



Samforsk

**The Social Science
Research Institute**

Annual report 2019





FUTUDEM

2019 An eventful year

The year 2019 was remarkable for Samforsk and its 16 team members. The Centre of Excellence FutuDem, and the research funding from the Academy of Finland for building a national infrastructure for public opinion research (FIRIPO), are proof of the splendid cooperativeness and ambition that characterizes Samforsk. As a result, we have created a critical mass that attracts funding and produces high quality research. In addition, we have acti-

vely collaborated with many of our esteemed international partners, whose contribution was invaluable for the positive results that our team has produced. We are grateful for all the support and collaborations during the past year. We look forward to a productive 2020 with new opportunities on the horizon. In this annual report, you will find a short presentation of Samforsk's research projects and its main events during 2019.



Research projects 2019

FutuDem

The Future of Democracy, or **FutuDem**, is a Centre of Excellence in public opinion research at Åbo Akademi University. The centre launched in 2019, and has funding for another three years. FutuDem sets out to study the current condition of democracy and to test new deliberative and participatory models of democracy functions in practice, especially democratic

deliberation. The Social Science Research Institute coordinates FutuDem, with Professor **Kimmo Grönlund** as its director, and Director of research **Lauri Rapeli** as its Vice Director. PM **Albert Weckman** is the project coordinator at FutuDem since October 2019. FutuDem consists of seven work packages, with a senior researcher leading each work package.

FutuDem work packages

- WP 1:** Democracies at risk (Inga Saikkonen)
- WP 2:** Populism (Peter Söderlund)
- WP 3:** The role of civic literacy (Lauri Rapeli)
- WP 4:** Inequalities and political participation (Henrik Serup Christensen)
- WP 5:** The role of social media in societal polarization (Kim Strandberg)
- WP 6:** Participatory and deliberative democracy (Kaisa Herne)
- WP 7:** The future of democracy (Kimmo Grönlund)

The Barometer

(Barometern – den finlands-svenska medborgarpanelen)

The aim of this project is to map the attitudes on societal and political issues among the Swedish-speaking population in Finland, and analyze changes in opinion. The Barometer was conducted regularly in the early 2000's, and was revived as an online-panel in 2019 after a longer break. The first wave of The Barometer 2019 went live on November 19, 2019, and the data collection for the first wave ended on December 9. Out of the 35000 Swedish-speaking Finns that were invited, 4700 registered to the panel. 3804 persons answered all of the questions in the survey, a successful response rate of 80,7%. The Swedish Cultural Foundation in Finland finances the Barometer. Dr. **Marina Lindell**, who is a researcher at Samforsk, leads the project. Project assistant **Rasmus Sirén** manages the data collection processes and handles panel maintenance.

The Language Barometer (Språkbarometern)

Mainly funded by the Ministry of Justice, Samforsk has every four years since 2004, conducted a special survey called the Language Barometer about public service in bilingual municipalities, and the collaboration is set to continue. The next survey will be conducted in 2020, and is funded by the Ministry of Justice. Samforsk, together with The Ministry of Justice and the Association of Finnish Municipalities, carries out the Language Barometer 2020. The survey has been part of the Report that the Government presents to the Finnish parliament

on the application of language legislation. Samforsk researcher, Dr. **Marina Lindell**, leads this project, with the help of project assistant **Jonas Schauman**.

eOpinion 2019

Between March and June 2019, Samforsk organized an online panel, eOpinion 2019. It gathered almost 2 000 Finnish adults, who were surveyed eight times in total. The online panel was the third of its kind run by Samforsk since 2011 in conjunction with the Finnish parliamentary elections. The 2019 eOpinion-panel covered both the Finnish parliamentary elections and the European Parliament elections of 2019. eOpinion 2019 culminated in a report called: "Voting and Public Opinion in Finland, The Parliamentary election of 2019". You can find the report at: www.abo.fi/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Voting-and-Public-Opinion-in-Finland.pdf

The Finnish National Election Study (FNES) 2019

The aim of FNES 2019 is to analyze the voting behavior of the Finnish voters and to provide explanations for the Finnish 2019 parliamentary election outcome. The Finnish National Election Study Consortium, consisting of 30 political scientists from Åbo Akademi University, University of Tampere, University of Helsinki and University of Turku, conducted the FNES 2019. The collection of election data was coordinated by Åbo Akademi University (Samforsk). FNES is part of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), which collects and coordinates elections studies in over 40 countries worldwide. Election studies have been implemented regularly in Finland since year 2003. The results from the FNES 2019 are published in a main report, which will be distributed in the spring 2020. Currently

Kimmo Grönlund is the Director of the Finnish National Election Study.

Ostroinvolve 2019

Ostroinvolve 2.0 ended in 2019. It was a four-year project, funded by Högskolestiftelsen i Österbotten. The project's aim was to strengthen the local democracy by arranging deliberative citizen forums as field experiments. In collaboration with a municipal partner, the project organized nine citizen forums concerning political questions of varying significance. The scientific aim of the project was mainly to study how these discussions complement representative democracy on a local level, and how participants perceive and were affected by them. The leader of this project was Professor **Kim Strandberg**.

Palo

PALO is a multidisciplinary research project that focuses on the problems related to long-term decision-making practices. The PALO consortium consists of four organizations, one of which is Åbo Akademi University. PALO gets its funding from The Strategic Research Council at the Academy of Finland. The funding period is 2017 – 2021. The PALO project aims to strengthen democracy by developing better practices for deliberative citizen participation and public decision-making. Director of research, **Lauri Rapeli**, is also one of the work package leaders within PALO.

The Finnish Research Infrastructure for Public Opinion (FIRIPO)

In December 2019, Academy of Finland granted Samforsk a three-year funding for building a national infrastructure for public opinion research – FIRIPO. FIRIPO is a multidisciplinary consortium for the study of public opinion, attitude formation and choice behavior. FIRIPO will serve a broad spectrum of academic disciplines and

scholars around the world who study public opinion. FIRIPO will also inform the society, especially decision-makers and the media. The leading partner in this project is Åbo Akademi (Samforsk). Professor **Kimmo Grönlund** is the principal investigator of FIRIPO.

Events 2019

March 2019

Guest lecture: Professor James S. Fishkin

In March 2019, Professor **James S. Fishkin** visited Åbo Akademi University. He gave a lecture at ASA Main Auditorium, titled *"Revitalizing Democracy Through Public Deliberation"*. James S. Fishkin is Professor of Communication, Political Science and Director of the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University.

April 2019

PALO reseach-workshop

The workshop, titled *"Survey experiments and public opinion research"*, focused on empirical studies that examine the behavior of citizens and elites, with a particular emphasis on experimental methods. Keynote speakers at the event were **Diana Mutz** (University of Pennsylvania), **Rune Slothuus** (Aarhus University), **Sofie Marien** (University of Leuven), **Patrik Öhberg** (University of Gothenburg).

July 2019

Press conference, report release

The press conference and release of the report *"Voting and Public Opinion in Finland"* was arranged at Suomi Areena in Björneborg.

September 2019

Guest lecture: Jean-Paul Gagnon

Dr. Jean-Paul Gagnon, University of Canberra, held a weeklong doctoral course, titled *"Democracy and its critics revisited"*, at the ASA-building, Åbo Akademi University.

October 2019

FutuDem Advisory Board Meeting, Berlin

FutuDem's management team, WP-leaders and advisory board met in Berlin for a two-day internal meeting. The main purpose of this meeting was for WP-leaders to present their respective work packa-

ges to the advisory board. The Advisory Board consists of seven eminent professors from all around the world. This time four of them could attend – **Brigitte Geisel** (Goethe University Frankfurt), **Rachel Gibson** (University of Manchester), **Per-Ola Öberg** (University of Uppsala, Sweden), **Maija Setälä** (University of Turku). The meeting took place mainly at The Finnish Institute in Berlin, but it also included a visit to the Embassy of Finland, hosted by Minister **Antti Kaski**.



During his visit to Finland, Professor **James S. Fishkin** was invited, together with professor **Grönlund**, by the then Speaker of the Finnish Parliament **Paula Risikko**, to give his presentation at the Finnish Parliament. During this seminar, professor Grönlund also presented a framework for using citizen's deliberation in Finland. The seminar rounded off with a panel debate on this subject, in which parliamentary MP's took part. The National Coalition Party, Center Party, Social Democratic Party and the Green party were all represented in the panel.





November 2019

FutuDem Inaugural Conference, Turku

In November 2019, FutuDem had its Inaugural Conference in Turku. Apart from presentations of working packages and Q&A:s, the conference had four keynote speakers. Dr. **Jane Suiter**, Associate Professor at Dublin City University, gave a presentation on the Irish citizens' assembly. Professor **Maija Setälä** from University of Turku presented "*Deliberative mini-publics facilitating voter knowledge and judgement: Experience from a Finnish local referendum*". The mayor of Turku, **Minna Arve**, spoke about "*The challenges and opportunities in cities with new democracy*". **Niklas Wilhelmsson**, who is Head of Department at the Ministry of Justice Finland, presented the government programme of Finland and its democracy politics.

Meisel-Laponce Award

Kim Strandberg, Staffan Himmelroos and Kimmo Grönlund are the recipients of the 2020 Meisel-Laponce award for the best article published in International Political Science Review (IPSR) in the previous four years. The award will be presented at the IPSA World Congress in Lisbon in July 2020. Their article "*Do discussions in like-minded groups necessarily lead to more extreme opinions? Deliberative democracy and group polarization*" was published in the IPSR in 2019 (vol. 40, issue 1).

Academy of Finland Research Fellows at Samforsk 2019

Democratic Innovations in Finland and Political Legitimacy (2015–2020).

Henrik Serup Christensen

Personalization of electoral competition: long-term institutional effects on party-voter linkages and party systems (2014–2019).

Peter Söderlund

Involving citizens through deliberative processes? – Experimental evidence on central causal mechanisms, and their applicability to real-life policy-making, of deliberative mini-publics. (2016–2021).

Kim Strandberg

Coordinating Machine Politics and Clientilism: Variation in Non-Programmatic Electoral Strategies (2018–2023).

Inga Saikkonen

Find out more

For more information about Samforsk staff and their publications, go to: www.abo.fi/en/samforsk

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