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Abstract

A central element in networked forms of governance is the use of projects and related policy instruments and forms of action. However, the relation between “projectification” and democracy has so far been researched only to a limited extent. This article is based on the analysis of a specific participatory project, in which the aim was to test and model different forms of citizen participation. The broader policy programme which the project belonged to is also scrutinised. According to this study, the programme level was based on traditional forms of steering, whereas projects allow flexibility and new forms of participation and deliberation. However, enhanced possibilities for participation do not necessarily increase the influence of involved actors as the relationship between the projects and the permanent municipal administration remains weak.

Introduction

Since the 1990s, there has been an extensive body of research on governance, interpreted as a networked way of formulating and implementing policies and directing the society, based on “soft” forms of control, various forms of cooperation, negotiations, the blurring of sectoral boundaries and a multitude of actors who not only represent the public sector but also the market and civil society (see, e.g., Kooiman, 1993; Stoker, 1998; Sørensen & Torfing 2007; Bevir 2011). What has been neglected in a great part of the governance discussion, however, is that many policy instruments and implementation strategies in the context of governance are characterised by a limited time frame. In recent research, *projects* in particular have been conceived as a central element of governance, some authors have interpreted the development as a “projectification” of public policies (Sjöblom et al., 2006; Sulkunen, 2006; Godenhjelm et al., 2012; see also the other articles in this special issue). However, projectification is not only about a growing use of projects, as these are often used together with a broader family of related policy instruments and forms of action such as programmes, contracts, evaluations, funds and partnerships (Sulkunen, 2006; Sjöblom, 2011).

The relationship between projectification and democracy has so far been studied to a relatively limited extent (Godenhjelm et al., 2012: 55), but the questions raised are relatively similar in other studies of governance and democracy (see, e.g., Papadopoulos & Warin, 2007; Sørensen, 2005; Kuokkanen, 2009, Kübler & Schwab, 2007). On the one hand, the growing use of projects and related policy instruments can be seen as problematic in democratic terms. This is because in multi-actor networks based on partnerships and the participation of various stakeholders, aspects like political control, accountability and representation are less clear than within the institutions of representative democracy, a hierarchical chain of accountability and a clear politics/administration divide. On

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the other hand, the emphasis on partnerships and stakeholders can broaden the opportunities for citizen participation and lead to more deliberative forms of decision-making. In the context of projects, their limited time frame and the relationship between projects and the regular administration makes the projectification phenomenon analytically challenging.

This article is based on the analysis of a specific participatory project named “Citizen Channel”, in which the aim was to test and model different forms of citizen participation and interaction between citizens, municipal officials and politicians. The project was implemented as a part of a policy programme, The Urban Programme for the Helsinki Metropolitan Area 2005–2007, which formed the broader institutional framework, also analysed in this article. The programme and the project are both situated within the framework of Finnish urban policy. The research questions are the following: How can the Urban Programme and the Citizen Channel project be analysed from a democratic perspective? What is their relation to existing political and administrative institutions? Do they include participatory and deliberative forms of action and if so, what are they like? The analysis is based on a framework which has been developed for assessing the democratic qualities of programmes and projects (Godenhjelm et al., 2012). I will first assess the existing literature about projects and democracy. In the empirical analysis, the broader policy programme is scrutinised before turning to the Citizen Channel project.

(Urban) governance, projects and democracy

Since the 1990s, social scientists have referred to governance (sometimes using the prefix “new”, “network”, “collaborative” or “participatory”) as a shift towards a more networked way of formulating and implementing public policy and directing society, based on “soft” forms of steering, various forms of cooperation, negotiations, the blurring of sectoral boundaries and a multitude of actors who not only represent the public sector but also the market and/or civil society (e.g., Kooiman, 1993; Stoker, 1998; Pierre, 2000; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2004; Sørensen & Torfing, 2007; Bevir, 2011). While the emphasis in research and public debate has been on networks, a crucial characteristic of these new forms of governance is the growing use of temporary forms of organisation. Authors like Sjöblom et al. (2006; see also Godenhjelm et al., 2012; Sulkunen, 2006, Jensen et al., 2007) state that temporary organisations, especially projects, are an essential part of the new forms of governance. Projects are usually used together with related policy instruments and forms of action such as programmes, contracts, evaluations, funds and partnerships (Sulkunen, 2006; Sjöblom, 2011). The ideal of programme management is that programmes establish the general framework for individual projects and group them together, whereas projects are the main instruments for the implementation of the programme (see Sulkunen, 2006: 17; Artto et al., 2006: 29; Mikola, 2007: 87). Programmes and projects are based on contracts between the central actors, financed by funds and monitored

by evaluations, whereas partnerships define the roles of actors within programmes and projects (cf. Sulkunen, 2006: 17).

At the urban level, new forms of urban governance are often linked to the so-called “new urban policies”, a label for policies that have been created in the 1990s in many European countries and by the European Union (Le Galès, 2005; Andersen & van Kempen, 2001; Kuokkanen, 2005, van den Berg et al., 2007). These policies include collaboration across various levels of administration and policy areas as well as between the public, private and voluntary sectors. One key characteristic of the new urban policies is that they are often based on programmes and projects and more generally, on decentralisation and experimentation (Vranken, 2005; Pinson, 2009; Kuokkanen, 2005; Le Galès, 2002). The French scholar Gilles Pinson (2009) even states that projects have become the main instrument of the governance of cities. This, of course, not only concerns projects that belong to different policy programmes, but various kinds of big development and building projects as well. According to Pinson (2009: 10–11), the growing use of projects in European cities has meant a shift from state-led, hierarchical policies to networks involving both public and private actors which combine technical, political, expert and lay knowledge.

The democratic consequences of projectification have been studied only to a limited extent (Godenhjelm et al., 2012: 55). However, it is possible to draw parallels between the democratic analysis of projects and the more general discussion about governance and democracy (see, e.g., Papadopoulos & Warin, 2007; Sørensen, 2005; Kuokkanen, 2009; Kübler & Schwab, 2007). From a “pessimist” point of view, projects can pose a threat to the basic principles of representative democracy, since in partnership- and network-based structures aspects like political control, accountability, transparency, representation and inclusiveness can become unclear (see Sørensen, 2005; Hirst, 2000; Kübler & Schwab, 2007). This is because projects include actors that are not subject to political accountability and control, and because of the ambivalent relationship between projects and the permanent administration (Godenhjelm et al., 2012; Considine & Afzal, 2011). The decision-making situations and the decisions that are made are not necessarily formal, and the number of decision-making arenas is multiplied, which makes political control, accountability and transparency difficult (Kübler & Schwab 2007). The direct participation of citizens and NGOs in governance networks can also be problematic because the civil society becomes intertwined with the structures of the state, those people who are already active tend to participate, and citizens and associations that participate in governance arrangements might represent special interests instead of the “common good” (Sørensen 2005; Häikiö, 2007). The participating associations can also become increasingly bureaucratic and in fact exclude ordinary citizens from participation (Hirst 2000: 20).

From an “optimist” perspective, projects, like other forms of governance, can be related to the growing participation of different groups and more participatory and deliberative forms of democracy that can complement existing representative institutions (see, e.g., Sørensen, 2005; Kübler & Schwab, 2007; Hirst,

2000; Warren, 2009; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2004, Papadopoulos & Warin, 2007; Kuokkanen, 2009; Kübler & Schwab, 2007). Following this logic, projects can offer new arenas of influence for individual citizens or NGOs, the stakeholder approach gives the individual the opportunity to influence issues that affect him or her the most, and the decision-making culture in projects is based more on negotiations and the search for common solutions than on voting (cf. Sørensen, 2005). Moreover, “empowering” initiatives are intended to enhance the inclusion of marginalized groups, who are not necessarily heard in the context of representative democracy (McLaverty 2011: 403). Projects allow experiments with new forms of participation, and can thus be related to a broader discussion on democratic innovations (Saward, 2000; Bengtsson, 2008; Smith, 2009; cf. Blaug, 2002), which means the development of democratic procedures and institutions by public authorities and professionals. What characterises many of the current participatory initiatives is that they occur at the policy level and are often driven by public officials outside the channels of electoral democracy (Warren 2009).

In an analysis of the democratic qualities (or in their analysis, “effects”) of projectification, Godenhjelm et al. (2012) emphasize several elements (which have been slightly modified to fit into the framework of this study). The central criteria for assessing democratic qualities of project organisations are the actors represented, the institutional linkage between the permanent administrative structure and the project(s), the forms of participation utilised, the way in which conflicts are resolved, the types of knowledge included, the outcome of the project(s), the procedures for transferring new knowledge to the permanent structure and the political mandate of the project(s) (see Table 1). According to Godenhjelm et al., projects can either be incorporated into the existing political and administrative machinery and act according to its working logic, with a representation of political and/or administrative actors and clear chains of accountability, or can include the broad participation of different actors and a deliberative type of working logic, but remain loosely coupled to the existing administration. In practice, however, various hybrid forms can exist between these two ideal types.

These criteria are in this article applied to a case study on Finnish urban policy. The project analysed, Citizen Channel (*Kansalaiskanava*), formed part of the Urban Programme for the Helsinki Metropolitan Area 2005–2007, which was an urban development programme. The aim of the project was to test and model various forms of participation and interaction between citizens, municipal officials and politicians in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Citizen Channel was different from the other projects of the programme, which were mainly conducted by public or semi-public actors and which concentrated on creating networks and new forms of action within specific policy sectors. Citizen Channel was chosen as a case because the explicit aim of the project was to develop participation. Since the Urban Programme, to which the project belonged, formed the broader institutional framework for the project, it is also important to analyse the programme level.

Table 1. Criteria for assessing the democratic qualities of project organisations (modified from Godenhjelm et al. 2012)

Actors	What actors are represented?
Institutional linkage	How are the projects related to the permanent administrative structure?
Forms of participation	What forms of participation are utilised?
Conflict resolution	How are conflicts solved (e.g., through voting, bargaining or deliberation)?
Types of knowledge	Are different types of knowledge included (e.g., administrative and expert knowledge, lay knowledge)?
Outcome	What is the outcome of the project?
Transfer of knowledge	Are there clear procedures for transferring new knowledge to the permanent structure?
Political mandate	Is there a clear political mandate? Can politicians be held accountable?

The research is based on 31 semi-structured interviews (two of them by e-mail) with the actors of the Urban Programme for the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and the Citizen Channel project as well as on analyses of relevant policy documents. The interviews were conducted in 2008–2009 when the Urban Programme and the Citizen Channel project had been finished. The interviewees at the programme level included members of the management group of the Urban Programme, which consisted of relatively high-level public officials. Interviewees at the project level included both the paid project workers and members of the management and steering groups of the project (they will all be referred to as “project organisers”), as well as citizens and municipal officials (librarians) who had participated in the activities organised by Citizen Channel when the project was implemented in the target areas. The policy documents analysed for this study were the programming documents of the Urban Programmes 2002–2004 and 2005–2007, descriptions of the projects and the evaluations of the programmes, in which the individual projects also were evaluated.

The democratic qualities of the Urban Programme for the Helsinki Metropolitan Area

The Finnish political system is characterised by a strong unitary state and municipalities which have a high level of autonomy and a key role in the provision of welfare services. As in the other Nordic countries, the Finnish regional policy has traditionally been redistributive, targeted at the peripheral regions and limiting the growth of the biggest cities (Schulman, 2000: 24). The issue of a specific urban policy came onto the political agenda in Finland in the 1990s, partly because of Finland’s EU membership, partly because of other economic, social and political developments (such as the collapse of the Soviet Union, the economic depression in the early 1990s, the growth of the ICT based industry later in the

1990s and a growing number of immigrants in cities; see Haila & Le Galès, 2005). At the same time as the regional policy started to emphasize endogenous growth, local activity and new forms of cooperation, cities were perceived more strongly than before as “motors” of local and national economic growth (see, e.g., Schulman, 2000; Bradley et al., 2004; Holstila, 2007).

The Helsinki Metropolitan Area consists of Helsinki, the capital of Finland, and the cities of Espoo, Vantaa and the small municipality of Kauniainen situated inside Espoo. The urban policy of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area can be seen a mixture of both state- and municipality-driven action. What characterizes the current situation is a growing political pressure to further the metropolitan collaboration. The Urban Programme was one of the first attempts to create a dialogue about common urban and metropolitan policies for the four municipalities of the area, which had long been competing with each other. The first programme covered 2002–2004, and this study concentrates on the second programme, which covered the 2005–2007 period. Officially, the aim of the Urban Programme 2005–2007 was to improve the international competitiveness of the Helsinki Region. This vision was implemented through three lines of action that concentrated on service delivery, competitiveness and urban structure and housing. (Pääkaupunkiseudun kaupunkiohjelma 2005–2007.) The Urban Programme 2005–2007 was a development programme consisting of 17 projects. In general, the aim of the projects was to increase regional cooperation and organising capacities by creating various pilot projects and new models of action as well as to deal with issues that were not part of the responsibility of other existing policy sectors or established cooperation forums.

The main **actors** in the Urban Programme were municipalities, and in practice, municipal officials, not elected politicians. The programme was launched on the initiative of a cooperation meeting of the mayors of the cities of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, the Executive Director of YTV (a network of the four municipalities of the region which was in charge of utilities like waste disposal, traffic and air protection and has since been reorganised) and the Executive Director of the Uusimaa Regional Council. The implementation of the programme was directed by a management group appointed by the mayors. The management group of the Urban Programme consisted of relatively high-level public officials from the cities of Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen, the Uusimaa Regional Council, the Ministry of the Interior (later from the Ministry of Employment and the Economy), the Finnish Association of Local and Regional Authorities and the above-mentioned YTV. The coordination of the programme was the responsibility of the research unit of the city of Helsinki and the management of funds that of the Uusimaa Regional Council. The programme was funded by the municipalities of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and by the state (through regional development funds).

I can say it right at the beginning that the municipalities had the thing firmly in their hands. (Member 1 of the Urban Programme management group.)

The implementation of the programme, i.e., the various projects included, broadened the sphere of actors participating in the governance networks of the programme. One of the criteria in the selection of projects was networking, collaboration and partnerships with the municipal administration, the regional administration of the state, companies, research institutes and associations. In practice, however, most of the projects were conducted by organisations belonging to the sectoral municipal administration – which, of course, is related to the **institutional linkage** of the projects and the permanent administrative structure – or by a development company owned by the Uusimaa Regional Council, the cities of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa, and the universities, polytechnics, research institutes and business community of the Helsinki region. There was only one NGO conducting a project, Helka, in the case of the Citizen Channel.

The Urban Programme in general was not characterised by various **forms participation** or strategies of large-scale public involvement. However, it must be noted that the idea of stakeholder involvement was present, both in the preparation and the implementation of the programme. The first Urban Programme in particular went through a preparatory phase with the consultation of stakeholders such as the different levels of public administration, universities and polytechnics, NGOs, companies and chambers of commerce (this habit, of course, is not only typical of programmes, but also has its background in the Nordic corporatist tradition). However, the interim evaluation of the 2005–2007 programme suggested a stronger bottom-up method of policy preparation and a model of interaction during the whole programming period, where the “weak signals” coming from citizens, inhabitants, companies, researchers and other actors would be taken into account in the formulation of the programme (Uusikylä et al., 2007).

The working logic of the Urban Programme allowed experimentation with new procedures which were not possible in the normal sectoral municipal administration. This was seen as one of the big benefits of the programme. Moreover, as to **conflict resolution**, it became evident in the interviews that the Urban Programme marked a shift in the interaction between the four municipalities of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Traditionally, the municipalities have been competing with each other, and the Urban Programme was one of the first attempts to create a dialogue and some common framework for the metropolitan area. Throughout the interviews, it became clear that this was the biggest achievement of the Urban Programme, despite its official policy objectives. However, some interviewees had reservations, saying that despite the collaboration in the management group of the Urban Programme, there was also some bargaining and attempts to dominate decision-making. According to the interviews, the four municipalities of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area were, for instance, opposed to the idea of getting more municipalities into the programme. One respondent also stated that there were many unofficial contacts between the municipalities where many things were agreed, apart from the meetings of the management group. In general, however, it can be stated that the decision-

making and discussion culture of the management group moved a step towards more deliberation than before.

I think that the biggest objective here has been that the actors find each other. (...) Put simply, just to establish a dialogue and that the municipalities talk more or less without hidden agendas there. (Member 2 of the Urban Programme management group.)

The **types of knowledge** present in the programme were administrative and expert knowledge, even if stakeholders were present in the preparation phase of the programme and in some projects. If NGOs participated in the programme, as in the case of Helka (the umbrella association of district associations in Helsinki), their professional nature was emphasized in the interviews.

The most important **outcome** of the programme was, according to the interviews, the way in which it had created interaction and new forms of communication between the four Helsinki Metropolitan area cities. In the interviews, the members of the management group mentioned only few actual results of individual projects. The interview data does not give a clear answer to whether there were clear procedures for **transferring new knowledge** to the permanent administration of the cities. However, in the interim evaluation of the 2005–2007 programme, the fragmented and ad hoc nature of the compilation of projects was seen as leading to a lack of commitment and to problems in the implementation of the results. According to the evaluation, even if the implementation of the results of several projects seemed promising, there was still a risk that the projects would remain mainly as pilots. (Uusikylä et al., 2007.)

The benefit of the Urban Programme was often a lot more than the actual results. Its outcome was rather that the bureaucracies talked with one another; these people bumped into one another and got to know each other. (...). In this way, I would say nastily that the programme achieved different objectives than those that were probably written down. (Project organiser 1.)

Finally, the question of the **political mandate** of the programme needs further attention. The programming document of the first Urban Programme, which covered 2002–2004, emphasized the conformity of the programme with several municipal, regional and national strategies and policies. The mayors, who had an important role in launching the programme, were seen as those with the operative responsibility emanating from the political mandate of municipal councils (Pääkaupunkiseudun kaupunkiohjelma. Osaaminen ja osallisuus). According to the interim evaluation of the first Urban Programme, there were two different conceptions of the role of the municipal councillors among the governance networks of the programme: some considered the indirect link sufficient, while others wanted more information about the programme for the councillors – a view supported by the programme evaluation as well (Uusikylä & Valovirta, 2003).

However, the role of representative municipal democracy in the context of metropolitan development changed between the two programming periods. The Helsinki Metropolitan Area Advisory Board, which is a cooperation body of leading elected officials of the four municipalities of the area, met for the first time in 2004. The Advisory Board approved a common vision and strategy for the Helsinki Metropolitan Area in 2004, and the objective and lines of action of the Urban Programme 2005–2007 were formulated according to this strategy. According to the programming document of the Urban Programme 2005–2007, the implementation of the programme happened for the first time in a situation where there was a mandate based on a politically approved collaboration arena (Pääkaupunkiseudun kaupunkiohjelma 2005–2007: 4).

There is the strategic work between the leaders of the cities, which is the work of the council and municipal governments and their chairpersons, and this [Urban Programme] has been more like collaboration between the sectors of municipal administration, and operative [work]. But already since the programming period 2005, this [Urban Programme] has been adapted to the three strategic pillars which are in accordance with the common vision [approved by the Helsinki Metropolitan Area Advisory Board]. So in this way these worlds have met. (Member 3 of the Urban Programme management group.)

The relation between the Urban Programme and representative democracy can be characterised as indirect. In the programming documents (and in some interviews, as seen in the citation above), there was a clear need to show the democratic legitimacy of the programme. The emphasis on the notion of *operative* work in the programming documents 2002–2004 and in some interviews can be interpreted as the need to show that the programme was part of a chain of political accountability. The establishment of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area Advisory Board was again strongly emphasized in terms of a democratic mandate for the Urban Programme. This shows that the question of representative democracy in the context of the Urban Programme is both an important and, to some extent, a delicate issue, which is related not only to the mandate of high-level municipal officials but also to the complicated issue of the governance of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Finally, even if the programme had, to some extent, a political mandate during the programming period 2005–2007, municipal councillors still remained almost entirely absent from the governance of the programme – something which has been confirmed in earlier studies of local governance (e.g., Häikiö, 2005).

This, well, is not apparent in the everyday life of municipal councillors. (...) Such small – in a way, small – programmes and projects don't go to the council level. (Member 4 of the Urban Programme management group.)

Altogether, it can be said that the Urban Programme worked according to the a bureaucratic logic and tradition political steering rather than a vision based on broad public participation and deliberation. However, even if the decision-

making of the programme was mainly based on the strong role of municipalities, there were deliberative elements compared to the traditional competition between the four cities of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. This was by the interviewees actually seen as the most important achievement of the Urban Programme, and the official objectives of the programme were actually less important than the creation of networks and collaboration. From the perspective of a political mandate, the link between the programme and municipal democracy was indirect, as municipal councillors did not directly participate in the programme. The Urban Programme was mostly based on the action of high-level municipal officials, even if it had an indirect relation to institutions of representative municipal democracy through strategic steering and the creation of new municipal collaboration forums.

The democratic qualities of the Citizen Channel project

Citizen Channel was one of the projects of the Urban Programme. However, it was relatively different from the other policy programme projects, which were mainly administered by municipalities or the (mainly municipal) development company Culminatium. According to the original description of Citizen Channel, the objective of the project was to develop a model of interaction, a “citizen channel”, between the citizens and the administration of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, which would cross municipal and sectoral borders. One of the ideas of Citizen Channel was to augment interaction in the border areas of the four Helsinki Metropolitan Area municipalities. In practice, the project consisted of experiments with a variety of “participatory” tools in target areas. The ambitious goal of developing a model for participation for the Helsinki Metropolitan Area soon turned into the more modest idea of developing of a “toolbox” that could be used later in other, similar contexts. These tools were then presented in leaflets published by the project and on the Internet pages of the project and of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area.

The project was conducted by Helka, the umbrella association of district associations in Helsinki. The interviews show that funding from the Urban Programme enabled an ambitious project that had already been planned for a long time among the activists of the association and some other actors. Moreover, for Helka, the project was an opportunity to augment their professionalism and to give them the opportunity to work in close collaboration with the municipalities. Finally, the steering group of the project was an opportunity to gather experts working with citizen participation from different sectors and from the Helsinki Metropolitan Area municipalities.

The most important **actor** in Citizen Channel was Helka, the NGO in charge of the project. In general, project actors included both municipal officials and representatives of NGOs. The Citizen Channel management group was a relatively small group which consisted of officials from the four cities, the chairperson of Helka and the representative of the Finnish Association of Local and Regional Authorities. The aim of this group was to function as a link between

the project and the programme level and to make decisions about the financing of the project and other important issues. The project steering group consisted of more various stakeholders working with participation issues. Its members included not only representatives from the cities and the Finnish Association of Local and Regional Authorities, but also of NGOs representing districts, detached housing, community centres and such areas as future studies. Moreover, the public officials were closer to the grassroots level than in the management group, as they were mainly planners, researchers or working in social services. The project had a variety of participants, mainly from the target areas in which it organised various events. However, the most active people in the project were district association activists, and district associations were also the channels for spreading information about the project locally. It can be said that the activists in the project were people who were already active elsewhere, and the project was based on active citizenship rather than on the empowerment of vulnerable groups (or areas), as in socially oriented urban policies. Even if the aim of the project was to involve elected municipal politicians, their role remained very modest, and this was seen as a weakness in the interviews.

The fact that the Citizen Channel was largely situated outside the regular municipal administration resulted in a relatively weak **institutional linkage** between the project and the permanent administrative structure. However, some institutional linkage did exist. As noted above, the management group of the Citizen Channel project consisted of relatively high-level officials from the four cities, the chairperson of Helka and the representative of the Finnish Association of Local and Regional Authorities. Moreover, the project workers participated in activities organised by the Urban Programme. This link, however, was perceived as insufficient in several interviews.

Even if the organiser was really good and ran the project professionally, so in something which is kind of related to the inner system of the cities, to get participation there, the project should in a way come from the inside (KK: Inside the city?) Yes, or inside the cities. You should in a way have the owner there. (Member 5 of the Urban Programme management group.)

The project used various **forms of participation**. It was actually the aim of the project – to test and model different forms of citizen participation and interaction between citizens, public officials and politicians at the local level. These forms included meetings, seminars, local forums, walks in the area, the gathering of ideas among local schoolchildren, meetings with planners and other municipal officials, exhibitions and inquiries, local websites, different forms of user democracy and creating local images for the future. The project was implemented in target areas where neighbouring districts belonged to different municipalities. The main results of the Citizen Channel included forms of interaction and participation which were identified and tested during the project. In the “toolbox” published by the project, eight different “tools of interaction” were highlighted (Kansalaiskanava – Seutuyhteistyötä paikallistasolla). First, the project presented three forms of action related to the gathering of local development ideas: the

organisation of open forums at the neighbourhood level (even bypassing municipal borders if needed), regular meetings between citizens and experts (like planners or local politicians) and the establishment of local discussion forums on the Internet. Second, the project emphasized the importance of neighbourhood web sites, the collection of contact information on relevant local actors as well as the creation of networks consisting of local associations, companies, planners, local politicians, active citizens and others in the dissemination of information. In the gathering of local information, the projects highlighted the use of SWOT as well as interactive GIS systems and maps. Finally, the project suggested the establishment of a “user democracy club” (which was actually established during the project), which would work with client feedback issues.

The issue of power and influence was not directly related to the participatory devices that were used in the project. The aim of Citizen Channel was to *develop* participation, not to influence decision-making *by means of* participation during the course of the project. The development of participation can be related to the broader literature on democratic innovations (Saward, 2000; Bengtsson, 2008; Smith, 2009; cf. Warren, 2009), according to which participation and democracy can be developed through political intervention. However, in a more critical analysis, Ricardo Blaug (2002) sees a cleavage between the objectives of what he calls “democratic engineering” and the aims of bottom-up activism. The Citizen Channel project was marketed to local inhabitants in very practical terms. They were not necessarily aware of the modelling part of the project, as the task of creating models was left to the project administration. Even if the inhabitants discussed local issues such as traffic connections or the development of a local river area, the idea of the project was not to actively communicate the local claims further to the administration.

It does not sell to say welcome to participate or come and have an impact or do you want to have interaction. It's not selling. And nobody is interested in that. Instead, (...) you have to go through an issue like hey, now we'll talk about traffic, do you feel that there are bad public transportation connections in your area or are you afraid of the building of Ring Road II or something, you have to go that way, through the theme and the topic and the issue. It has clearly been the thing that you have to forget the word 'participation' or the word 'interaction'. (Project organiser 2.)

However, two reservations are needed. First, it can be said that the project actually did promote participation by creating the toolbox that could be used later in other contexts. In the project literature, emphasis is not only on what is done during the project, but how the project affects the permanent organisation once it has ended (see, e.g., Jensen et al., 2007). However, as described later in this article, the transfer was problematic in the Citizen Channel project. Second, the aim of Citizen Channel was not to get a “representative sample” of local citizens, as it was primarily a pilot project, based on the activists in local inhabitant associations. From that perspective, it was perhaps natural that it had only a loose connection to actual decision-making.

And with these inhabitant associations, you can always see the risk that there is a small group of people who found an association and start to speak for the whole area. (Project organiser 3.)

Within the project, **conflict resolution** was mainly based on deliberation. The working logic of the steering and management groups was based on consensus rather than on bargaining, and the district association activists who participated in the project also talked about a consensual atmosphere. However, there were a few situations where the management group set limits for the steering group, mainly in the allocation of resources. Moreover, the interviews indicated that there were some tensions in the steering group about the role of the project between modelling and actual action, the relation between representative and participatory democracy, and about the way in which the results of the project should be presented. Finally, in the activities organised by the project in the target areas, some inhabitants every now and then were accused of nimbyism instead of working in a consensual way. Generally, however, the interviewees emphasized the consensual nature of decision-making within the project.

But then in the situations when I was very critical, in the meetings [of the steering group] I somehow softened. There was always some point of view that was so well justified, that this is important and this is useful. (Project organiser 4.)

Several **types of knowledge** were included in the project: administrative and expert knowledge, as well as lay knowledge. Lay knowledge was very much present in the practical implementation of the project. The local inhabitants had a say on the themes on which the project was concentrating in the pilot areas. However, this knowledge was not further used in the project, as it concentrated on creating a model or tools for participation. Therefore, expert knowledge was the most dominant type of knowledge. It was a very special kind of expert knowledge, however, as the steering group (and to some extent, the management group) of the project included *experts in participation* – people who had been working with or doing research on participation.

I knew almost everybody from that [steering] group before, probably because I have been doing these (...) home page concepts together with Helka, and maybe also the research that I have done. (Project organiser 5.)

The most substantial **outcome** of Citizen Channel was the “toolbox” created by the project, which presented various possible forms of participation available at the local level. The interviewees also mentioned other achievements of the project like the creation of networks, the bypassing of municipal borders and the work of the “user democracy club”. It is also interesting that even if the aim of the project was not to promote political issues, the Citizen Channel project in itself was sometimes seen in the interviews as a way to get issues of participation onto the political agenda of municipalities more forcefully.

They created a really great project, were working at the whole metropolitan region and were working very close to the concrete level, and also tried to get certain ideas [and] proposals into decision-making. And what I think is the greatest thing is that now the collaboration models, ways, what tools we have, they are collected. Now, in a way, the next step is which ones we put to use. (Member 5 of the Urban Programme management group.)

Even if the project had interesting results, it can be said that there were no clear procedures for **transferring the knowledge** acquired in the project to the permanent structures of the municipalities (for similar findings, see Häikiö, 2005). This was in fact an issue that was present throughout the interviews at the project level, and was seen as the weakest point of the project. One reason for this problem that was mentioned in the interviews was that the project was led by an NGO, whereas its results were mainly intended for municipalities. Some interviewees saw that the problems in the transfer of knowledge depended on a lack of political willingness and that municipalities were not interested in implementing the results of the project in practice (for similar findings, see Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000). On the other hand, one of the municipal officials from the management group of the Urban Programme emphasized the complex environment of various policy instruments and saw that projects do not necessarily fit the framework of strategic management in municipalities.

I think that we don't need any projects any more; I think we need political decisions next. We have an immense number of experiments and projects and summaries and evaluations and opinions and experiences, and I don't think we will get any new findings from any project. (...) It's easy to outsource participation (...) to projects that are outside the regular organisation of government – and in the worst cases, they stay there and don't change anything. (Project organiser 6.)

It's a constant challenge in a project how it is transferred to normal action, or is there anything that is transferred to these current practices. There has probably been less than what the project wished for. But we (...) have created the strategy of [the city], where we have defined objectives and through it the way of action, how we want to target things, how to do them. So I kind of understand that you cannot really change the organisation through projects. (Member 6 of the Urban Programme management group.)

However, in a way, the project did continue in the form of a later project organized by Helka and in another democracy-oriented project of the Urban Programme 2008–2010, which were seen in the interviews as the continuation of the action started in Citizen Channel. Moreover, the benefits of the toolbox created by the project were conceived as useful from the perspective of municipal mergers elsewhere in Finland. Many interviewees among the project organisers said that changes in the organisational culture of municipalities were slow, and the

Citizen Channel was only a part of a bigger group and continuum of participatory initiatives that can gradually have an impact on municipalities. The interim evaluation of the Urban Programme 2005–2007 also saw that the implementation of the results of Citizen Channel as such would have been unrealistic, but the project was nevertheless creating prerequisites for further work (Uusikylä et al., 2007).

With one project you do not usually make very big changes, no matter how much you got good and realisable ideas. The challenge is rather that it takes time for people to adopt new models and ways of action, so one project can seldom get big things established. Development is a long process where you proceed one bit at a time. It seems like nowadays you should define results straight after the project has finished, even if they should be reviewed after a ‘long’ time. (Project organiser 2.)

Gilles Pinson (2009), who has conducted research on projects and cities, does not see the short-termism of projects as a problem. For him, projects are a way to anticipate the future in a relatively flexible and dialogical way in an increasingly pluralistic and uncertain world. Pinson emphasises the importance of the “meta-project” – or horizons, principles and policy discourses, which form a framework for individual projects – as a way to ensure continuity. In the case of Citizen Channel, it became evident that the project belonged to a larger group and continuum of related projects. However, there is a risk that such projects – even as a continuing meta-project – might remain outside the regular municipal administration.

The project had, to some extent, an indirect **political mandate**. The issue of participation was mentioned several times in the programming documents of the Urban Programme, and all the interviewees considered participation to be an important part of urban policy and of the Urban Programme. Citizen Channel was, in fact, the only project in the programme that directly concentrated on citizen participation. However, from a broader democratic perspective, the ambiguous relation between representative and participatory democracy was present in Citizen Channel, as in many other participatory initiatives. In Citizen Channel, the elected politicians participated only to a limited extent, even if the organisers of the project (as well as some participants) would have wanted them to play a more active role, as the original aim of the project was to augment interaction between municipal officials, elected politicians and citizens (for similar findings, see Häikiö, 2005; cf. Warren, 2009). Moreover, another question concerned the channels of participation and whether citizens should participate directly or through NGOs.

Well, in my opinion, there are always inevitably contradictions in these projects. (...) And the principal questions about, in a way, the relation between direct participation and representative participation and the role of associations, they were always present. (Project organiser 6.)

To sum up, the Citizen Channel project included various forms of participation. However, even if there were attempts to mobilize local actors, their possibilities for influencing local decision-making remained limited especially in two respects. First, even if inhabitants did participate in the project, their claims and development ideas on local issues were not actively taken into account, as the aim of the project was to create a model or a toolbox of participation. A counter-argument is that the toolbox created in the project could be used later in other situations and thus promote citizen participation. Second, the ability of the project to influence the permanent administration of the municipalities remained weak. However, the project did have some continuity in terms of subsequent projects.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to study the democratic qualities of the Urban Programme for the Helsinki Metropolitan Area 2005–2007 and the Citizen Channel project. The Urban Programme was clearly an administrative tool, based on the strong role of public officials (see Table 2). However, it included some elements that were not possible to achieve in the sectoral administration of municipalities. The most important achievement of the programme was the way in which it created networks and dialogue, even if they concerned a relatively small group of municipal officials. This meant a step towards deliberation in the interaction between the municipalities of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, which have traditionally competed with each other. On the other hand, the outcome of the programme was not always clear. Moreover, although the political chain of accountability to some extent influenced the programme, the relationship between the programme and the municipal representative democracy was weak and indirect. The Citizen Channel project clearly had participatory and deliberative elements, even if the developed tools for citizen participation did not provide possibilities for real influence on political decision-making. The project included various forms of participation, and decision-making within the project was mainly deliberative, but there were problems in transferring new knowledge to the permanent structure of the municipalities.

It can be argued that the programme level was based on traditional forms of steering, while the project level to a greater extent allowed flexibility and opportunities for participation and deliberation. However, the aim and the effects of the participatory activities were not particularly clear. In a project which is intended to develop participatory models, citizen participation is not necessarily related to the power and influence of the involved actors. On the other hand, the interviews showed that individual projects can be situated within a broader “meta-project”, the continuum of other projects and initiatives, and that participatory models and innovations can lead to a subsequent enhancement of citizen participation. However, the relationship between this meta-project and the regular municipal administration remains ambivalent. A prerequisite for a broader im-

part of projects like Citizen Channel is that the projects and their achievements are well integrated in the municipal administration.

Table 2. The Democratic Qualities of the Urban Programme for the Helsinki Metropolitan Area 2005–2007 and the Citizen Channel Project

Criteria	The Urban Programme	The Citizen Channel Project
Actors	Public and semi-public actors from several levels of administration (municipalities, regional level, state level)	Public officials, representatives of NGOs, researchers, local inhabitants; strong role for an NGO (Helka)
Institutional linkage	Representation of administration in the management group; most projects conducted by municipal actors	Representation of administration in the management group; the linkage between the project and the municipalities considered as insufficient
Forms of participation	Administrative routine; consultation of stakeholders in the preparation of the first programme	Various forms of participation; the impact of participation not always clear
Conflict resolution	Mainly by discussion and deliberation	Mainly by discussion and deliberation
Types of knowledge	Administrative and expert knowledge	Various forms of knowledge; emphasis on “participatory expertise”
Outcome	More collaboration between the municipalities; the results of the individual projects	A “toolbox” of participation
Transfer of knowledge	Exists; however, discussed to some extent in the programme evaluation	The transfer of knowledge to municipalities considered as insufficient; the continuation of the themes in later projects
Political mandate	Exists; however, only an indirect link with institutions of representative municipal democracy	No direct political mandate, but participation is considered as an important issue in the programming documents and interviews

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