

Faculti Summary

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This video discusses a study on municipal amalgamation—merger of two or more municipalities—highlighting its effects on electoral turnout. The study began amid a wave of municipal mergers in Europe aimed at cost savings and rationalization during economic recession. It aimed to analyze how these amalgamations impact voter participation in elections at the local level.

Key findings include:

1. **Decrease in Turnout**: Overall, the study found a decrease in municipal voter turnout by approximately three percentage points post-amalgamation across ten countries and over a thousand municipal units.
2. **Factors Affecting Turnout**:
 - **Process of Amalgamation**: Whether the amalgamation was voluntary or imposed by the national government significantly influenced turnout. Imposed amalgamations led to greater declines in participation.
 - **Size of Amalgamated Units**: While larger municipalities were expected to see lower turnout, the research revealed that the increase in size itself is not the sole cause of reduced participation; rather, it is the amalgamation process that predominantly matters.
 - **Community Dynamics**: The nature of the municipalities merged also played a role. Merging similar-sized municipalities created political conflicts that could diminish turnout.
3. **Inclusion and Balance as Policy Implications**:
 - Including citizens in the amalgamation decision-making process and ensuring balance among merging municipal units are recommended strategies to mitigate negative effects on voter turnout.
4. **Complexity of Voter Behavior**: The study suggests that while amalgamation increases the size of municipalities, the two phenomena—size and amalgamation—should be viewed differently in terms of their impacts on electoral behavior.

The research contributes to understanding municipal reforms and emphasizes that policymakers should pursue inclusive and balanced approaches to mitigate the adverse effects on local electoral participation.