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STATSVETENSKAPLIGA FÖRENINGEN  
FINNISH POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

## 10. Changing patterns of political participation: Sustaining Democracy in Finland?

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**Työryhmän kuvaus:** Patterns of political participation are changing in Western democracies, where a decline in traditional forms of participation accompanies an increase in new forms of non-institutionalized and bottom-up political activities. At the same time, several democracies have introduced so-called democratic innovations at both the local and state levels. By enabling greater citizen involvement between elections through officially sanctioned channels, the hope is to rekindle citizens' belief in the political system and thereby increase democratic legitimacy.

While this pattern can be observed in most representative democracies, the implications are still far from certain. Some argue that the changes are signs of responsibility-taking on behalf of citizens and the arrival of a new democratic ideal. Contrary to this, others contend that the changes show that citizens do not comprehend how democratic politics function and that the new forms of participation do not adequately empower citizens in political decision-making. It is also unclear who take part in the different forms of participation. In particular, it is unclear whether the new forms of participation mobilize new segments of the population in the democratic process or mainly offer new channels for those who are already politically active.

In this workshop, we invite contributions that examine these developments empirically or theoretically in a Finnish context. The working language of the workshop will be English, but the papers may be in Swedish and Finnish as well.

## **Abstraktit:**

### **Citizen involvement in building sustainable futures**

In recent years, there has been a trend showing declining interest of citizen participation in traditional forms of democracy in many European countries. There has, thus, emerged a call for new forms of bottom-up activities that utilize direct citizen engagement in formulation of advice to policy makers. The European CASI project has involved citizens in influencing future research policy in a response to the European Commissions Horizon 2020 challenge on climate action, environment, resource efficiency and raw materials. In the project, citizens in 12 countries envisioned sustainable futures, which experts in the field developed into research priorities. These priorities were then evaluated by the citizens that were involved in the vision building. It turned out that the citizens evaluated the priorities very differently from the experts. We shall first review differences in citizen and expert evaluations of the most important research priorities for sustainable futures. Secondly, we look at how Finnish citizen evaluations correspond to both expert evaluations and the overall European evaluation of the citizens. This analysis helps position Finnish citizen evaluations of research priorities for sustainable futures in a European perspective. Kaisa Matschoss, Petteri Repo, Minna Kaarakainen, University of Helsinki

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### **Interest groups and online consultations in Finland**

Online consultations, e.g. online discussions and online surveys, are increasingly used by public administrations to engage interest groups and citizens in policy making. In Finland, interest groups and other actors can, for instance, participate in policy making via online discussions and surveys at Otakantaa.fi web site. Our presentation analyzes interest groups participation in and perceptions of online consultations. Data comes from a survey of Finnish interest groups (November 2015 - February 2016). First, we describe how often interest groups participate in online consultations and how important they are for them. Second, we compare the use and importance of online consultations to more traditional strategies of interest group influence (e.g. direct contacts to civil servants) and to new bottom-up social media strategies. Third, we describe how interest groups evaluate the Otakantaa.fi web site. Finally, we present the first steps in analyzing whether online consultations are weapons of the weak (cf. Van Der Graaf et al. 2015) that may enhance the influence and access of relatively weak interest groups. This is done by analyzing whether groups resources and privileged position (see Binderkrantz 2005) is related to the use and perceived importance of online consultations.

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## **Demokraattisen kansalaissubjektin tuottaminen suomalaisen kansalaisaloitteen suunnittelussa ja soveltamisessa**

Kansalainen on demokratian kannalta välttämätön toimija. Tutkimuksessa kiinnitetään huomiota siihen, että kansalainen, kuten mikä tahansa muukin sosiaalinen konstruktio, on aina tuotettu sosiaalisessa kanssakäymisessä (Cruikshank 1999). Subjektin tuottaminen on vallankäyttöä, jossa pyritään määrittelemään, millaista käyttäytymistä siltä odotetaan ja mikä puolestaan problematisoidaan ja pyritään oikaisemaan (Kaisto ja Pyykkönen 2010). Kansalaisuus ei ole vapautta vallanalaisuudesta tai vallanalaisuutta, vaan yhtä aikaa molempia (Foucault 2000). Viimeisimmän perustuslain muutoksen yhteydessä demokratian vahvistaminen nousi yhdeksi teemaksi. Merkittävimäksi kansalaiseen suoraan liittyväksi toimenpiteeksi valikoitu sisällöllinen kansalaisaloite. Artikkelissa ensimmäisessä osassa tarkastellaan, millaista kansalaista kansalaisaloitetta valmistelemissa valtiollisissa asiakirjoissa tuotetaan ja miten. Toisessa osiossa esitetään samat kysymykset eduskunta-aineistoille kansanedustajien käsitellessä ensimmäisiä eduskuntaan saapuneita kansalaisaloitteita vuosina 2013-2015. Näitä vertailemalla voidaan havaita yhtäläisyyksiä ja eroja kansalaissubjektin tuottamisessa kansalaisaloiteinstituutiota valmistelevässä vaiheessa ja toisaalta käytännön soveltamisvaiheessa. Käytännössä kysytään esimerkiksi, millaisia nimiä kansalaissubjektille annetaan, mitä kansalaissubjekti tekee ja millaisia määreitä joko subjektille tai sen tekemiselle annetaan. Saarinen et al (2014) ovat esittäneet, että kansalaissubjektin ihanne on muuttunut kohti aktiivista yksilöä, jonka vastinparina esiintyy patologinen ja syrjäytynyt kansalainen. Alustavan tarkastelun mukaan aktiivisen kansalaisen ihanne on aineistossa vallitseva. Varsinaisessa analyysissä eritellään tätä tarkemmin ja keskusteluosiossa pohditaan, mikä on kansalaisten omien vastatulkintojen mahdollisuus ja mielekkyys (ks. esim. Rosanvallon 2009, Saastamoinen 2010).

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## **Leder demokratiska samtal med likasinnade till extrema åsikter?**

När likasinnade diskuterar med varandra tenderar deras åsikter att bli mer extrema. På internet och i sociala medier kan vi fritt välja vem vi samtalar med och människor tenderar att söka sig till likasinnade och undvika konflikter i politiska samtal. Dyliga samtal kan på sikt leda till en polarisering av samhällsklimatet då deltagarna i diskussionen stöder varandras initiala åsikt utan att höra avvikande åsikter. När olika åsikter inte finns representerade uppmuntras medborgarna inte att reflektera och överväga sina åsikter. Samtalsregler och facilitator verkar kunna förhindra denna åsiktpolarisering, men det saknas studier där dessa faktorer kan analyseras systematiskt. Vi använder experimentell data från en medborgardiskussion där 216 slumpmässigt valda medborgare diskuterar det svenska språkets ställning i Finland. Experimentets syfte var att jämföra deliberationens effekter i två typer av likasinnade grupper: 1) deliberation med facilitator och samtalsregler och 2) fri diskussion. Denna studie bidrar till att öka kunskapen om hur diskussioner där endast likasinnade ingår kunde användas som en metod för att öka det politiska deltagandet - utan att åsikterna blir mer extrema som en konsekvens av begränsad argumentanvändning och ensidig information. Studien klargör också hur åsikterna om svenska språkets ställning i Finland påverkas av att delta i demokratiska samtal.

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## **The Finnish Citizens' Initiative as a New Form of Participation**

The Finnish Citizens' Initiative (CI) was adopted in 2012 as part of the Constitutional reform. It provides 50 000 Finnish citizens a new instruments to influence political decision making and it also shapes the work of elected representatives in significant ways. As for any new democratic institution, it is important to study the use of and attitudes towards the CI systematically from early on, in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of its potential as an instrument of political participation. To this end, we examine the early experiences with the CI in Finland. This includes an overview of the use of the CI and how citizens feel the CI has affected the state of democracy in Finland. Furthermore, we examine the use of the CI to determine whether the CI mobilizes groups of citizens otherwise inactive in political matters. The data for the study comes from the Finnish National Election Study following the national elections in 2015 (FNES2015).

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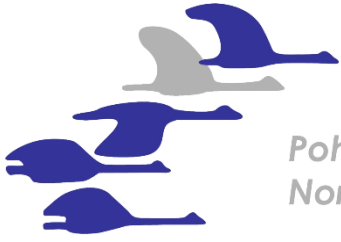
## **Supra-nationals can't jump? A comparison of effectiveness between the European- and national-level citizens' initiative**

European citizen's initiative (ECI), applicable since March 2012, has proven to be almost a downright disappointment, at least in terms of effectiveness. The main source of dissatisfaction relates to the role Commission, which has next-to monopoly both in examining the initiatives and deciding whether to propose legislation as a result. It has even been argued that the broad discretion exercised by the Commission, together with the complexity and bureaucracy embedded in the initiative system, have made the expectations of participatory democracy flat. However, experiences from the national level seem considerably more reassuring. In this study, we systematically assess the effectiveness of ECI vis-à-vis Finnish citizens' initiative. Implemented exactly the same day, citizens' initiative institution has quickly become a vital part of Finnish parliamentary democracy. Hence we ask: what are the main institutional and procedural differences between these two initiative systems? Consisting of three parts, namely input, decision-making process and output, our analysis provides concrete recommendations for increasing the approachability and applicability of citizens' initiative at the European level.

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