
A pathway to influence?

**Older people, young people
and people with disabilities
participating in the Wellbeing
Services Counties**

Research plan, Lisa Heilmann

Agenda

1. Overall idea
2. Theoretical background
3. Research questions
4. Methodology
5. What I want to do at Etelä-Savo & schedule
6. Ethical considerations
7. Open questions

1. Overall idea

- Phd-research project on public participation in Lapha (& now also other WBSCs)
- Article 1: under review, analysis of Laki hyvinvointialueesta & the implementation of PI (participatory innovations = methods of participation, e.g., vaikuttamistoimielimet) in Lapha
- **Article 2: evaluation of BEI** (bodies for exerting influence = vaikuttamistoimielimet)
 - 3 research questions:
 - Are BEI participatory innovations/citizen participation?
 - How do the BEI influence governance of the WBSC?
 - How do the BEI operate within and which form of communication is used?
 - Qualitative interviews with experts + chairs of BEI (+ possibly former chairs/members?)
 - Quantitative survey among current members of BEI
 - Multiple WBSC included in analysis to guarantee anonymity

2. Theoretical background

- Participatory & deliberative democracy
- Definitions of participatory innovations/citizen participation
- participation can lead to increased legitimacy, justice and effectiveness
- IF its „good“ participation = fair & competent
 - Member selection
 - Process, communication & deliberation
 - Impact (coupled to political system)



3. Research questions

1. To what extent can the BEI of the wellbeing services counties be considered participatory innovations?

- member selection, representational attitudes, organization, communication

2. How do the BEI exert influence within wellbeing services counties?

- process, (impact)

3. How do the BEI operate, and which form of communication is prevalent?

- deliberative quality, mode of communication & decision-making

4. Methodology

1. Qualitative expert interviews (in English, if at all possible)

- to establish overall information framework

2. Qualitative interviews with chairs & former members (in Finnish, or English if by chance possible)

- to extract information on procedure, communication, deliberation, representational attitudes, role understanding + refine questions for survey

3. Quantitative survey of current members (in Finnish)

- questions on communication, deliberation, representational attitudes, role understanding, connection to municipal level



5. What I want to do at Etelä-Savo & schedule

- 1-2 interviews with experts on BEI at Etelä-Savo: **asap**
- 3 interviews with current BEI chairs: **asap**
- ideal deadline to complete all qualitative interviews (in all WBSC cases): **28.02.2026**
- survey with current BEI members
 - possible to do on paper if an in-person meeting is coming up?
 - digital survey, possible shared in a meeting?
 - Deadline ideally: **31.05.2026** (depending on meeting structure)
- possible feedback event to discuss results with BEI
- article finished & submitted: **31.08.2026**; publication expected in **2027**
- possibly do another survey round in early 2027 to see changes

6. Ethical Considerations

- basis: informed consent, total freedom to withdraw from interviews at any time, withdraw already given information
- data protection: qualitative interview data will be stored by Lisa Heilmann on ULapland server; interviews will be transcribed with university software, translated using AI; interviewee information will be anonymised/pseudonymised (e.g., connected to information on BEI case)
- total guarantee of anonymity in publishing: no individual results of Etelä-Savo will be published. At least 4 different WBSC will be included, and BEI will always be in „case groups“ with at least one other case (e.g., 2 vammaisneuvostot that have the right to speak in the aluevaalusto)
- evaluation results could be „negative“ as measured against the theoretical framework
- results could potentially be received and considered by Etelä-Savon ha administration, stakeholders and politicians
- Currently applied & waiting for ethical review from Lapin yliopisto



7. Open questions

- General feedback/thoughts?
- What is the availability level of BEI chairs and former members?
- Do the chairs possibly speak English?
- What are the needs of the interviewees? Can the interviews be online? Should another person be present? Which survey form is best?
- Are there any problems/roadblocks you foresee?
- Would you help me contact the chairs/former members for the interviews?
- Would you help me distribute the survey?

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