includes around 550 minipublic cases from Spain. They find that politically challenging proposals as well as high financial costs decrease the likeliness of implementation of the forums´ recommendations. On the other hand, external funding, internal support and the quality of participation enhance the prospects of the implementation of a recommendation (Font et al. 2018, 628). The study contains numerous potential antecedents of minipublic uptake as variables and conducts an in-depth analysis of the data, but the results are limited to the Spanish context.

There are further studies that focus on minipublics in a single country or a single policy area. Beierle et al. (2002) analysed public participation on environmental decisions in the United States. They find that attributes of context, e. g. issue type and institutional setting "bore little direct relationship to the success of the process" (Beierle 2002, 76). Following a broad definition of minipublics that includes cases with self-selection of participants, Pogrebinschi and Ryan (2018) conducted a comparative analysis on 31 cases of National Public Policy Conferences in Brazil. They find that participation exercises can lead to policy change and that the policy area the minipublic engages with "contributes to explaining its effectiveness" (Pogrebinschi and Ryan 2018, 236; see also Masuhara et al. 2016 for a case analysis in Japan). Finally, Elstub et al. (2018) investigated minipublics in eight countries (Australia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom) from 2006-2017, but focuses only for social policy. Their findings suggest that the type of minipublic (e. g. a Citizens' Jury or a Consensus Conference) has no effect on uptake. In contrast to the report of the OECD they find that "most cases failed to achieve discernible policy and practice impact" (Elstub et al. 2018, 2). Overall, it is time to overcome the limitations of previous studies and engage in large scale and comparative analysis of minipublic success, i.e. uptake of their policy recommendations.

Roads to Minipublic Success: A Framework for Analysis

To address the issue of minipublic consequentiality in a systematic way, we will formulate a framework for analysis (drawing on existing studies and their findings) in the following part. Notice that we only focus on deliberative minipublics with randomized or stratified randomized recruitment; participatory budgeting cases are not included.

What conditions affect the implementation of policy recommendations formulated by deliberative minipublics and are there certain roads that lead to minipublic success in the sense of policy implementation? We will elaborate on potential antecedents of minipublic uptake, ranging from issue type (salience and technicality), process design (initiative, purpose, size, composition), political support (especially alignment of recommendations with preferences of political elites), to characteristics of the level.

Issue Type

Several studies suggest that different types of issues may affect policy uptake (e.g. Michels and Binnema 2018, 754). We focus on here on two issue characteristics, namely salience and complexity. Regarding salience, we also distinguish between symbolic or technical issues. For example, same sex marriage may be considered a symbolic and salient issue, whereas climate change is a technical and salient one. Notice, however, that the distinction between technical and symbolic is always gradual rather than clear-cut. To start, we expect that less salient and symbolic issues have the highest chances of being taken up by political authorities since the implementation costs tend to be lower. Research finds that the lower the costs of implementing recommendations of minipublics, the higher the chances of successful uptake (Font et al. 2018, 628). This is especially the case when less salient issues are mostly symbolic. For example, the

cost of implementing a minipublic recommendation for "more transparency" is comparably low in cost and will not face opposition (since more transparency in politics is a very consensual demand). By contrast, uptake of issues with high salience is more difficult. Salience is frequently indicative of polarized opinions towards the political issue in question which may entail strong opposition in parts of society and political bodies (Beauvais et al. 2019, 9). This is especially true when salient issues are technical (such as climate change): under such conditions, the respective costs for implementation are higher, especially in financial terms. However, political elites might initiate a minipublic exactly on such high salient and technical issues in order to legitimate their political wills or to delegate divisionary issues to the citizenry. Nonetheless, we still expect that less salient issues are more likely to be implemented by political authorities than salient ones.

Process design

Initiative. When deliberative minipublics are initiated bottom up, we expect them to produce less policy uptake as when they are organized top down. As Vrydagh (forthcoming) holds, under such conditions "decision-makers are more likely to disregard the results because they tend to distrust processes that give the impression of bypassing them and in which they tend to be excluded from the organization". Political authorities may also question the setup, the choice of experts, or the framing of the issue. Moreover, bottom-up initiated processes might deal with issues where policy makers are not particularly interested in receiving citizen input. If bottom-up processes also involve policy development then this might be even more challenging to political elites. Moreover, respective recommendations may be more difficult to translate into the political agendas and debates. Last but not least, a bottom-up initiated minipublic might also simply escape the attention of political authorities.

By contrast, when minipublics are initiated top-down, attention as well as trust in a deliberative minipublic is higher for political decision-makers. Here, at least some political actors or administrations must have seen citizen involvement as promising for their own agenda. Moreover, ignoring the recommendations put forth by the representative sample of citizens might backfire (see van Dijk and Lefevre 2022). Therefore, we expect that policy uptake is higher when minipublics are organized top-down. Existing empirical research points in this direction. Elstub et al. (2018), note: "Close ties to governmental or public administrative bodies in the set-up of the mini-public was the most crucial factor in determining impact, but provided no guarantee".

However, we should not overlook that political elites might also initiate participatory processes for the market-testing of policies (see Goodin and Dryzek 2006, 228). A minipublic then serves an "anticipatory" function (MacKenzie and Warren 2012) to find out how the public thinks about an issue when being informed about it (Parry and Ercan 2023). Yet, anticipation is about informing political elites about citizens´ considered opinions and may not conduce to concrete policy uptake. Nonetheless, we expect top-down initiated minipublics to have higher chances of uptake compared to bottom-up initiated minipublics.

Policy appraisal vs policy development. Bussu and Fleuß (2023) point out that for the distinction of bottom-up and top-down cases one should not only focus on the actors initiating a mini-

public, but also focus on *top-down* vs *bottom-up process design*. A bottom-up process design is characterized by the openness of the process (allowing the participants to influence the agenda and discuss topics more broadly) whereas a top-down process is characterized by predefined policy choices and is, therefore, more constricting. We focus here on the distinction between policy appraisal and policy development. As Cherry et al. (2021, 6) put it: "In a more open and bottom-up process, recommendations can be said to have been developed by citizens. In a more top-down and closed process, recommendations are developed by experts and appraised by citizens." One should note, however, that policy appraisal and development are not inclusively linked to top-down or bottom- up initiated of deliberative minipublics. Nevertheless, we expect that mere policy appraisal leads to higher policy uptake. Respective recommendations have high policy relevance (Cherry et al. 2021, 4) and do not challenge the political preferences of political elites. By contrast, when citizens formulate their own policy ideas, this may not match the preferences of political elites or generate "generic or unworkable outcomes" (Cherry et al. 2021, 4).

Size and Composition. We expect that recommendations produced by minipublics with larger size have higher chances of policy uptake, since this entails higher representativity of outcomes. Similarly, we expect that minipublics with mixed composition, i.e. co-creation or sustained dialogue of participating citizens with political actors are more likely to have political impact than minipublics where citizens only get input from policy-makers. In mixed-composition minipublics, policy makers may gain more understanding of citizens´ arguments and concerns, whereas citizens may also co-produce proposals that better match political and implementation constraints (see Lafont 2017). At the same time, participating politicians might also overcome their prejudices – such as citizen incompetence – and thus have more trust in the recommendations made by the minipublic (Harris et al. 2023, p. 164). Moreover, policy makers who participated in a deliberative forum might promote deliberative process and its recommendations to their party members and colleagues (see Farrell et al. 2021).

Political Context

Support from key political actors. Another key explanatory factor for minipublic uptake is support from key political actors. We expect support of political actors to affect the uptake of minipublic recommendations in a highly positive way. Existing research supports this conjecture. Font et al. (2018, 627f.) find that the internal support of politicians and public servants for a minipublic recommendation as the strongest predictor of its implementation. Notice, however, that Font et al. (2018) conceptualize support from key political actors at the level of the policy proposal. We want to broaden this conception and understand support of key political actors in a more encompassing way, including generic support before recommendations by the minipublic are formulated. An example here is the French Citizens' Convention for Climate (CCC) and president Macrons' general pledge to support it (see Giraudet et al. 2022, 3). Of course, one might object that political support quasi-automatically implies policy uptake. But as the French case underlines, Macron modified his support for specific recommendations of the CCC during the process. Moreover, one might expect that political support is strongly tied to top-down organization of minipublics. But that is not the case: the Spearman rank correlation is only -0.05,

showing that bottom-up cases also generate political support (even though we agree that the number of bottom-up cases in our databank is much lower than bottom-up cases, which may bias this finding). Hence, our broad and generic conception of political support makes it possible that political support is also generated for minipublic organized in bottom-up ways.

Finally, we also expect the "scope" of a minipublic, i.e. whether its policy scope is regional, national or Pan-European has impact on policy uptake. We expect that uptake is much more difficult at the national or transnational level, since actor conflictuality and complexity tends to be higher compared to the regional or local level).

Following our discussion in the introduction, our main interest is less on the individual factors, but whether a top-down or bottom-up road to minipublic success prevails. An extreme top-down road would entail initiation by the government, the legislature or the administration, enjoy the support of political elites, be limited policy appraisal (participating citizens can only assess predefined and existing proposals) and elites would be included in the minipublic proceedings. A more bottom-up pathway would entail bottom-up organization, allowance for policy development, non-interference of political authorities during the process and non-alignment with preferences of political elites.

A new data set

In order to empirically explore the expectations formulated above, we need new data that go beyond the existing data sets. As mentioned before, the OECD Database of Representative Deliberative Processes and Institutions and POLITCIZE dataset contain only top-down initiated cases and, therefore, do not allow comparisons with more bottom-up initiated cases. Therefore, we created a new data set based on the the Participedia platform (participedia.net). The Participedia project is "specifically designed to overcome selection bias", includes crowdsourcing and maps characteristics of cases globally (Spada and Ryan 2017, 776). Therefore, the Participedia platform is open to less successful and less well-known or studied cases (see Smith et al. 2015; Parry and Ercan 2023). Moreover, it enables filtering the cases of interest, which in our case are deliberative cases with (stratified) random selection.

The new databank comprises around 150 minipublic cases conducted at the national and regional level in Great Britain, Germany, France, Ireland, Italy, Denmark and Finland, as well as the European level in the period from 2000-2021. Ireland is included because it is a country with high frequency of deliberative minipublics (which are well documented too). Great Britain, in turn, has long experience with the use of deliberative minipublics (see Parkinson 2006). Germany and France are picked to include an important distinction in the literature on social movements the success of political outsiders, namely between open and closed political systems (Kriesi et al. 1995). In this regard, a politically more open system (such as Germany) with a more open electoral system, significant regional and local access points might produce different success rates compared to a "closed" system with a majoritarian electoral system, few regional and local access points and a very strong and highly professionalized administration such as France. We also focus on political trust levels, again expecting that high vs low trust levels affect minipublic success. Hereby, we focus, on the one hand, on Italy, a country with low levels

of political trust. On the other hand, we focus on Scandinavian countries which score high on political trust levels. More precisely, we include one Scandinavian country with a long history of deliberative minipublics (Denmark), as well as one in which deliberative minipublics are relatively new institutional innovations (Finland). We choose the time span from 2000 to 2020 because this period makes is it easier to obtain more reliable information compared to older cases. We also decided that the cases should at least have regional scope, since it is almost impossible to identify a comprehensive sample of local deliberative minipublic events (see Remer 2019) Besides using the information contained in the Participedia databank, we conducted an online observer survey to find additional information on cases with little information and/or to cross-check the information retrieved. While in most cases, we have reliable information from the *Participedia* platform on many variables, e.g., "*Country*", "*Scope of influence*", "*Initiative*", "*Size*", "*Format*", "*Composition*", information on political alignment and political impact is difficult to obtain. Thus, we decided to set up the observer survey in a way to obtain missing information on critical variables in a targeted manner via an online survey. In concrete, we asked experts to code the variables "*Changes in public policy*" and "*Support from key political actors*". Observers only code cases they know "well" or at least "a bit" and could specify the certainty with which they rated the respective cases. To further minimize selection bias, the experts were asked to name cases missing in our dataset for their region of expertise. In the following, we decided to use the data of the most critical observer for the analysis.

Operationalization and Methodology

Outcome Variable: Changes in Public Policy

Changes in public policy refers to the implementation of minipublic recommendations or outcomes. We use a broad definition of policy implementation, without going into detail at which particular stage of the implementation the cases are. What matter is there has been action taken by public authorities to follow the recommendations (see also Font et al. 2018, 624). We use this broad definition because implementation processes are complex and time-consuming (see also Caluwaerts and Reuchamps 2023).; it is generally difficult to foresee when recommendations are really put into effective policies. Applying a strict criterion of, we would bias implementation success in direction of older cases where the time span was longer to implement minipublic recommendations (we have also created a variable "timing" to account for such effects; see below). We agree that a "Sequential Impact Matrix" as proposed by Vrydagh (2022) would be ideal to assess minipublic success. However, this would require an in-depth analysis of each case and is hardly feasible for large n-studies as ours. Following Font et al. (2018) the "fate of the proposal" is captured by using an ordinal variable (p. 624), where "0" indicates "No implementation of recommendation", "1" indicates "Recommendation partly implemented", and "2" indicates "Recommendation fully implemented". However, a frequency distribution shows that only in 4 cases all of the recommendations are coded as "2". For the statistical analysis the dependent variable is therefore transformed into a dichotomous variable, where those cases that were partly or fully taken up are lumped into one category. The percentage of the cases where some or all recommendations are taken up by public authorities is 41,3% for our dataset. In a majority of the cases, however, recommendations are not implemented (58,8%). The number of observations is N=80 (out of 145).

Table 1: Frequencies of Implementation of Minipublic Recommendations

	N	*Raw %*	*Valid %*
No implementation of recommendation	47	32.41	58.75
Recommendation partly or fully implemented	33	23.76	41.25
Missing	65	43.83	-

Source: Own calculations.

By contrast, the OECD (2021) finds a very high success rate (89%) of minipublic recommendations in the context of 88 cases. Notice again that the OECD database only comprises minipublics which are organized top-down. Moreover, the database includes cases from 16 OECD countries (including local cases) between 1979 and 2021. We suspect that the OECD dataset might be biased towards successful cases (and involving cases that are too scattered over time, country and level to put us in a position to give a proper assessment of minipublic success). Given the critical observations of many observers and even minipublic advocates regarding the policy consequentality of minipublics (Setälä and Smith 2018), our success rate (24%) seems more reasonable.

Predictor Variables: Issue Type, Process Design, Political Context and Timing

Issue Type. We distinguish between salient vs less salient and between technical vs symbolic cases. To do so, we created two dichotomous variables. The first captures issue salience and is coded (1) for cases with rather high salience and (0) for cases with lower salience. The second variable distinguishes between (1) technical issue and (0) for symbolic issues (or cases that fit both categories).

Process Design. First, in order to capture who initiated the deliberative minipublic, we created a variable "Initiative/Agenda Setting". For every case we coded if it was (mainly) the (1) Executive/Legislature (2) Administration, (3) an NGO, (4) citizens, or (5) a mixture of a top-down and a bottom-up actor who initiated the minipublic. Initiation by the executive, legislature and/or the administration are coded as "top-down" (1); initiation by a mix of the executive/legislature/administration and an "NGO" is coded as "rather top-down" (2); initiation by an "NGOs" and the executive/legislature/administration is coded as "rather bottom-up" (3); and initiation by an "NGO" or citizens is coded as "bottom-up" (4). We recognize that the agenda setting process can be affected by different actors and that it is not always apparent who originally initiated a minipublic. We still claim argue that the sole act of "top-down" initiation sets these cases apart from bottom-up cases as they are "invited" by the political elites and that it is important to control for this effect. Second, we focus on "size", which distinguishes between small, medium and large-sized minipublics. Third, we consider the "composition" of minipublics. We distinguish between minipublics involving citizens only who just receive input from policy makers, experts and/or stakeholders and minipublics where citizens and policy makers co-create recommendations. Fourth, regarding the minipublic format, we distinguish

between (1) face-to-face, (2) mixed, and (3) online formats. Finally, authorization is captured with a variable differentiating what a minipublic is authorized to do: (1) Informed opinion, (2) Recommendation, (3) Recommendation with Referendum, and (4) Binding Decision.

Political Context. To analyse the support from key political actors the data from the observer survey is used and the variable is coded as follows: (0) No support, (1) Diffuse and unclear support, (2) Partial support, and (3) Full support. This variable was difficult to assess; we therefore strongly rely upon the assessments by knowledgeable observers. However, when they disagreed, we always took the more conservative assessment for the analysis.

Scope of influence. We differentiate between cases with different regional scope: (1) subnational scope (2) national scope (3) European-wide or multinational scope. For the "European" cases to qualify as having multinational or Europe-wide scope, it does not actually need citizens from across Europe being involved according to our definition. The deliberative event can also happen in different European states or involve citizens from different member states. Therefore, the code also applies to cases such as the "Bürgerforum Europa" (Citizens' Forum Europe), being held in one country but targeting European issues like the future of Europe in this case.

Timing. To control for the possibility that the recommendations of minipublics at a later point of time in the data set have less time to be picked up by political actors, we use respective start year of a minipublic case as a control variable.

Table 2: Overview of Predictors of Policy Uptake

	Variables	***Operationalization***	***Mean (standard deviation)***
Issue Type	Salience	(0) Less salient (1) More salient	0.39 (0.49)
	Technical (vs Symbolic)	(0) Symbolic (1) Technical	0.70 (0.46)
Process Design	Initiative/ Agenda Setting Categorized	(1) Top Down (2) Rather Top Down (3) Rather Bottom Up (4) Bottom Up	1.32 (0.67)
	Purpose	(1) Policy appraisal (members assess pre-existing proposals) (1.5) (2) Policy development (members write own proposals)	1.54 (0.43)
	Size Categorized	(1) Small (>50); (2) Medium (50-200); (3) Large (<200)	1.80 (0.72)
	Composition	(1) Citizens only (only input from experts, policy makers and stakeholders) (2) Mixed (cocreation or sustained dialogue with political actors)	1.13 (0.33)
	Format	(1) Face-to-face (2) Mixed	1.30 (0.56)

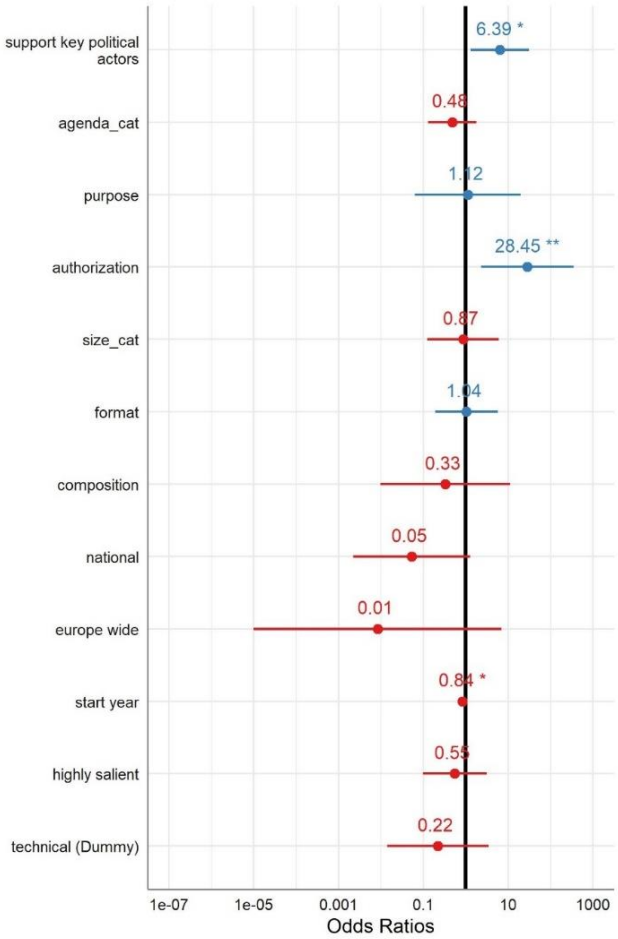
		(3) Online	
	Authorization	(1) Informed opinion (2) Recommendation (3) Recommendation with Referendum (4) Binding Decision	1.71 (0.52)
Political Context	Support From Key Political Actors	(0) No Support (1) Diffuse and unclear support (2) Partial support (3) Full support	1.60 (0.89)
	Scope of influence	(1) Subnational region (2) National (3) Multinational (Europe-Wide)	1.79 (0.54)
Timing	Start Year	Numerical with values between 2000 and 2020	2012.61 (5.70)

Statistical Analysis. As our deliberative dataset involves a hierarchical structure with the minipublic cases nested in different countries, the standard errors of the regression coefficients can be distorted when using statistical methods that do not take the hierarchical data structure into account (Steenbergen forthcoming, p. 1). The intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) for our data is 0,202 which means that 20% of the chances of minipublic recommendation uptake can be explained by between-country differences (see Sommet and Morselli 2017: 212). We also applied grand-mean centering (on (quasi-)metric predictor variables (Sommet and Morselli 2017; see also Hox et al. 2018). To account for the dichotomous dependent variable, we run multilevel logistic regression models with countries as the level-2 units.

Results

The multilevel logistic regression provides some straightforward results (see figure 1).

Figure 1: Multilevel Logistic Regression Model ~ Changes in Public Policy



95 percent confidence intervals.
N = 62

First, in contrast to our expectations, the issue type (highly salient vs less salient issues as well as technical vs symbolic issues) does not matter for the implementation of minipublic recommendation. We expected that less salient and symbolic issues would have higher chances for being implemented. The substantive effects slightly go in the expected directions, but they fail to reach statistical significance. Second, conforming to our expectations, political support has a clear positive effect on the implementation of minipublic recommendations (see figure 1). When the support from key political actors increases by one unit, it is 6.4 times more likely that (some) recommendations by a respective deliberative minipublic are implemented. Figure 2 shows that if there is full support from key political actors, the predicted probability that (some) recommendations are implemented is over 80%. Second, and also in accordance with our expectations, "authorization", i.e. whether a minipublic produces informed opinion only or whether it makes recommendations (with different stages of political bite) has a positive effect on the implementation of minipublic recommendations as well. Increasing the authority variable by one standard deviation makes it 28 times more likely for changes in public policy to occur. This effect might look trivial at first glance since one might think that only

recommendation can produce policy uptake. But this is not the case, and there are several cases where informed opinion led changes in public policy. Third, the bottom-up initiation of a deliberative minipublic has a negative and marginally significant effect (p=0.06) on the chances that minipublic recommendations are implemented. Fourth, the distinction between policy appraisal and policy development does not yield any discernible effect on the implementation of minipublic recommendation. We expected that cases with policy appraisal only would have a higher chance of being taken up. Fifth, process design - size, format and especially composition of minipublic - does not matter for implementation either: neither format, size or composition yield a discernible effect on chances that minipublic recommendations are implemented. While we did not formulate strong expectations for size and format, we expected that mixed compositions – involving citizens and political authorities – would facilitate implementation. Sixth, we find that national and the European-wide cases produce slightly less implementation of minipublic recommendations compared to regional cases, but the effect is not statistically significant. Finally, "timing" also matters: minipublic cases at a later time point in our data set have a slightly lower chance that their recommendations are implemented. In other words, minipublic success is also a question of time, with less recent cases having higher implementation success.

Figure 2: Predicted Probabilities Changes in Public Policy (mpad) and Support from Key Political Actors (mco_support)

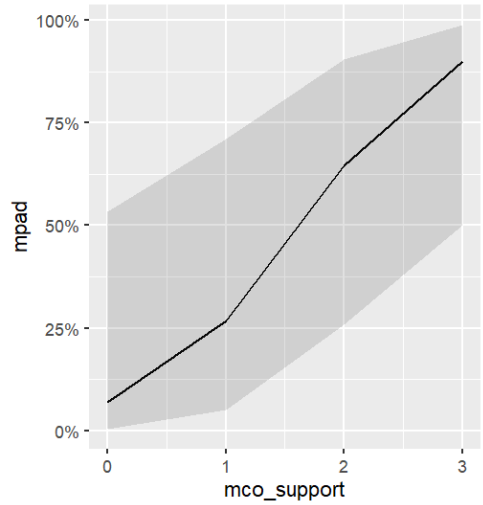
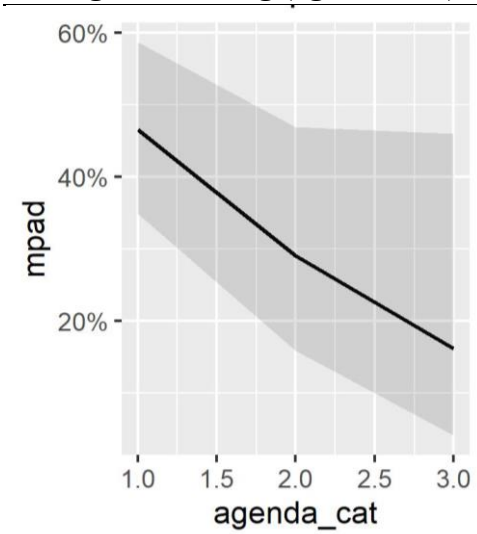


Figure 3: Predicted Probabilities Changes in Public Policy (mpad) and Initiative/Agenda Setting (agenda_cat)



Short Discussion

Taken together, our results point in direction of a top-down road to minipublic success. In short, if a minipublic has support from political actors and is initiated top down, then the chances that minipublic recommendations are implemented are considerably higher. By contrast, if a minipublic is organized bottom-up and does not align with the preferences of political elites, policy uptake does barely happen. But there are two intriguing deviations from an extreme top-down process: implementation is not dependent on whether a minipublic is limited to policy appraisal

nor does it matter whether political authorities are involved in the political process. The latter finding is particularly interesting in the context of the fairly heated debate whether minipublic processes should be shielded from political influence or whether direct involvement of political actors is necessary to generate political impact. Our findings support neither claim. In sum, Bussu and Fleuß 2023) may be correct that the real world of minipublic uptake may lie somewhere between top-down and bottom-up roads, even though our findings point in the former direction. Put differently, minipublics with bite must trade-off (albeit not fully) with more participatory and emancipatory democratic aspirations. Again, the fact that policy development within minipublics does not seem to hinder subsequent implementation is a promising democratic aspect, contradicting skeptics arguing that minipublics are only deployed to legitimize decisions that have already been taken by political elites. Moreover, our results also carry important lessons for minipublic organizers. To date, much of the debate about minipublics is about its proper setup, including questions of format, size or composition. But these formal design components do not seem to play any role when it comes to minipublic consequentiality. This surprising result is also backed by a study on the success of mediation processes, finding that diverse mediator techniques – even though they constitute the backbone of the mediation business - do not affect respective outcomes (Itten 2017). Of course, minipublic design may be crucial for other desired goods (such as high-quality deliberation within minipublics), but it does not seem to be instrumental for its policy success. To end, minipublic success is - perhaps non-surprising for many – largely a product of political engineering and political support. There is no political magic that overrides ´politics´, even in the context of an institutional innovation that many deem a democratic crown.

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