

## **Municipal Referendums in Finland**

An overview of the relationship between the referendum results and the acts of municipal councils during the years 1991–2020

**KIM BACKSTRÖM  
THOMAS KARV  
KIM STRANDBERG**

Referendums constitute a political method for increasing the level of democratic legitimacy for a policy decision. An amendment in the Finnish constitution in 1990 enabled the organization of municipal level consultative referendums. The political power remains at the municipal council, irrespective of the referendum result, and municipal councils across Finland have on several occasions chosen to vote against the outcome of the referendums. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of studies focusing on how the outcome of a municipal level referendum affects the political behavior of municipal councils. This study aims at contributing to this line of research by analyzing to what extent the voter turnout and margin of victory following a referendum affects the willingness of municipal councils to act accordingly, or not, to the results. Our results show that when the majority size of the winning side in the referendum is lower, the possibility for the municipal council to act against the majority will increase, while voter turnout does not seem to have any effect. This indicates that when the public opinion becomes sufficiently clear, the congruence between the referendum outcome and the municipal council decision increases, meaning that the result from a consultative referendum in reality transforms into a politically binding political outcome.

Keywords: referendums; municipal mergers; voter turnout; margin of victory; democratic legitimacy

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## Local Lists in Finnish Municipal Elections

**ANDREAS FAGERHOLM**

This study focuses on local lists in Finnish municipal elections. The purpose is to carry out a general overview, focusing mainly on the period 1984–2017. The study has three main tasks; to offer a mapping of the presence and success of local lists, to present a tentative taxonomy of the core ideological features of local lists, and to empirically test a number of factors that can help to explain local lists. The results indicate that local lists are an established, albeit not ideologically uniform, element in Finnish local politics. Furthermore, it is suggested that they can best be explained with reference to cultural factors (tradition).

Keywords: local lists; parties; municipal elections