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Public trust in citizens' juries when the people decide on policies: evidence from Switzerland

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ABSTRACT

Facilitative political trust is the reduction in cognitive demand citizens experience when forming their opinions about political issues. This type of trust is important for generating legitimate democratic institutions in the eyes of politically uninvolved citizens. The article develops and validates an original direct measure of facilitative political trust among voters receiving a voting aid compiled by a Swiss municipal-level deliberative minipublic convening twenty citizens ahead of a federal popular initiative vote on expanding affordable housing policies. Based on perceiving the randomly selected group as competent and aligned with voters' interests, we find a reliable and valid latent trust measure using confirmatory factor analyses among the same sample of voters within the municipality at two points during the campaign, ahead ($N=1159$), and again around the time of the ballot ($N=472$).

In subsequent multiple regressions, increases in facilitative trust scores are the main driver of readers' ratings of both the voting aid's usefulness for deciding how to vote and of how important they judge its information for their peers' vote decisions.

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political trust; facilitative trust; mini-publics; deliberation; direct democracy; referendum

Introduction

Political trust is a fundamental prerequisite to equip both citizens and elites with the cognitive resources to make informed judgments in a democratic system (Levi and Stoker 2000; Dalton 2005; MacKenzie and Warren 2012). Citizens' declining trust in existing political institutions and their increasing demand for involvement in decision-making has raised the question whether an expanding application of participatory or democratic innovations taps into alternative sources of political trust (Dyck 2009; Geissel and Newton 2012; Åström, Jonsson, and Karlsson 2017; Kern 2017; Marien and Kern 2018). MacKenzie and Warren (2012) and Warren and Gastil (2015) propose the concept of facilitative political trust defined as the reduction in cognitive cost citizens experience in response to perceiving such institutions when making political decisions. It builds on previous conceptions of political trust (Braithwaite 1998), but unlike a

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suspended judgment, it entails "*active choices to remain passive*" (MacKenzie and Warren 2012, 99, original emphasis), foregoing to monitor a trustee. This way, the concept introduces a cognitive dimension to political trust, and it incorporates elements of generalized and particularized social trust as citizens judge both a trustee's competence and its alignment with their interest (Warren and Gastil 2015). Ubiquitous communication in democratic societies exacerbates the relevance of facilitative trust in individual political decisions because citizens have it harder to identify trusted agents against the backdrop of unreliable information (Ercau, Hendriks, and Dryzek 2019). Scrutinizing whether participatory mechanisms constitute trusted institutions among citizens is thus crucial to discern if and how broadening popular involvement in policy making can strengthen citizens' political support.

Warren and Gastil (2015) argue that the far-reaching scope of current political problems coupled to established political institutions failing to generate sufficient levels of facilitative trust is what makes citizens remain passive and become eventually disengaged with the policymaking process, although they demand more involvement in political decisions writ large. Thus, the question arises whether novel institutions – randomly selected deliberative minipublics convened for discussing an issue of public matter (Setälä and Smith 2018) – can aid this function. Warren and Gastil (2015) present the two examples of the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform (BCCA) and the Citizens' Initiative Review (CIR). They argue that these deliberative minipublics of different sizes and processes both acted as facilitative trustees for the larger public. However, there is no *direct* measure grasping citizens' level of facilitative trust in response to a minipublic. In this article, we investigate whether such a direct measure that accounts for measurement error in its indicators is able to capture this type of trust. We contribute a valid and reliable latent factorial construct of facilitative trust that is adaptable to different contexts. We study the case of a Swiss municipal-level pilot CIR that compiles a voting aid (referred to as summary statement) on a federal initiative vote on expanding affordable housing policies. Besides the question of testing the psychometric properties of this novel measure of facilitative trust, the article concludes that the Swiss pilot CIR acted as a facilitative trustee.

The CIR is a randomly selected body of voters that couples an extensive four-day deliberation to informing fellow voters prior to state-level popular ballot initiatives with a summary statement (Gastil and Knobloch 2020; Már and Gastil 2021). To date, past research across five U.S. states and Finland has continuously attested high-quality deliberation and the effectiveness of the voter information deployed to the electorate (Gastil, Knobloch, and Reedy 2018; Setälä, Serup Christensen, and Leino 2021). Unlike a shortcut in the form a recommendation, the statement contains the most important key facts about an upcoming ballot measure plus three pro and con arguments each. The CIR panelists prioritize and scrutinize them following a facilitated process with expert interventions (Gastil, Rosenzweig, and Knobloch 2016; Johnson, Black, and Knobloch 2017).

Beginning from the question what facilitative trust adds to democratic citizenship, we review the previous literature to conceptualize trust as a latent factor composed of two components, interest alignment and competence perception, among the larger public. After that, we show that the construct is distinguishable from other forms of political trust in the next section. Then, by highlighting its relevance among voters not involved

in the minipublic, we develop a scale for a potential application among other minipublics and political institutions that go beyond previous indirect measures. Based on the items developed, we assess construct fit and validity using confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) on two consecutive surveys, gathered ahead ($N = 1159$) and during ($N = 472$) a citizens' initiative vote on housing policy. The article concludes in support of Warren and Gastil (2015) that (1) facilitative trust is a valid and reliable construct that should not be neglected in future research on political trust and (2) that the CIR has got the potential to act as a facilitative trustee in the new context of Swiss popular vote campaigns. Supporting these findings, increases in trust factor scores are associated with voters evaluating the summary statement as more useful and important for others. Facilitative trust scores predict voting aid evaluation even when adjusting for being a winner or loser in the final outcome or putting more trust in the minipublic's random selection. The article contributes a latent measure of facilitative trust that helps future research on the legitimacy of deliberative minipublics by translating the construct's theoretical relevance into a tangible empirical scale. Furthermore, the article contributes to the field of governance by equipping policymakers with the knowledge whether citizens trust and respond positively to participatory innovations introduced to implicate them more directly in political decision-making.

What is facilitative trust?

When it comes to the legitimacy of political institutions in democratic systems, facilitative trust possesses a unique function, setting it apart from other types of political trust: it eases citizens' cognitive expenses of forming opinions (Warren and Gastil 2015, 566). Whereas established definitions of trust operate on a typology of trust objects and the two dimensions of social-political and generalized-specific trust (Newton and Zmerli 2011), Warren and Gastil (2015) identify four kinds of political trust in a typology based on cognitive demand (MacKenzie and Warren 2012). Trust still refers to warranted decisions to rely on people or institutions to act and decide on one's behalf. They also keep trust objects as one defining element in their typology. Regarding these agents and institutions, they emphasize that precisely the traditional political actors like parties or politicians are much less likely to "facilitate, enable, and support citizens' capacity for political judgments by lowering their cognitive costs" (Warren and Gastil 2015, 566), and thus act as *facilitative trust agents, trustees or trusted information and decision proxies* (Warren and Gastil 2015, 563) to distribute facilitative trust within a democratic system.

In the original concept, based on a seminal chapter by MacKenzie and Warren (2012), the authors assume limited cognitive resources that citizens have available to weigh off participation on the one hand and putting trust in agents who act on behalf of them on the other (Warren 1996; Bohman 1999). Minipublics may assist them with two trust-based functions: as (a) information proxies in the legislative branch, and as (b) anticipatory publics within the executive domain. MacKenzie and Warren state that minipublics can "maximize the democratic impact of their political resources by enabling warranted forms of trust" (2012, 98).

However, besides the active part, the primary use of trust and a major aim for democracy given most citizens' scarce cognitive resources is to create "good forms of passivity"

(MacKenzie and Warren 2012, 99, original emphasis), enabling them to make justified trust choices. Two components of facilitative trust work together to attain such good passivity. The potential trustee's motivation ("interests"), and an evaluation of the trustee's competence. If both components are present, facilitative trust will help reduce choice-related risks associated with political decisions by realigning interests and values (MacKenzie and Warren 2012, 101).

Agents and institutions certify facilitative trust and distribute it to loci of the system with trust deficits. However, established means of distribution like voting cut short in two areas: First, in policy areas with high levels of both technical and political complexity (for example health care or affordable housing), potentially exacerbated by an absence of appropriate information proxies (MacKenzie and Warren 2012, 116). Second, these mechanisms possess deficits in handling problems involving temporal complexity (MacKenzie and Warren 2012, 117). In these areas, minipublics like the CIR can act as trusted information or decision proxies, mediating instead of substituting political trust (MacKenzie and Warren 2012, 116). The overall increasing complexity of developed deliberative systems ultimately necessitates trust-based minipublics (MacKenzie and Warren 2012, 123–124). Minipublics as trusted information and decision proxies facilitate voting or casting a ballot (Warren and Gastil 2015, 570), spreading facilitative trust within the deliberative system by lowering the cognitive demand for voters to arrive at conclusions that correspond to their preferences. We continue with important properties of the construct's components, competence and interest convergence.

The three components of facilitative trust

Warren and Gastil (2015) refer to competence convergence as the first necessity for a successful generation of facilitative trust. Bystanders need to perceive that the minipublic was sufficiently equipped to reach the conclusions in the summary statement. These knowledge checks the authors argue emanate from a minipublic's thorough examination of evidence that results in a costly effort to ponder the available evidence in a structured fashion (MacKenzie and Warren 2012, 111–113). Another contribution to the competence dimension of trust is an externally granted, credible reputation for example by recognition from established political actors and effective penalties for lying (Lupia and McCubbins 1998, 53f.). Furthermore, (un)favourable reporting, disruptions or support by minipublic participants may grant or deny credibility caused by an (in)effective minipublic process (Warren and Gastil 2015, 563–564). Second, generating facilitative trust requires interest convergence (Warren and Gastil 2015, 568). Two consequences of randomly selecting minipublic participants imply aligned interests between them and the uninvolved citizenry: First representing a diversity of interests within the population, and second perceiving the transparency of the process, which suggests a roughly equal chance of selection. Furthermore, participants of a short process like the CIR might appear less open to influence by special interests than politicians involved in everyday politics. Moreover, adopting the summary statement as the CIR's final output requires at least a supermajority of participants and is often taken consensually, aiding in aligning the interests between the larger public and the minipublic in the popular vote. However, it is an empirical question whether a given minipublic actually signals trust, depending on voters' perceptions and the process criteria

outlined before. A minipublic must signal convincingly to voters that it aligns both to broader *public interests* and that its process enables participants to be sufficiently *competent* to summarize and judge the issue at hand (Warren and Gastil 2015, 567). If minipublics attain alignment of competence and interest, they will act as facilitative trustees, thus becoming objects of trust and inducing the *good* passive participation that voters seek (MacKenzie and Warren 2012).

Given these prerequisites, the two components must align if an institution is to effectively mediate trust by incentivizing and attesting aligned interests and competence (Warren and Gastil 2015, 564).

Why is facilitative trust relevant?

The main facets of facilitative trust already highlight the potential benefits of information and decision proxies for contemporary democracies. This section explains what makes a trustee useful beyond its core function, and which conditions might enhance the transmission of trust.

Trust signal countering eroding political trust

Facilitative trust may alleviate some of the concerns of distrustful citizens who stop short of fully pronounced ideational populism (Gidron and Hall 2020), but who are nevertheless cautious of established ruling coalitions and political elites (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002; Warren and Gastil 2015, 569). Warren and Gastil (2015) state that a facilitative trustee may signal that it is worthwhile to invest *more* cognitive resources to engage with an important topic or decision. This function potentially reduces existing inequalities in political efficacy, knowledge, and cognitive effort among more passive voters in a citizens' initiative, which has been shown repeatedly in the case of CIR (Knobloch, Barthel, and Gastil 2020; Suiter, Muradova, and Gastil 2020). The potential of reducing these gaps underlines the value of trusted information proxies. As trust entails knowing about its possible misuse, it fosters an active judgment about an agent's trustworthiness. The implication for democratic systems is that they are able to develop institutions that may respond to citizens' generalized distrust (Warren and Gastil 2015, 572).

Assessing whether an institution facilitates trust

Besides taking a normative view and asking in which ways facilitative trust benefits democratic systems, it is important to assess whether voters in a real-life case possess a specific attitude of facilitative trust as opposed to other forms of political trust. Voters might perceive facilitative trust differently compared to other types of political trust by experiencing the effects of its three main functions:

- (1) Facilitative trust reduces voters' cognitive cost of arriving at political decisions (Warren and Gastil 2015, 566).
- (2) Facilitative trust lets citizens judge on a topic consistently according to their preference (Warren and Gastil 2015, 569).
- (3) Facilitative trust stimulates voters' own information-seeking (Warren and Gastil 2015, 570).

Thus, we expect a facilitative trustee to (1) work effectively as a trusted information and decision proxy to vet constitutional reforms put to a people's vote or in other initiatives and referendums, respectively (MacKenzie and Warren 2012, 118). If the trustee cannot fully live up to this ideal, it can still (2) signal to distrustful citizens that investing more effort in weighing the consequences of an important political decision is perhaps worthwhile. However, the two expectations do not explain why exactly minipublics are more effective trusted information proxies than other institutions and agents. Warren and Gastil (2015) suggest that the existing institutional support for this kind of trust is very low. They argue that experts, political representatives or public authorities are currently unable to mediate facilitative trust effectively. According to their analysis, deliberative minipublics appear as prime candidates for filling the role of facilitative trustees compared to these established political institutions.

Three success criteria govern whether a given minipublic certifies facilitative trust vis-à-vis other institutions. First, its representativeness due to sortition ensures that conflicts of interests within the minipublic remain unsystematic and helps separate judge from cause. Second, the minipublic's process ideally demonstrates deliberativeness that leads to the convergence of perceiving competence and overlapping interests. Third, a successful trustee needs to reach an agreement on the issue with a decision and/or final outcome because a larger degree of consensus is expected to yield more trust than a split judgment, which rather promotes learning and engaging (MacKenzie and Warren 2012, 110). Deliberative minipublics like the CIR are expected to excel at deliberativeness and the alignment of competence and interest (Lupia and McCubbins 1998, 53f.), while their judgment depends on the subject at hand.

Previous measures and cases

Past measures of facilitative trust were mostly indirect. Már and Gastil (2021) are to our knowledge the only study employing a multi-item measure of mini-public legitimacy in the context of the U.S. CIR. However, its trust object referenced a mini-public in a general sense due to the aim of their survey experiment. Setälä, Christensen, and Leino (2020) measured generalized trust as an outcome using a single observed indicator in the context of a CIR pilot on a top-down municipal merger in Finland. Setälä, Serup Christensen, and Leino (2021) conducted an exploratory factor analysis involving generalized trust toward multiple trustees. Pow, van Dijk, and Marien (2020) captured "like me"-perceptions of citizens among the broader public as a sizable source of minipublic legitimacy. Drawing on the case of a deliberative minipublic on Northern Ireland's constitutional future, they show the extent to which trustworthiness judgments regarding minipublics form unconditionally among citizens, a process expected to be pivotal for facilitative trust.

Warren and Gastil (2015) report that several instances of the CIR led to increases in initiative-related knowledge and changes in the voters' position. They find the CIR adheres to its function as a facilitative trustee when a large enough share of the public is aware (Warren and Gastil 2015, 570–571). Based on state-level surveys from multiple CIRs, an observed measure of the quality of judgment of different political actors yielded on average larger values for the CIR than other trust objects like the U.S. Congress and the Oregon state legislature.

A disadvantage of using single, observed measures to assess whether a given minipublic or trust object acts as a facilitative trustee is that these typically do not accommodate measurement error. Estimating a latent, underlying factor based on an item scale instead filters this noise and amplifies the signal (Wolfle 2003). Facilitative trust is compatible with this approach as several observed indicators reflect changes in the latent factor that capture the subjectively experienced reduction in cognitive effort to process political information about a popular vote decision. Aside, public awareness and other indirect measures are prone to a honeymoon effect of the CIR. As our case concerns a first application, this could lead to increased attention of the electorate overall, biasing measures obtained from one-time surveys (Levi and Stoker 2000).

Thus, this case combines three unique characteristics: (1) a latent measure of facilitative trust, combined with (2) a longitudinal approach testing the measure's long-term construct validity, plus (3) an embedded experiment¹ in the first survey that extends Warren and Gastil's analysis to assess whether viewing the CIR's summary statement in different versions or not at all is consequential for its facilitative trust function.

Case information: a Swiss pilot CIR on a vote on housing policy

The CIR's process in Switzerland consisted of four phases that closely followed the original model from the U.S. state level (Knobloch and Gastil 2015). A random sample of 2000 voters drawn from the municipality's registry (share of volunteers: 10.2%) formed the basis for the final CIR panel of 20 panelists, selected from the pool of positive replies in a public session. The panel reflected five key background variables of the municipality's voting population: education, age, gender, left-right-placement and vote frequency. In the second stage, the panel met on two consecutive weekends to create the two-page summary statement containing key facts and the three most important arguments in favor or against the popular vote proposal (see Figures A1 and A2 in the Online Appendix). The third stage involved sending an invitation by letter to complete an online survey on the platform SoSciSurvey ahead of the vote campaigns to a random sample of Sion voters not previously invited to the CIR panel. In the final stage, respondents who gave their consent received an invitation to complete a second online survey just ahead of the popular vote campaign's start. Meanwhile, all voters in the municipality received the summary statement by letter before the initiative suffered a defeat in the vote.

The Swiss tenants' association (close to Social Democrats and Greens) launched the proposal, which passed the 100k signature threshold in time to trigger a federal popular vote. The proposal sought to modify Switzerland's constitution to strengthen the position of public housing cooperatives on the market. These provisions included a 10% fixed quota of newly constructed housing set aside exclusively for public housing cooperatives. The non-profits would have earned a preemptive right to buy housing put on the market. On 9 February 2020, 57.1% of participating Swiss voters and a majority of cantonal votes led to the proposal's rejection. The turnout at the Swiss federal level averaged 41.1%, slightly below the mean (42.3%) of 2018 and 2019. For this pilot, the advisory council of the CIR overseeing the whole process coordinated with the team to choose this proposal as the vote date restricted the number of available popular initiatives to just a single one put to a vote in the municipality. We also expected voters to be more open to persuasion as opposed to the only other option of choosing a

referendum on this date. The latter challenged a law already passed by the Swiss parliament on extending a ban on hateful speech against sexual minorities, finding strong support (63%) among voters.

Switzerland equals an important case for examining the CIR's relationship with political trust, for the following three reasons: First, the CIR's procedure has been shown to conduce facilitative trust in particular only in U.S. state-level citizens' initiative votes. The other example presented by Warren and Gastil (2015) refers to the Canadian case. It is thus of interest to know whether a different context of direct democracy with smaller intervals between citizen-initiated popular votes yields similar results.

Second, we argue that the Swiss case fits to investigate facilitative trust toward minipublics because non-motivated voters may gain incentives to invest in trust signals, and motivated voters possess enough resources to process trust in an environment abundant of different sources of information. The context might in fact seem too perfect, implying that citizens can make informed decisions even without a minipublic. We argue that this detail is exactly what qualifies the Swiss context to reveal whether a latent measure of facilitative trust exists. Voters in a real-world application who might view the CIR as a successful facilitative trustee are necessary to ascertain whether a scale in this context is valid and reliable. Without having a regular vote, it would be difficult to discern the noise from the signal that is (facilitative) trust toward the CIR.

A third and final consideration strengthens the view that Switzerland grants an ideal environment to a facilitative trustee. Parkinson (2020) devises three criteria that the CIR likely passes in Switzerland, as we argue: decisiveness, providing narratives in public discourse, and connecting claims with reasons by filtering arguments in the debate. While minipublics remain rarely consequential and can even backfire in representative decision-making (van Dijk and Lefevere 2022), Switzerland offers decisive popular vote processes, where the public discourse steadily generates narratives used in the debates (Tresch and Feddersen 2019), with the CIR as a potential facilitative trustee connecting claims and reasons (Setälä, Serup Christensen, and Leino 2021).

Part 1 – designing a measure of facilitative trust

The random sample of the first wave consists of 2500 randomly selected voters of the Swiss municipality of Sion, from which $N=1159$ responded to an online survey to which they were invited by letter (push-to-web design). The survey closed just ahead of voters receiving their voting materials followed by the summary statement in a separate envelope (19 Dec 2019–15 Jan 2020). This happened before campaigns started and other cues about the popular vote could effectively reach a majority of voters (see previous section for more information on the timing of the popular vote). This design permits to test whether a facilitative trust measure is reliable without the heterogeneity introduced by many voters already having access to other trustworthy sources of information about the vote subject. The sample's summary statistics along with all item wordings are available in Tables A1 and A2 in the Online Appendix.

We conduct a CFA on both samples (Bollen 2002; Brown 2015), for the following three reasons: First, facilitative trust, its components and their relationship are clearly spelled out by the theoretical framework rooted in the literature of political trust (MacKenzie and Warren 2012). Second, existing observed measures of political trust allow for a

comparison of the scale's properties and the indicators' reliability and validity. Third, CFA permits to combine a confirmatory examination of the factor's structure with the embedded experiment of the first wave. This experiment directly captures a latent measure of minipublic legitimacy, facilitative trust, later allowing for a multiple-group comparison between different versions of the statement assigned to respondents. Moreover, the longitudinal design grants inferences from two consecutive surveys, promoting to test the long-term stability of facilitative trust.

Thus, we focus solely on results substantiated by CFA methods. Warren and Gastil (2015) expect a facilitative trustee to certify competence *and* aligned interests. Empirically, this expectation complicates differentiating between a construct's proper sub-dimensions and its facets. CFA simplifies the problem by allowing to examine one-factor and two-factor solutions. According to theory, convergence will blur the difference between indicators of competence and aligned interest, leading to a very large factor correlation. This likely results in empirically equivalent models that favour a one-factor solution. The survey proceeded along the steps outlined below each of the following subheadings.

Screening questions

We probed participants' awareness about the initiative, their prior position on the initiative, and whether they had already used the official voting booklet published by the Federal Chancellery. Moreover, we included a question on whether they had been aware of the CIR, and the source from where they first heard about it.

Treatment of the embedded experiment

The purpose of embedding an experiment in the first wave was to test whether facilitative trust is a reliable and valid construct even when voters do (not) see the final document of the CIR, the summary statement. The experiment followed a between-subject design, randomly assigning participants to view one of four different variations of the citizens' statement or to see only a mock-up news article in two control groups that did not receive the statement. In each of the four treatment conditions, respondents read a slightly modified but otherwise identical version of the summary statement that varied including or excluding two vote positions: (1) the vote of the Swiss parliament plus the position of the Swiss federal government against supporting the initiative proposal, and (2) the CIR's position (11-8) against the proposal derived from a secret vote at the end of its deliberation. In the two control groups, participants did not read the summary statement. Instead, they read a four-paragraph mock-up article about the general proceedings of the citizens' jury. A modified control group received the same article, but it additionally contained a verbal cue that the CIR had internally voted with a small majority against the initiative. In addition to the two control groups, varying the two vote cues results in a total of six randomly assigned experimental conditions. During part of the factor analysis presented later, multiple groups will reflect these conditions, allowing to determine whether they influence facilitative trust and its indicators. To convey the original two-page statement adequately in an online survey, we split it in its three parts: first, respondents saw a short paragraph outlining the basic information on the CIR. Then, they were forced to display the key facts section

for at least 15 seconds, after which they proceeded to view the arguments page (including potential vote cues inserted by assignment to treatment conditions) for at least another 15 seconds until they could proceed. The Online Appendix (cf. Figures A1 and A2) lists the detailed information displayed in treatment and control conditions.

Evaluation of the statement

Those respondents assigned to the treatment groups were urged to recall the most important information they remembered from the summary statement, followed by questions on their knowledge about and stance toward the popular vote. Treatment groups that received the statement but not the control groups then proceeded to evaluate the statement regarding its usefulness and its importance for other citizens' vote decisions on 7-point scales. After that, all respondents answered the facilitative trust items (see next section), before providing demographic and political background information. The order avoided risking potential priming effects arising from showing the trust items first.

Facilitative trust items

We propose eight indicators that cover different facets of facilitative trust and its two main parts outlined in the previous section (see list below), accompanied by a corresponding short label. The retained indicators for the final version of the scale appear in bold (see [Figure 1](#) for a depiction). Each item runs along a 7-point Likert-scale, labelled

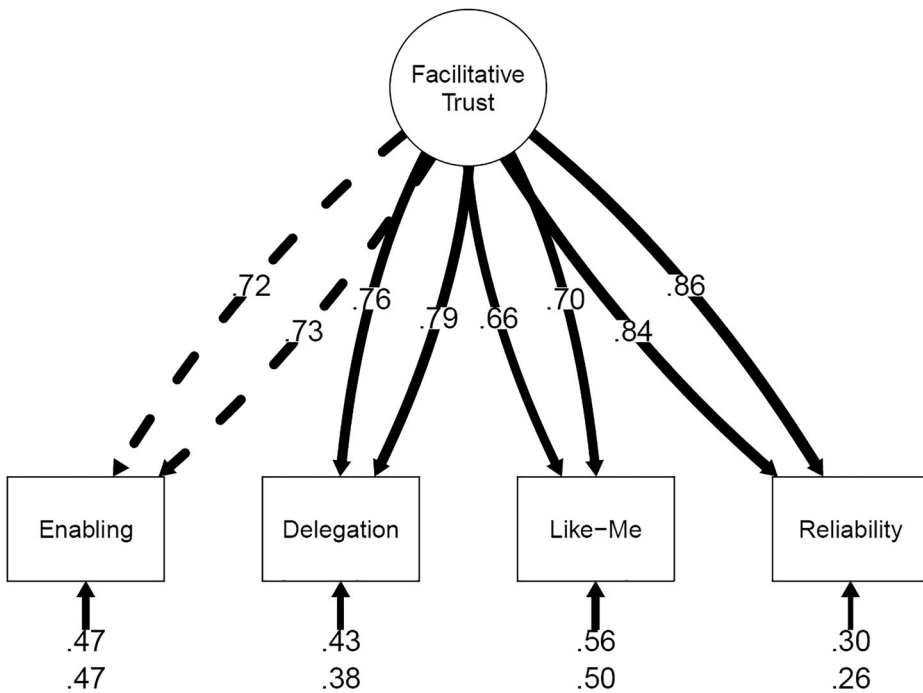


Figure 1. Retained two-group CFA model of facilitative trust with factor loadings constrained equal across two surveys and close fit used to calculate factor scores. Note: Standardized factor loadings.

1 *Strongly Disagree*, 4 *Undecided*, 7 *Strongly Agree*, and includes a Don't Know option. The item wordings reflect either the competence aspect of the minipublic or emphasize the latter's alignment with one's interests (Pow, van Dijk, and Marien 2020). The first sentence introducing the scale presented below appeared only in the second wave.

By mid-January, you should have received the “demoscan” citizens’ statement on the Affordable Housing Initiative, written by a panel of 20 randomly selected people from the municipality of Sion.

What do you think of Sion’s citizens’ panel? Please respond by evaluating the statements below.

- Competence dimension
 - (1) Members of the citizens’ panel share experiences similar to mine, which gives them a sense of what needs to be done. (*Experience*)
 - (2) I perceive the citizens’ panel to be competent enough to make informed judgments. (*Judgment*)
 - (3) The citizens’ panel seems adequately equipped to derive the consequences of the vote. (*Expertise*)
 - (4) **The citizens’ panel enables me to find a standpoint on the issue.** (*Enabling*)
- Interest alignment dimension
 - (5) **The members of the citizens’ panel act on behalf of my interests.** (*Delegation*)
 - (6) **The citizens’ panel consists of people like me.** (*Like-Me*)
 - (7) **You can rely on the most important decisions made by the citizens’ panel.** (*Reliability*)
 - (8) The citizens’ panel could come to conclusions similar to mine when examining a topic thoroughly. (*Congruence*)

Assessment of construct reliability

An exploratory check shows that the items share a significant amount of variance ($\chi^2(28) = 5903.07$, $p < .001$) and are suitable to form a scale (average KMO = .94). Cronbach’s Alpha (assuming a one-factor solution) is excellent for both the individual items as well as the whole set ($\alpha = .92$).

When assessing the fit for the CFA models, we use the following cut-off values as decision criteria for exact² fit: (1) Scaled χ^2 -Test of exact fit: 95%-level of confidence, (2) rCFI $\geq .95$ and rTFI $\geq .95$, (3) SRMR $\leq .06$, (4) rRMSEA $\leq .06$. The analysis uses the *lavaan* package (Rosseel 2012) for R with Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) estimation to account for missing values. Listwise deletion confirms the substantive conclusions (see Tables A3 to A10 in the Online Appendix that contain extended reporting for the following CFA models). Unless otherwise noted, all standardized factor loadings are greater than .6.

The initial one-factor model comprising all eight indicators does not fit the data well ($\chi^2(20) = 70.07$, $p < .001$, rCFI/rTLI: .98/.97, rRMSEA: .07 [.053; .088], SRMR: .027). Modification indices attribute the cause of the misfit to the first indicator (*Experience*), proposing additional error correlations with up to three other items. However, this approach yields conflicting signs for the expected parameters, suggesting a more substantial problem with this item. In support of this finding, the resulting model including the

two error correlations whose expected parameter points into the same direction fits the data well (see Tables A5 and A6 in the Online Appendix). The residual correlations might be due to respondents differentiating the panel itself from the sum of its members when assessing whether they share similar experiences with each other. Hence, we drop the *Experience* item from the analysis for a more parsimonious solution that fits well on the data of the first wave ($\chi^2(14) = 22.18$, $p = .075$, rCFI/rTLI: 1/.99, rRMSEA: 0.034 [0;.059], SRMR: .017).

In a next step, we adjust the model comprising the seven remaining indicators to the randomly assigned groups of the embedded experiment. Without imposing any equality constraints, we obtain close fit ($\chi^2(114) = 156.91$, $p = .005$, rCFI/rTLI: .98/.98, rRMSEA: .058 [.033; .08], SRMR: .065). This result implies that neither presenting the summary statement to respondents nor assigning different versions of it that vary the inclusion of the CIR's and Swiss parliament's votes on the popular initiative proposal is relevant for the reliability of facilitative trust. Thus, the CFA models presented next account for the experimental assignment only implicitly.

A major question concerning facilitative trust is whether the two sets of competence and interest alignment indicators form separate latent factors. We find just a single dimension when allowing correlated factors³ (see Tables A11 and A12 in the Online Appendix). Regardless of using the full scale or excluding the *Experience* item, we obtain an almost perfect factor correlation ($r \geq .95$) from a two-factor model ($\chi^2(13) = 20.88$, $p = .075$, rCFI/rTLI: 1/.99, rRMSEA: .035 [0;.061], SRMR: .017). The overlap between the two sets of items corresponds well to the theoretical expectation of convergence between competence and interest alignment as a consequence of successful facilitative trust generation (Warren and Gastil 2015, 564). However, a large factor correlation indicates poor discriminant validity (Brown 2015, 28). Hence, we retain the more reliable, single factor, and assess next whether its fit is also acceptable on the data of the second wave.

Part 2 – assessment of long-term reliability

Due to the promising reliability of the models from the first part of the analysis, we decided to retain the full scale for the second wave ($N = 472$) fielded around voting day (30 January–16 February 2020). We increased the difficulty of two indicators to probe for the presence of method effects, notably the response style of acquiescence bias (DiStefano and Motl 2006). This type of bias is likely to occur when respondents become inattentive to question wording in longer item scales rated along the same direction. Subsequently, we reversed⁴ the wording of two items (*Judgment* and *Congruence*) from each trust component and emphasized the negation for respondents (see below). We then adjusted the model for any potential response bias by adding an error correlation, and assessed its fit against another specification excluding both items.

- I *don't* perceive the citizens' panel to be competent enough to make informed judgments.
- The citizens' panel *was not able* to come to conclusions similar to mine when examining a topic thoroughly.

Results

Following the same steps of the analysis as in the first part, Bartlett's test for the second wave indicates again a significant shared amount of variance among the indicators ($\chi^2(28) = 1746.37$, $p < .001$). A KMO of .89 and Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha = .87$) are again very good. The extended reporting for the models presented in the following steps is available in Tables A15 to A22 in the Online Appendix.

The initial one-factor solution on the second wave including all eight items does not fit the data well ($\chi^2(20) = 85.68$, $p < .001$, rCFI/rTLI: .94/.91, rRMSEA: .102 [.08; .124], SRMR: .058). Subsequently adding an error correlation between the reversed items confirms the intuition that the misfit is due to acquiescence bias in these items (see Tables A17 and A18 in the Online Appendix). Despite close fit, the bias introduced by the reversal causes the items in question to only weakly relate to the latent construct, indicated by standardized factor loadings below .5 in the previous model. Hence, we re-specify the one-factor solution without the two reversed *Judgment* and *Congruence* items. Additionally, we exclude the *Expertise* item that shares error covariances with multiple other remaining indicators. The wording of the item likely causes problems because the survey took place around the time of the popular vote, when trends or the results made it clear that consequences, i.e. an implementation of the demands, would not materialize. This has an important implication: Throughout different stages of a popular vote campaign, part of the indicators are sensitive to nuances in timing, making some more suitable than others for a longitudinal study of trust. The re-specification results in exact fit based on the data of the second survey of the model with the remaining five indicators ($\chi^2(5) = 7.85$, $p = .165$, rCFI/rTLI: .99/.99, rRMSEA: .043 [0; .097], SRMR: .016).

Due to excluding the *Experience* item from the analysis of the first survey, we decided to exclude this indicator as well for the final one-factor model fit on the data of the second wave. The four-indicator model also passes the scaled test of exact fit ($\chi^2(2) = 4.08$, $p = .13$, rCFI/rTLI: 1/.99, rRMSEA: .053 [0; .129], SRMR: .013). A BIC comparison confirms that the model comprising the remaining four indicators is more parsimonious than the five-item factor (BIC 6030.3 vs. 5004.1). Estimating the four-item model on the sample of the first wave attains close fit and confirms the factor's reliability (see Tables A13 and A14 in the Online Appendix).

Overall, the analysis extends the previous results, yielding a reliable factor also on the second wave. This finding allows to answer whether facilitative trust is temporally stable in the next section.

Is the construct stable over time?

We test the factor's long-term reliability by estimating the four-indicator factor on the data of both waves as two separate groups in a multiple-group model (see Tables A23 to A26 in the Online Appendix). Temporal invariance, i.e. a temporally stable construct, suggests that factor loadings are constrained equal across both waves, while the model's residual variances are set as free parameters to reflect fluctuation in measurement error over time (Brown 2015). Thus, the resulting model sets cross-group equality constraints on both surveys' factor loadings only. This model (see Figure 1) fits closely to the data and serves to predict trust factor scores in the third and last part of the analysis presented next ($\chi^2(7) = 17.99$, $p = .012$, rCFI/rTLI: .99/.99, rRMSEA: .055 [.024; .087], SRMR: .024).

When restricting the estimation to only those who participated in both surveys, model fit further improves (see Tables A25 and A26 in the Online Appendix).

Discussion

These findings suggest that the proposed measure of facilitative trust comprising four indicators is reliable and stable over the course of the initiative campaign. Furthermore, the factorial models allow for flexible inclusion of part of the indicators to adapt the moment of fielding the instrument to the timing of different phases of a popular vote. A case in point is to include the *Expertise* item when probing the scale solely ahead of a vote, and to exclude it should a survey be fielded afterward. Note that from the final specification of *Enabling*, *Delegation*, *Like-Me*, and *Reliability* indicators, just *Enabling* stems from the initial set of competence indicators. Though this is partly due to a missing adaptation to the exact timing of the vote, it falls in line with the expectation that the CIR's competence becomes less relevant in the eyes of voters when they become more competent on the matter themselves. A limitation of this part of the study is the sub-par performance of the reversed items. Future research may elaborate an affirmatively-negative wording for a reversal. The next part of the analysis clarifies whether the factor assumed to be facilitative trust actually measures facilitative trust and not a different latent construct.

Part 3 – assessment of construct validity

Based on the reliable factor obtained in the previous analysis, we review its criterion validity to ascertain that the measure reflects an underlying dimension of facilitative trust. Hence, we first compute factor scores for each of the two surveys using the multiple-group one-factor CFA model selected in the previous section. Then, we correlate these scores with convergent observed measures from the survey (Yuan and Deng 2021). Most importantly, we expect facilitative trust to be consequential for how useful (H1a) and important for others (H1b) voters judge the summary statement, adjusted for covariates (Már and Gastil 2021; Setälä, Serup Christensen, and Leino 2021). Two more correlations matter for our case: the coefficient between trust scores and the amount of trust in the CIR due to its random selection (H2), and the coefficient between facilitative trust scores and a competing minimal, single-item measure of generalized trust in the CIR (H3).

Hypotheses

H1 (*Consequentiality*): An increase in voters' facilitative trust is associated with better ratings of the (a) summary statement's usefulness and (b) its importance for the vote decisions of other voters, adjusted for a range of covariates.

H2 (*Trust random selection*): Voters' facilitative trust is positively associated with an increase in their trust toward the summary statement due to the CIR's random selection.

H3 (*Generalized trust*): Voters' facilitative trust is positively associated with an increase in their generalized trust toward the CIR.

Sample and measures

The *Consequentiality* hypotheses (H1a/H1b) require assessing whether facilitative trust is important for voters' evaluations of the CIR's summary statement and whether it generalizes to voters beyond those included in the sample. Thus, we use separate multiple OLS regressions for the two 7-point observed dependent variables of how useful and how important for others the sub-sample of respondents assigned to viewing the voting aid in each of the two surveys rated the summary statement. For the second wave, we include only those in the estimation who had already voted at the time of the survey to probe the CIR's relevance as a trusted decision proxy. For the two hypotheses concerning simple associations with trust criteria (H2/H3), we calculate pairwise correlations.

Results

As for the *Consequentiality* hypotheses (H1a/H1b), the models depicted in Figure 2 and Figure A3 in the Online Appendix regress the usefulness and importance of the statement for others in each of the surveys on facilitative trust and a set of covariates. This set is the same for both models, except that the models of the second wave also adjust for the previous position of those who gave away their vote preference already in the first survey⁵ (see Tables A27 to A32 in the Online Appendix for more details). Supporting the expectations from both hypotheses, the latent factor scores exert a positive influence on both outcomes. This holds even when adjusting for a range of covariates related

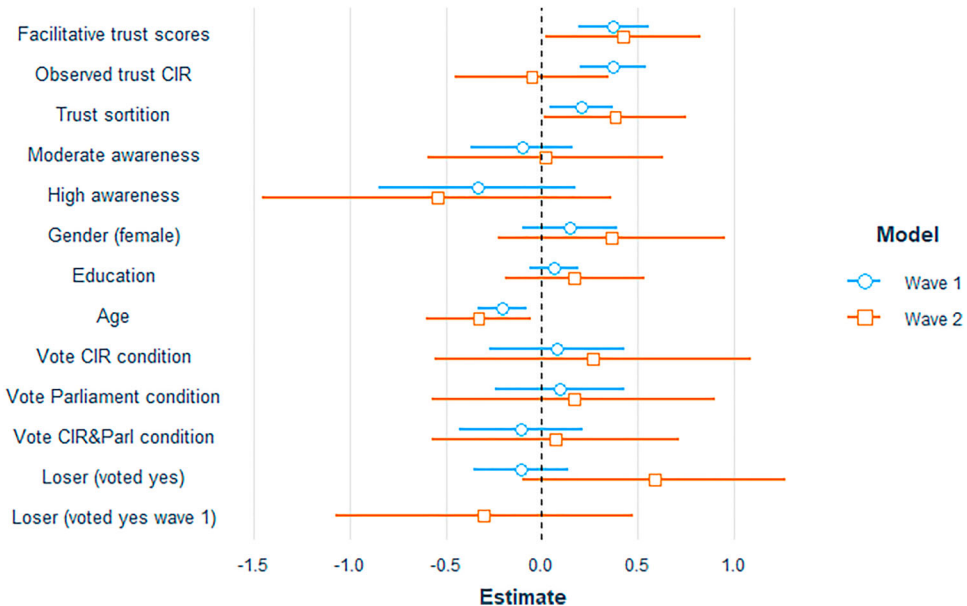


Figure 2. OLS regressions of usefulness of the CIR statement. Note: Non-binary covariates standardized. Robust standard errors. 95% C.I. Ref.=No awareness, CIR statement w/o any vote cues, male. Adj. R^2 (Wave 1): 0.26, df (Wave 1) = 513. Adj. R^2 (Wave 2): 0.24, df (Wave 2) = 84.

to various individual attributes such as winning or losing in the final vote, political attitudes, socio-economic background and most importantly, the other two trust criteria treated individually in the remaining hypotheses. The regression coefficients imply a stable increase of the usefulness and importance ratings by between .3 and .4 on its 7-point scale in response to a one standard deviation unit increase in facilitative trust, all else equal. Another result from the regression models helps evaluate the importance of using factor scores over the observed responses of single trust indicators. As seen in the regression graphs in [Figure 2](#) and [Figure A3](#) in the Online Appendix, the effect of the generalized observed trust covariate on usefulness and importance from the first wave broke down in the second wave. The breakdown points to problems in using a simple observed trust measure that are resolvable efficiently and at low additional cost by using a latent factor of facilitative trust as the more reliable and specific measure.

Concerning trust rooted in the panel's random selection (H2), we find strong correlations for both waves confirming the expectation of a pronounced positive relationship between these two types of trust ($r = .55$, $N = 940$; $r = .56$, $N = 203$). For generalized trust (H3) we find correlation coefficients indicating the same strong association with facilitative trust scores, confirming the expectation that the factor, in addition to its reliability, is also a valid measure ($r = .64$, $N = 869$; $r = .52$, $N = 332$). Note that despite these large effect sizes, each criterion variable is nevertheless distinguishable from the factor scores. This is an important observation given the previous finding that the two components of latent facilitative trust, aligned interests and competence, correlate almost perfectly. Put differently, there is just as expected much less overlap between the factor and the criteria than between the factor's integral parts.

Discussion

The third part of the analysis shows that the proposed scale comprising the *Enabling*, *Delegation*, *Like-Me*, and *Reliability* indicators forms a valid measure of facilitative trust. The positive and strong associations produced between factor scores and related trust measures support all three hypotheses independently for both survey waves. Neither is facilitative trust a pure proxy measure of generalized political trust nor is it primarily related to the fact that the panel is randomly selected. Instead, it is a proper latent factor that captures the reduction of cognitive effort that voters in the municipality experience. The analyses also support what MacKenzie and Warren (2012) predicted in their initial conceptual definition: Facilitative trust exists empirically and there is a stable set of indicators to measure it reliably. This finding holds even when adjusting the rating of the CIR's summary statement for citizens' generalized institutional trust and their trust in the CIR's selection by lot.

Theoretically, our application confirmed that four success criteria determine whether a minipublic generates facilitative trust: (1) Representativeness ensured the (2) absence of conflicts of interests, and (3) deliberativeness preceded the alignment of competence and interests for facilitative trust to emerge. Lastly, the CIR's summary statement was approved by (4) consensus among its panelists. Given these criteria, we expect facilitative trust to generalize well beyond small-scale deliberation to the regional and national level. Also, the results support the CIR as a deliberative process that acts as a conduit for

facilitative trust. CIR panelists educate themselves so that passive citizens can reduce their cognitive expenses of a vote decision (Knobloch and Gastil 2015). The CIR already addressed a federal-level initiative in this application, only the level of random selection tied this pilot to the municipality. However, policies or popular vote questions on which participants have difficulties deriving a balanced set of arguments could pose a challenge to the CIR in Switzerland. This would result in a differentiated capability to act as an effective facilitative trustee across popular votes. Future studies might examine whether a popular vote more generally is a necessary condition for the emergence of minipublics as trusted information and decision proxies in democratic systems outside of Switzerland (Beauvais and Warren 2019). The two cases of the BCCA and the CIR in Canada and the U.S. fit the pattern of facilitative trustees working in conjunction with both top-down as well as bottom-up popular vote mechanisms (el-Wakil 2020). Researchers should distinguish consequences and success criteria of facilitative trust with other types of deliberative minipublics and political institutions. This would allow to compare the effectiveness of various trusted information proxies across different political issues and discourses.

Conclusion

The article developed a valid and reliable scale of facilitative trust, a type of political trust that helps voters reduce their cognitive effort needed to reach a reasoned conclusion to a politically relevant decision. Based on propositions by MacKenzie and Warren (2012) and Warren and Gastil (2015), we delineated the theoretical coordinates of facilitative trust and found that the trust construct fits the Swiss case of a municipal-level CIR on expanding federal housing policies very well over time and independent of having direct access to its summary statement. In support of Warren and Gastil (2015), we identify a proper sub-type of political trust that reduces voters' cognitive effort needed to arrive at a well-reasoned decision in a facilitative fashion. We validated the scale successfully by finding that the case of a minipublic coupled to a popular vote generates facilitative trust for voters, making them more likely to evaluate the summary statement's key facts and arguments more positively. The theoretical relevance of voters' facilitative trust in participatory institutions applies to an original direct measurement in a real-world case beyond the CIR's original American context. The findings help policymakers and public administrators to identify policy areas where broader popular involvement can tap into a source of public support among citizens.

Notes

1. The research was pre-registered (see Online Appendix) and conducted according to the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its later amendments.
2. For close fit, we deviate from these criteria in two aspects: (1) rejecting the scaled χ^2 test of exact fit, (2) a rRMSEA ≤ 0.08 , and the inclusion of .05 in its 90% confidence interval.
3. Because a confirmatory multi-factor model requires identification before estimation (Bollen 2002, 624), a rotation phase does not occur.
4. We expect the negated wording to detect respondent inattentiveness at the expense of reliability compared to using affirmatively-negative statements (e.g. "making careless judgments").

5. Further inspection of the predictors for both outcomes did not reveal any substantial multicollinearity.

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