

The more voice the better?

Prof.Dr. Jean-Patrick Villeneuve

Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) – Switzerland

Modern governance emphasises concepts of Transparency, Accountability, but also Participation. Participation rests on Habermas's conception of the Public Sphere. It posits that to make better decisions, there is an intrinsic value to having more voices, and greater and broader participation and this in opposition to having fewer, even if more expert opinions.

Several mechanisms have been put in place by public institutions at local and national levels. More globally, international organisations and International civil society organisations such as Transparency International and The Open Government Partnership have also pushed in this direction.

Participation mechanisms and initiatives have sought to make public decisions (and the processes leading to them) more open, accountable, and inclusive of the diversity of voices present in society. This in turn leads to greater legitimacy of the decisions being made, generating a greater buy-in from all stakeholders. More effective policy choices are offered, and policy implementation is thus facilitated by the consensus built (or at least inclusion achieved) along the way. At a more general level, these initiatives seek nothing less than the emergence of a more sustainable democratic society and to provide, at least in part, a remedy for the rising tide of socio-political tensions and mistrust towards public and global institutions.

These concepts will be discussed and evaluated through two ongoing research projects:

“Deliberative Quality in Trade-Related International Organizations” -

<https://snis.ch/projects/deliberative-quality-in-trade-related-international-organizations/>

“DigitalPartIndex” <https://digipartindex.ch/en/project/>