

Abstract

This thesis deals with the synodal process and democratic innovation. The main research objective is to determine whether the current synodal process, which began in 2021, can be described as a democratic innovation, specifically deliberative mini-publics, as it is a groundbreaking process that has been made available to all members of the Catholic Church for the first time in history. The research is based primarily on the theory of political scientist Archon Fung, who has written extensively on deliberative mini-publics. The thesis asks two main research questions. The first addresses whether, according to official Catholic Church materials describing the synodal process at the grassroots level, this process can be described as a deliberative mini-public. The research also selected two case studies focusing on two different parishes where the synodal process took place. The second research question was then answered by analyzing these two parishes to examine the fulfillment of selected design criteria of deliberative mini-publics. Based on the processed results of the analysis, it can be concluded that a level of fulfillment of the design elements was achieved such that the synodal process at the grassroots level was identified as a DMP. However, in answering the second research question, the answer is not so clear-cut as one parish met the criteria but the other did not, therefore it can be concluded that the synodal process has the potential to be designated as a DMP but that this potential is not always fulfilled.