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Invited but not Selected: The  
Perceptions of a Mini-Public by  
Randomly Invited – but not  
Selected – Citizens

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## Abstract

Random sampling offers an equal chance to all citizens to be randomly invited to a deliberative mini-public. However, a large number of randomly invited citizens usually refuses to participate, which is why larger sample has to be drawn to obtain enough positive responses to compose the mini-public. Then, a second random sampling is operated among the people who accepted to participate, usually along quotas reflecting the population at large. This paper seeks to investigate those people who were randomly invited but finally not selected to participate the citizen panel “Make your Brussels Mobility”. On the first stage, 8000 residents of Brussels were randomly invited. Among them, 377 accepted to participate. On the second stage, 40 citizens were randomly selected to compose the panel. Our paper builds on a survey sent to the 336 citizens who were finally not selected to participate and studies their perceptions of the legitimacy of the citizen panel.

## Keywords

participation, deliberation, random selection, (non)participants

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## Introduction

Deliberative mini-publics are mushrooming both among academics and among policy makers. These small-scale face-to-face citizen assemblies are typically designed to test whether citizen deliberation can live up to the deliberative principles of inclusiveness, respect, publicity, and rationality. As critical tests of deliberative theory, these deliberative mini-publics usually do not involve many people, and they are often insulated from real-world politics to prevent them from being subject to outside pressures. This has led some authors to criticize mini-publics, as being disconnected from mass democracy (Chambers, 2009; Lafont, 2015; Papadopoulos & Warin, 2007; Parkinson, 2006).

Some authors have begun to circumvent this shortcoming by envisioning a role for mini-publics in connection with the broader public and political decision-makers, that is, in a larger deliberative system (Mansbridge et al., 2012). According to this systemic approach, mini-publics hold potential to improve the quality of deliberation at a systemic level. In order to do so, the rest of the population must first be aware of its existence in order to subsequently endorse it. Whereas scholars have examined the degree of awareness of a mini-public in the population (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2018; Fournier, van der Kolk, Carty, Blais, & Rose, 2011; Jacquet, Moskovic, Caluwaerts, & Reuchamps, 2016), no research has investigated whether citizens that are aware of the mini-public also perceive it as legitimate.

Even though mini-publics can only be considered legitimate if they are somehow endorsed by the wider public, they usually fail to reach awareness among the general population. One of the possible links in connecting the mini-public to the general public consists of a particular group of people who were (1) obviously aware of the process, but (2) did not take part. Since mini-public organizers usually oversample the group of potential deliberators, there is inevitably a group of potential participants that signed up to deliberate, but eventually did not get chosen. It is this largely invisible group of willing but not selected citizens that is at the core of this paper. It therefore seeks to fill a gap in the existing literature by investigating the links between the citizens' awareness of the mini-publics and their perception of its legitimacy. More specifically, we focus on a group of 336 people who accepted to participate in the citizen panel "Make Your Brussels Mobility" but were eventually not among the 40 selected to participate in the panel. Based on survey results among 209 out of the 336 randomly not-selected, we aim to investigate whether these people that were aware of the citizens' panel also followed its work and how their awareness correlates with the way they perceive the panel's legitimacy.

This paper starts with introducing mini-publics as parts of a broader deliberative system before conceptualizing the assessment of legitimacy. In this framework, we describe the case under study, the citizen panel “Make Your Brussels Mobility”, as well as its participants and the respondents to our survey. The results are then presented and discussed along the three dimensions of legitimacy: input, throughput and output.

### **Mini-Publics as Parts of a Broader Deliberative System**

In reaction to the perceived crisis of representative democracy, politicians, parliaments and governments have started to invest in so-called “democratic innovations” to rebuild their legitimacy. These innovations are typically new political spaces designed to involve lay citizens in public decisions, outside traditional political arenas such as political parties or parliaments (Smith, 2009).

One of the most commonly used forms of democratic innovations are “mini-publics” (Grönlund, Bächtiger, & Setälä, 2014). These are typically gatherings of small people deliberating on a particular subject for one or several days in order to formulate policy proposals. Mini-publics’ goals are to foster inclusive, respectful and informed exchanges of diverging and reasoned arguments (Habermas, 1996; Steiner, Bächtiger, Spörndli, & Steenbergen, 2004) and they should therefore be “small enough to be genuinely deliberative, and representative enough to be genuinely democratic” (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006, p. 220).

However, herein lies its main challenge: in modern mass democracies, it is impossible for the entire population to partake in the deliberation (Dryzek, 2001). One of the solutions to this problem is to draw a random sample of the broader population to constitute the mini-public (Fishkin, 2009; Ryan & Smith, 2014). This preference is based on two arguments. First, random sampling gives all the potentially affected an equal chance to be selected into the mini-public (Dahl, 1989). Second, random selection could – at least theoretically – reach traditionally excluded groups (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2012; Fung & Wright, 2003). The resulting diversity is crucial to fuel the deliberation with diverging opinions and perceptions of the topic under discussion (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2014). Research has demonstrated that it is only under the presence of different or even opposed views that participants are the most able to formulate reasoned and qualitative arguments and come to understand each other points of view (Luskin, Fishkin, & Jowell, 2002).

Based on these alleged virtues, scholars and practitioners of deliberative democracy have advocated randomly selected deliberative forums as isolated sites to try to cure the

democratic malaise (Grönlund et al., 2014). However, since the emergence of the “systemic approach”, mini-publics are no longer viewed as isolated sites anymore (Hendriks, 2016; Mansbridge et al., 2012). Their virtues have to be assessed not only on their internal features (deliberation and inclusiveness) and their direct impact on public policy, but also on their contribution to the deliberation at the system level (Curato & Böker, 2016).

Scholars argue that a mini-public can improve the quality of deliberation in the broad public sphere by distilling and synthesizing relevant discourses to the rest of the population (Felicetti, Niemeyer, & Curato, 2016; Niemeyer, 2014). While the public debate is affected by the spread of fake news and polarizing discourses, mini-publics arguably hold the potential to supply nuanced and elaborated arguments to the wider public. According to Mackenzie and Warren (2012), mini-publics could become a “trusted information proxy”, that citizens could use to position themselves on an issue. It functions as a shortcut to determine their position, much like party affiliation or expert reports. Such trust-based mini-publics would provide the broader public with guidance when they stem from the deliberation of informed and disinterested citizens and their recommendations are perceived as highly consensual (MacKenzie & Warren, 2012).

A few empirical studies have nonetheless demonstrated that mini-publics can affect the broader population. Ingham and Levin (Ingham & Levin, 2018) conducted a survey experiment showing that citizens change their political judgement if a policy proposal is supported by a mini-public. Moreover, Gastil et al.’s (2018) work on the citizens’ reviews in Oregon shows how this mini-public succeeded in changing the public’s vote choice. A final empirical study also shows that the mere awareness of the mini-public’s existence can increase the broader public’s external efficacy (Knobloch, Barthel, & Gastil, 2019).

However, this enriching function depends on two conditions. First, the broader population must be aware of the mini-public’s existence. Second, the public must perceive the mini-public as legitimate in order to listen to its arguments and eventually follow them. On the latter, Curato and Böker (2016) assert that mini-publics have an imperative of seeking legitimacy from the maxi-public as it conditions its meaningful relationship with the deliberative system. Only if the mini-public’s recommendations can be justified to and endorsed by the wider public, can they claim to have any legitimacy to influence public decisions (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2015).

On the former, studies have shown that the broader public is not aware of the existence of ongoing deliberative mini-publics (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2018; Fournier, Van der Kolk,

Carty, Blais, & Rose, 2011). Moreover, the few existing empirical studies suffer from a generalization issue, as they either conducted an experiment in which they artificially provided information about the mini-public (Ingham & Levin, 2018) or they focused on an institutionalized mini-public, which therefore enjoys a particular visibility among the broader population (Gastil et al., 2018). However, the large majority of mini-publics consists of one-shot ad hoc mechanisms from which the broader population receives has not heard of.

Furthermore, research tends to assimilate the awareness of the mini-public's existence with the awareness of the mini-public's process and output. Yet, these are two different things. When studying the relation between awareness and legitimacy, it is important to distinguish between the people who know about the mini-public's existence from the people who follow its work, with the latter being a subset of the former. Indeed, we can expect that the people aware of the mini-public's process and output are more likely to perceive it as legitimate, because they know that its outcome is the results of free and reasoned arguments among equals (Cohen, 1989). However, little is known about the people that are just aware of the mini-public's existence, and how they relate to its work and perceive its legitimacy.

This paper intends to fill this gap as it investigates the links between the citizens' awareness of the mini-publics and their perception of its legitimacy. It focuses on a specific group of citizens that was randomly selected in a first time but left out of the second sampling with stratified random selection. These citizens are aware of the mini-public because they agree to participate, yet they were not selected in the end. This group is interesting to study the link between the mini- and maxi-public because it gives further insight into a possible correlation between the awareness of a mini-public and its endorsement by the broader population. Indeed, this specific citizens' group is aware of the existence of the mini-public. However, do these citizens also keep an eye on the mini-publics' work? And how does the awareness relate to way these people perceive the mini-public's legitimacy? By answering these questions, this paper intends to examine the potential of broadening the size of the first random sampling in order to increase the population's awareness of the mini-public and therewith its endorsement by the broader population.

### **Assessing the Legitimacies of Mini-Publics**

The paper's main idea is to study the link between the awareness of a mini-public and the perception of its legitimacy. We stress the distinction between the awareness of the mini-public's existence and the awareness of the mini-public's work, where the latter refers to mini-

public's deliberative process and policy recommendations. Regarding the legitimacy, we rely on the assumption that "outcomes are democratically legitimate if and only if they could be the object of free and reasoned argument among equals" (Cohen, 1989, p. 22). In other words, a mini-public is legitimate when its outcome results from unconstrained deliberation in which the opinions and needs of ordinary citizens are included. Three dimensions of legitimacy are here intertwined: the input, throughput and output dimensions (Bekkers & Edwards, 2007; Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2015). This approach to legitimacy is tailored to examine the legitimacy of democratic practices, and has been applied in several empirical studies (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2016; Edwards, 2007; Geissel, 2011; Geissel & Gherghina, 2016; Reuchamps & Suiter, 2016). Following this theoretical framework, we investigate how the awareness of the mini-public's existence relates to their perception of these three dimensions of legitimacy that can be summarized as follows.

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

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

Third, output legitimacy, as understood here, rests on two elements (Jacquet et al., 2016). On the one hand, it has to generate the public endorsement of its results. On the other hand, it has to show responsiveness and accountability, that is, the results it produces have to provide an answer to the problem that was initially identified.

### **The citizen panel “Make Your Brussels Mobility”**

In June 2017, the Parliament of the Brussels Capital Region in Belgium decided to organize a citizen panel about mobility issues in and around Brussels. This “Make Your Brussels Mobility” panel<sup>1</sup> took place in 2017 within the framework of the new “Good Move” mobility plan of the region. The project shows that the Parliament and more particularly its president was willing to allow a panel made of 40 randomly selected citizens not only to gain awareness on the region’s mobility plans, but actually give citizens a word on such an important topic.

First, the citizen panel was invited to reflect upon the following questions: “In what kind of neighborhood do you see yourself living by 2030, and how do you want to travel?”. Together, the participants decided to dig deeper into 5 subtopics: communication, how to share the public space, the “Mobility” card<sup>2</sup>, mobility policies and how to ease the city’s traffic. The citizen panel met four times inside the walls of the Brussels Parliament, on 21 and 28 October (only in the morning) and on 18 and 19 November (the whole day). All the deliberations of the panel were moderated by trained facilitators and went from small-group discussion to plenary sessions, sometimes also involving the insights of experts or field actors. Several votes structured the deliberations in order to reach demands and practical recommendations, which were then submitted to the approval of the whole group of panelists.

At the end of its four meetings, the panel submitted to the Parliament a “citizen resolution”<sup>3</sup> containing a list of demands and recommendations around the five sub-topics cited here above. The citizen resolution was handed over to a special parliamentary commission in December 2017, which adopted a parliamentary resolution supporting the citizen resolution and asking the regional parliament to consider it<sup>4</sup>. The minister of Mobility was subsequently invited to the parliament to discuss the citizen resolution. Finally, in April 2019, the government’s mobility plan was adopted in the first lecture by the parliament and is being now implemented.

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<sup>1</sup> The Brussels Parliament dedicated a page of its website to this citizen panel: [http://www.parlement.brussels/panel\\_citoyen\\_fr/](http://www.parlement.brussels/panel_citoyen_fr/) (last accessed on 23 October 2019).

<sup>2</sup> The mobility card is the card that is used in Brussels for public transportation.

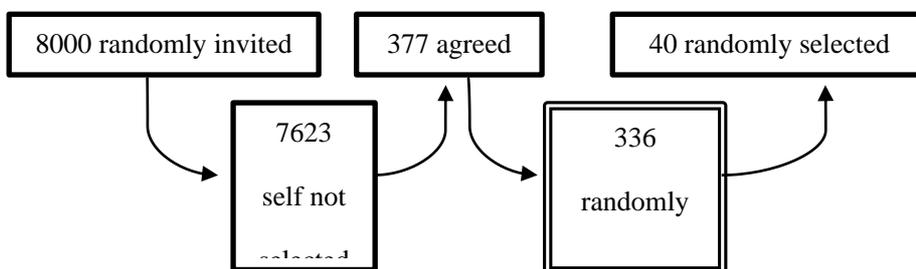
<sup>3</sup> The content of the Citizen resolution is available on the website of the Parliament: [http://www.parlement.brussels/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Résolution-citoyenne-191117\\_FR.pdf](http://www.parlement.brussels/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Résolution-citoyenne-191117_FR.pdf) (last accessed on 23 October 2019).

<sup>4</sup> The resolution of the special committee can be found here : <http://www.weblex.irisnet.be/data/crb/doc/2017-18/134912/images.pdf> (accessed on October 30 2018).

### The participants to the citizen panel and the respondents to our survey

The recruitment process started with 8,000 people living in the Brussels Region who were randomly selected (see Figure 1) and invited by an official letter from the President of the Brussels Parliament. They then had to communicate their willingness to participate in the event to its organizer: an organization called “Participation and Citizenship” (PartiCitiz). Among these 8,000 randomly selected people, 377 answered positively. This 5% response rate approximately equals the rates we usually find for other participatory experiences organized in Belgium (Jacquet, 2017, 2019; Reuchamps, 2011, 2013).

**Figure 1: The recruitment process**



Note: This paper focuses on the 336 randomly not selected citizens.

To select the 40 participants of the panel, a second random sampling was performed. In order to reach a panel representing the diversity of the Brussels population, a stratified random sampling was used. This means that it accounted for several criteria such as gender, age, level of education, professional background, composition of the family, nationality, mode of transport and municipality. The respondents (209) to our survey are drawn from the 336 randomly not selected among the first-stage sample of 377 people. They were thus willing to participate but were not selected to be in the 40 people who made the citizen panel. Tables 1 to 3 show the socio-demographics of these different groups, compared to the general population in Brussels.

**Table 1: Samples disaggregated by gender**

Gender	Men	Women	Total
Brussels' population	586,625 (48.9%)	612,101 (51.1%)	1,198,726
Self-selected drawn from 1 <sup>st</sup> stage random sampling	202 (53.6%)	175 (46.4%)	377
Participants drawn from 2 <sup>nd</sup> stage random sampling	21 (52.5%)	19 (47.5%)	40
Respondents to our survey	104 (50.5%)	102 (49.5%)	206

$\chi^2 (1, n=246) = .003$ , N.S. between the three samples

**Table 2: Samples disaggregated by age groups**

Age	17-24	25-34	35-50	51-65	66+	Total
Brussels' population	108,352 (11.7%)	204,444 (22.0%)	267,194 (28.7%)	192,057 (20.7%)	157,682 (17.0%)	929,729
Self-selected drawn from 1 <sup>st</sup> stage random sampling	9 (2.4%)	31 (8.2%)	118 (31.3%)	130 (34.5%)	89 (23.6%)	377
Participants drawn from 2 <sup>nd</sup> stage random sampling	5 (12.5%)	10 (25.0%)	12 (30.0%)	6 (15.0%)	7 (17.5%)	40
Respondents to our survey	0 (0.0%)	12 (8.9%)	56 (27.4%)	80 (39.2%)	56 (27.4%)	204

$\chi^2 (4, n=246) = 39,658$ ,  $p < .001$  between the three samples

**Table 3: Samples disaggregated by educational attainment**

Education	Primary	Secondary	Higher	Total
Brussels' population	348,181 (36.8%)	255,389 (27.0%)	342,689 (36.2%)	946,259
Self-selected drawn from 1 <sup>st</sup> stage random sampling	9 (2.4%)	70 (18.6%)	298 (79.0%)	377
Participants drawn from 2 <sup>nd</sup> stage random sampling	5 (12.5%)	20 (50.0%)	15 (37.5%)	40
Respondents to our survey	1 (3.8%)	24 (11.6%)	181 (87.9%)	206

$\chi^2 (2, n=246) = 52,490$ ,  $p < .001$  between the three samples

In terms of gender, all three groups fare relatively well, with the self-selected from the first random selection the most biased with 53.6% men, versus 48.9% in the general population. Interestingly, the respondents to our survey are the group coming closer to parity between men and women, which is good for the quality of this sample on this indicator. However, although it is well-balanced in terms of gender, the respondents show a clear and significant over-representation of highly educated and older people. Both over-representations are a consequence of a bias among the larger group of the 377 self-selected. Indeed, even if random sampling enables to reach a diverse group of people, there is no obligation for them to accept the invitation. We can see this trend here, too, with younger and less educated people less likely to participate.

This is why to compose the final panel, the organizers proceeded to a second stage of random sampling, in order to gather a diverse group of citizens, which they achieved to reach as we can see from the data. The first two findings of this paper are thus the confirmation of the need to combine random sampling with stratification and the peculiar nature of those who respond positively to an invitation sent through random sampling. The following question is therefore twofold: how these people perceive themselves and how they perceive the citizen panel despite they were not finally selected to be part of it.

### **Self-perception of the randomly not selected**

The respondents to our survey who are part of the 336 people who were randomly not selected for the citizen panel not only differ in terms of education and age but also in their self-perception. There is a strong feeling of self-confidence in their knowledge about political issues and mobility in particular. Indeed, 81.4% of the respondents claim they understand pretty well the mobility issues Brussels is confronted with. Also, 59.3% of them consider that they are better informed about the government and societal issues.

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

**Table 4: Internal political efficacy of the randomly not selected**

	Disagree	Don't know/median option	Agree
I think I am better informed about societal issues and politics than most of the people	20.6% (43)	20.1% (42)	59.3% (124)
I think I understand pretty well the mobility issues Brussels is confronted with	10.5% (22)	8.1% (17)	81.4% (170)

### The legitimacy of the panel in the randomly not selected's eyes

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

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

This article aims to answer these crucial questions on which the legitimacy of the mini-public rests. Indeed, if people who are aware of the process tend to trust the participants, consider them legitimate and endorse the results, then awareness would lead to the broad support a mini-public needs to build its legitimacy to weigh on political decisions. Awareness would thus be the key to generate support for the mini-public's process, participants and

outcomes and thereby allow it to contribute to the overall deliberative quality of the system by fueling it with largely supported recommendations.

**Table 5: Support for citizen panels among the randomly not selected**

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

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

**Table 6: Evaluation of the Brussels Mobility panel among the randomly not selected**

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

### Input Legitimacy

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

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

**Table 7: Perceptions of input legitimacy among the randomly not selected**

	Disagree	Don't know/median option	Agree
I think the participants of the citizen panel accurately represent the diversity of the Brussels' population	8.6% (18)	51.7% (108)	39.7% (83)
The participants have different opinions about mobility in Brussels	4.3% (9)	35.9% (75)	59.8% (125)
I think the participants have as much legitimacy as elected representatives to express their views about mobility issues	11.0% (23)	38.4% (80)	50.6% (106)

#### Throughput Legitimacy

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

**Table 8: Perceptions of throughput legitimacy among the randomly not selected**

	Disagree	Don't know/median option	Agree
The citizen panel should have auditioned more experts	30.2% (63)	46.4% (97)	23.4% (49)
The participants of the citizen panel do not have enough expertise to express their views on mobility issues	43.0% (90)	44.0% (92)	13.0% (27)

**Table 9: Perceptions of deliberative quality among the randomly not selected**

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

### Output Legitimacy

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

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

**Table 10: Perceptions of output legitimacy among the randomly not selected**

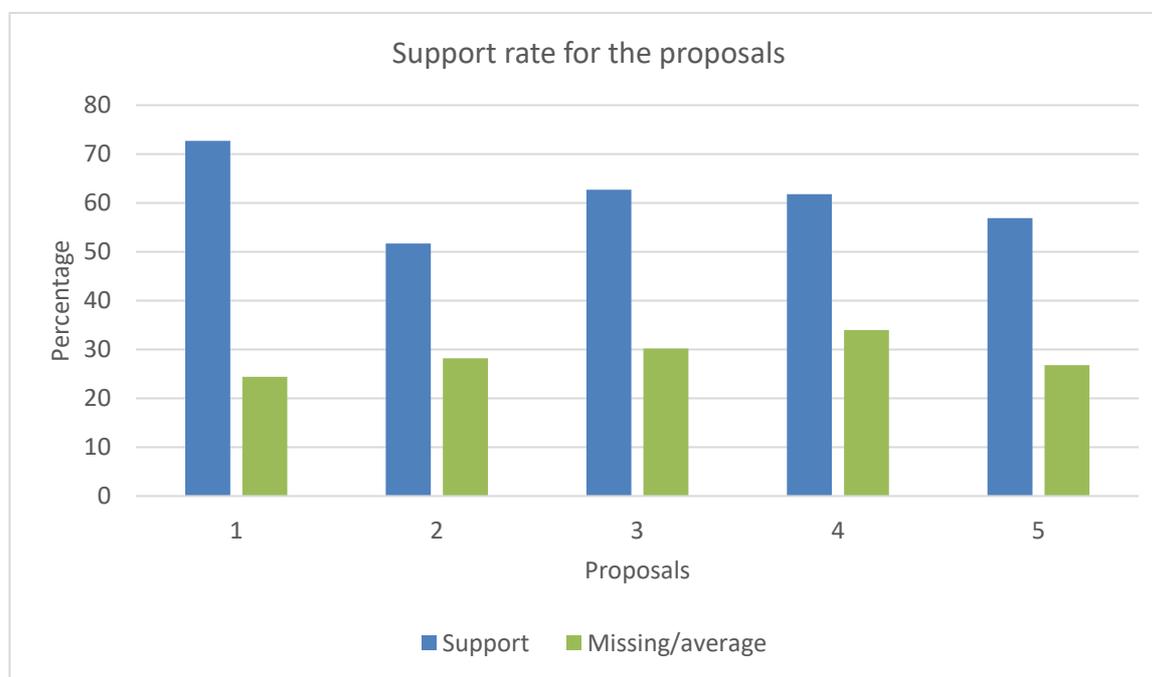
	Disagree	Don't know/median option	Agree
Even if I didn't participate, I followed the work of a citizen panel closely, for instance through the media, social networks, friends, and/or the Parliament website.	51.2% (107)	19.6% (41)	29.2% (61)
The citizen panel forgot important issues when it comes to mobility in Brussels	13.9% (29)	40.7% (85)	45.4% (95)
I totally agree with the recommendations made by the citizen panel	9.6% (20)	44.0% (92)	46.4% (97)
I think the majority of the citizens agrees with the recommendations made by the citizen panel	5.7% (12)	40.2% (84)	54.1% (113)
I think good decisions were made by the citizen panel	20.1% (42)	57.9% (121)	22.0% (46)
I have positive views of the results of the citizen panel	17.7% (37)	21.5% (45)	60.8% (127)
The recommendations of the citizen panel should be turned into laws	10.5% (22)	36.8% (77)	52.6% (110)
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Missing</b>
Have you read the final report?	30.6% (64)	62.2% (130)	7.2% (15)

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

To sum up, the support among randomly not-selected for the recommendations issued by the panel "Make Your Brussels Mobility" cannot really be attributed to a higher awareness they would have of the process or the outcomes it produced, as their initial awareness did not turn into a higher interest for the work of the mini-public. In other words, awareness does not seem to lead to a stronger support for the recommendations made by the mini-public. Besides, the higher awareness we find among some of our respondents does not seem to lead to a more positive or more negative evaluation of the process or its outcomes. This in turn reveals that awareness or even strong interest does not necessarily lead to build a link between the mini and the maxi-public. Therefore, awareness does not necessarily lead to a reinforced

legitimacy of the mini-public to weigh on public decisions, because awareness does not seem to increase the support for the process and outcomes of the mini-public.

**Figure 2: Support for the Panel’s proposals among the randomly not selected**



Note: 1= Creating a digital platform gathering all the information about public transports (timetables, routes, prices, etc.).

2= Reducing the parking spaces in favor of a better public space

3= Obliging all public transport operators to use the MOBIB card to provide their services

4= Creating a central authority in charge of coordinating and supervising all mobility actors

5= Implementing a toll for citizens who do not live in Brussels and use its profits to invest in a better public transport infrastructure

## Discussion

This paper brings about two contributions to the understanding of the link between people who were invited to a deliberative mini-public and its legitimacy. First, we assumed that the awareness of such mini-public would be key. Subsequently, this awareness would lead to the support for the mini-public’s recommendations. Our results show that a majority of the randomly not selected citizens is not aware of the mini-public, despite receiving an invitation letter from the President of the Brussels Parliament and accepting to participate. Perhaps this comes out some sort of frustration or simply because they did not follow the process once they were not selected. Furthermore, when these “non-participants” have followed the citizen panel, their awareness does not significantly correlate with the support for the recommendations. As a consequence, our assumption does not seem to hold. In order to

couple the mini-public with the maxi-public, the fact of being aware may not be enough. The support for the recommendations could stem from the mini-public's legitimacy. However, non-participants have a mitigated perception of its legitimacy.

Our second contribution offers an interpretation for this first finding. We distinguished two roles for mini-publics apropos its coupling with the maxi-public. On the one hand, it could be used as a trustee, that is providing the maxi-public with consensual recommendations that they could use without being invited to think through the matter. On the other hand, the mini-public could act as an information provider. It then aims to induce reflection among the maxi-public by presenting all the pros and cons of a decision. Our results show that "non-participants" do not envision the citizen panel as a trustee. The trustee implies that the maxi-public follows the mini-public's recommendations because they find it legitimate. Almost the half believes that participants focus on their individual interests instead of advancing the common good. Moreover, more than two third believe it is "difficult or maybe even impossible" to take consensual decision.

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

## **Conclusion**

This current study aims to better understand the coupling between a mini-public and the maxi-public. We argued that mini-publics are all too often isolated sites of deliberation, disconnected from the rest of the system. In this paper, we focused on its connection with the rest of the population that does not participate in the mini-public. More precisely, we focused on a specific

group that has not yet been studied: the citizens that positively answered the invitation of the first random sampling, but that were not selected in the second sampling. This group is of special interest for the coupling with the maxi-public because they could potentially enhance the awareness and support for the mini-public. These randomly selected non-participants could be more aware of the mini-public and show stronger support for its recommendations because they were invited to the citizen panel. If this assumption holds, one may think about increasing the number of randomly selected citizens so as to enhance the maxi-public's awareness and support for the mini-public.

Our research was a preliminary step towards testing this assumption. We explore the feasibility of this idea by surveying whether these non-participants were aware of the citizen panel "Make your Brussels Mobility" and supported its recommendations. Because our research was explorative, our findings should be read cautiously. Indeed, several limitations to this pilot study need to be acknowledged. First, we could not compare our survey results with the perception among the rest of the maxi-public. This is problematic because the non-participants under scrutiny are very likely to show a more positive stance towards mini-publics. The description of our population shows that the participation paradox applies on the non-participants. They are mainly older and highly educated citizens that are not representative of the population in Brussels. As a consequence, further research needs to compare the awareness and support in both the non-participants and the rest of the population. Only then will we know the capacity of the random sampling to improve the coupling between the mini- and maxi-public. Second, our theoretical model of the roles of the mini-publics does not seem to grasp adequately the non-participants' perception of legitimacy. Future trials should reconsider the normative role of mini-public regarding the maxi-public.

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

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