Consultation tools and agenda-setting

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The recent scholarship in the policy sciences has highlighted how different policy instruments and tools are assembled or bundled in complex policy portfolios in different stages of the policy process. A nascent strand of this important work concerns the agenda-setting phase, in which scholars aim to understand the instruments – procedural and substantive – that the government uses to shape the issues that it has to address. This chapter presents a taxonomy to typologize agenda-setting instruments and illustrative examples of emerging policy mixes used to manage policy demands. Tools are classified as those which governments use to routinize demands, regularize demands, generate demands, and impose issues onto the agenda. The chapter makes two contributions to the literature on policy tools and mixes. First, it presents a framework to study agenda-setting tools, and second, it contributes to the literature around policy portfolios by presenting empirical examples of emerging policy mixes used in the agenda-setting phase of the policy process.

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the consultation approaches and tools government have at their disposal to manage the agenda-setting phase and organize consultation process and, in this way, shape the participation and formulation of policy demands by external stakeholders, such as interest groups, think tanks, companies, citizens, and experts. While much work has focused on how and to what extent these external stakeholders have the ability to set the government agenda, the other side of the equation – namely, how policymakers approach stakeholder engagement in this early phase of the policy cycle – has received much less attention.

In all phases of the policy cycle, policymakers are in need of policy expertise and insight into societal legitimacy of policy measures, and the agenda-setting phase obviously is no exception. Quite in contrary, this kind of information might be most critical and influential in the earliest moments of setting the agenda and developing policy proposals as the space to shape the content and scope of policies is arguably largest at this point. This implies both that external stakeholders see this as a unique window of opportunity to shape policy initiatives, and public officials are likely to be most open to suggestions and input, compared to later stages in the policy process.

In organizing the consultation process, governments face several difficult choices and trade-offs, which will be addressed in this chapter. The first question involves which consultation

approaches and tools are most suitable, a question that has only become more important as the number of available policy tools has proliferated. The second question relates to the objectives of the central actors: Which strategies can governments follow to manage stakeholder demands, how do bureaucratic motives shape the chosen consultation approach, and how do stakeholders approach and perceive different consultation tools? These strategies and choices also relate to key trade-offs, such as the fairness and inclusiveness of consultation procedures.

Consultation Tools and Approaches

Consultation of external stakeholders is a central feature of contemporary governance. Much academic work has focused on the consultation of external stakeholders, such as NGOs, firms, business associations, think tanks, and citizens in the policy formulation phase. In this phase, consultation procedures are often characterized by higher transparency and more strongly institutionalized. Yet the importance of consultation practices at both earlier and later stages, such as agenda-setting, implementation, and evaluation, should not be overlooked. The phase of agenda-setting in particular provides a key opportunity for public officials and external stakeholders to set the policy scene and determine which (aspects of) policy problems receive attention and the range of policy solutions put forward for political and public debate.

The increased importance of consultation procedures to both policymakers and stakeholders can be explained by a combination of developments. As highlighted by Bunea (2020: 2), a combination of government reforms triggered by ideas related to New Public Management (accelerated by the emergence of new digital technologies), increasing concerns about the legitimacy and accountability of public policies, a growing need to enhance the functioning of regulatory regimes, more emphasis on evidence-based policymaking, and better regulation has resulted in more attention to consultation processes, greater investments in these procedures by public officials, and more scholarly attention.

In recent years, the number and variety of consultation tools that policymakers have at their disposal have increased considerably. Classic tools, such as advisory councils, parliamentary hearings, and expert committees, have been complemented with new instruments. Some of these tools have been enabled by new technologies, such as the increased use of online public consultations. Other tools follow a trend towards more participatory and collaborative modes of policymaking, such as cocreation, codesign, and collaborative policy platforms.

As a result, policymakers have a large toolbox and a variety of tools to engage with external stakeholders. To provide one specific example, in recent communication, the European Commission (see European Commission 2017) distinguishes the following consultation tools: (1) conferences, public hearings, and events; (2) Eurobarometer surveys; (3) Expert groups of the Commission; (4) focus groups; (5) interviews; (6) public consultations; (7) consultations targeting SMEs–SME panel; and (8) workshops, meetings, and seminars. Excluded from this list are direct meetings with policymakers. While this cannot be considered a consultation tool, this form of interaction between external stakeholders and policymakers still constitutes a scarce and highly valuable channel as it involves privileged access for a select number of groups, often on an individual basis.

While there is a tendency to study consultation tools in isolation (in particular those linked to democratic innovations), the political and administrative reality is that within a single policy process, policymakers often combine several consultation tools to involve stakeholders and acquire policy input. As a result, different types of tools are used to engage with external stakeholders in a similar issue context. In recent work, Fraussen et al. (2020) consider how public authorities might combine these different tools and conceptually distinguish between open, closed, and hybrid approaches to engaging stakeholders in policy processes.

The use of internet consultations provides a good example of an open consultation approach as this tool enables the participation of all external stakeholders who seek to provide policy input. An open consultation approach implies that the consultation procedure is accessible to everyone. Hence, theoretically, the number of external stakeholders who can participate in an open consultation approach is unlimited, as it provides "self-selected" involvement for a wide range of possible participants (2020: 476). An open consultation approach seems most suitable when policymakers aim to consult a very large and broad set of stakeholders.

The main difference between an open consultation approach and a closed consultation approach relates to the role of (elected or unelected) policymakers as gatekeepers. When a consultation approach is closed, participation depends on being invited by policymakers to participate in the consultation process: for instance, being selected as member of an advisory council, participant in a workshop, or expert on a specific committee. While many external stakeholders may wish to participate, places are limited, and only those stakeholders who are considered "relevant" participants by policymakers will be granted a seat at the table. Inclusion in these policymaking venues is often considered a privileged form of access as the smaller set of participants combined with the more enduring nature of these tools increases the insider status of groups and enables them to interact with policymakers on a regular basis (Fraussen et al. 2015). Typically, these approaches are used when policymakers aim to consult a narrower and rather well defined target group. These approaches are therefore sometimes also described as "targeted".

A consultation procedure in the context of a specific policy issue can also involve the combination of some of these tools, such as a public internet consultation open to everyone, followed by the establishment of an advisory committees that, for instance, involves 20 specific participants from academia and civil society. This third consultation approach is labelled hybrid as it involves elements of both open (public internet consultation) and closed approaches (advisory committee).

Government Strategies, Bureaucratic Motives, and Stakeholder Perspectives

The previous section outlined the great variety of consultation tools that policymakers have at their disposal and conceptually distinguished three types of consultation approaches: open, closed, and hybrid. In this section, we shift our attention to the strategies and motives that might clarify preferences for certain consultation tools and approaches, addressing these questions from the perspectives of policymakers as well as external stakeholders.

Government Strategies

To understand variation in consultation approaches, it is important to provide insight into the diverse reasons policymakers might prioritize a particular consultation approach above another. In recent work, Bali and Halpin distinguish four different strategies policymakers can apply to manage the demands of external stakeholders: policymakers can rely on consultation tools to routinize, regularize, or generate demands or instead rely on them to impose issues (2021).

When policymakers aim to routinize demands, they seek to "acknowledge and engage with a spectrum of actors, and design strategies to meet these demands" as well as turn "ill-structured or chaotic patterns of engagement with organized interests into more routinized forms" (Bali and Halpin 2021: 337). Policymakers can routinize demands by setting up and standardizing the use of particular consultation tools, such as the standard use of online public consultation (as done by the European Commission) or the establishment of expert committees or advisory councils

whose composition often remains identical for a longer period of time. In some cases, these committees or councils can also have a more ad hoc character as they are set up in response to a specific crisis or to address a particular policy challenge that cuts across policy domains.

Rather than routinizing demands, policymakers can also intend to "regularize" demands. The use of these tools ensures policymakers that particular issues automatically return to the government agenda at specific intervals, hence creating recurring consultation patterns. The examples here are annual budgetary and fiscal calendars or statutory set reviews, which ensure government and media attention to these matters on a regular bias. In short, the strategy to regularize demands refers to routines and procedures governments establish to ensure a smooth policy rhythm and to create a certain level of predictability and control.

The strategies of "routinizing" and "regularizing" aim to make engagement with external stakeholders more structured and predictable and can be considered ways to control, limit, and steer policy demands from external stakeholders. Consultation tools related to these strategies typically involve a standardized way of selecting and inviting stakeholders and detailed bureaucratic guidelines and procedures for collecting and processing their policy input. A strategy to routinize and regularize might lead to a stronger emphasis on closed or hybrid consultation approaches. For instance, policymakers could establish an advisory committee or combine public consultation with the formation of expert committees.

A government strategy can also aim to "generate" policy demands. This relates to the need of governments to support, or even create, policy partners, to ensure there is a policy public in a specific sector or related to a particular policy issue. Government funding of specific interest groups and societal organizations can strengthen (or facilitate the emergence) of a community that can support policy programs. While Bali and Halpin in their work focus on the mobilization of possible policy partners, another take on this strategy to "generate" demands would focus on the ability of governments to enable external stakeholders to put new issues on the government agenda or provide them the opportunity to develop new policy measures in different institutional settings so that they are less constrained by existing policies and procedures.

In other words, rather than restricting the space to provide input (for example, by determining the scope of the consultation and the specific questions formulated), when seeking to generate policy demands, governments maximize the room for policy deliberation and innovation. New forms of stakeholder consultation, such as co-design, co-production and collaborative platforms, provide relevant examples of this approach. The reliance on those tools is often situated within an open or hybrid consultation approach that enables the participation of a wider set of participants and, in some cases, also implies the absence of (government) gatekeepers and a less central role for public officials.

The fourth strategy could be considered the extreme opposite of the "generating" approach as governments here seek to "impose" issues on the agenda. Here, consultation is nonexistent or merely symbolic, as governments strive to "unilaterally install government issue priorities onto the agenda": for instance, via summits or executive statements that enable no (or only a very limited) role for external stakeholders (Bali and Halpin 2021: 339).

In these cases, a government uses its legitimacy (for instance, soon after elections or in response to a crisis) "to advance preferred agendas while dismissing the need for public consultation or engagement" (339). This strategy resonates with a closed consultation approach as policymakers here act as gatekeepers focused on limiting and controlling the possible contribution and policy input of external stakeholders.

The ability of government to prioritize particular strategies might also be constrained by (domestic) legal requirements (for instance, the obligation to organize public consultations on particular topics or the requirement to consult particular advisory bodies), as well as institutional

and cultural norms (such as differences in interest intermediation in neo-corporatist and pluralist political systems or different traditions in terms of relying on academic experts).

Bureaucratic Motives

The interaction between policymakers and external stakeholders is often conceived as an exchange relationship, with expertise and legitimacy being key currencies (Bouwen 2004; Tallberg et al. 2015). A similar logic applies to the consultation of external stakeholders in the agenda-setting phase. Public officials rely on expertise as they aim to increase the "problem-solving capacity" of governments (Van Ballaert 2017: 2, see also Princen 2011). Whereas the supply of detailed and relevant policy input is expected to increase the effectiveness of proposed policy measures, the involvement of relevant external societal stakeholders is considered imperative to garner sufficient societal support for policy proposals. A higher societal legitimacy of policy proposals is believed to benefit smooth political decision-making processes, as well as positively affect accurate policy implementation and compliance.

Focusing on the role of the bureaucracy, Binderkrantz et al. highlight two "central logics of bureaucratic behavior: concerns with securing and enhancing institutional power and bureaucratic autonomy" (2020: 474). These logics highlight the role of consultation within the broader political-institutional context. As regards institutional power, Bunea and Thomson, for instance, argue that the use of stakeholder consultation may strengthen the agenda-setting and bargaining power of the government (2015). Focusing on the EU context, they find that extensive and open consultations with interest groups in early phases of the policy process increases the likelihood of policy success for the European Commission and strengthens its position vis-à-vis other EU institutions.

Binderkantz et al. (2020) link the concept of bureaucratic autonomy to recent work on bureaucratic reputation and clarify how an emphasis on distinct aspects of reputation might lead to a preference for different consultation practices. They rely on the four-fold distinction made by Carpenter between the technical, performative, moral and legal-procedural aspects of reputation (2010; for an application in the EU context, see Rimkute 2020). Technical and performative reputation can be linked to the earlier-mentioned problem-solving capacity of government as it refers to in-house knowledge as well as organizational policy capacities. As expertise is the key resource here, Binderkrantz et al. assume that an emphasis on technical and performative aspects of reputation will lead to a greater use of closed consultation approaches. If we consider moral and legal-procedural reputation, the relative emphasis is on legitimacy. If political institutions aim to demonstrate those aspects of their reputation, open and hybrid approaches might be more suitable since they have the potential to result in "broad consultation involving not only interest groups that are usually among the stakeholders of the involved agency, but also allowing for the expression of broad, public interest" (2020: 475).

The central distinguishing feature between open, closed, and hybrid consultation approaches involves the accessibility of the consultation procedure. Van Ballaert highlights another key dimension of consultation practices: namely, their repetitive nature. Does it concern a one-time interaction or repeated exchanges and discussions with the same actors? (2017). This variation in the repetitive nature is equally relevant to understanding how consultation practices shape the ties between external stakeholders and policymakers as multiple interactions between the same actors are likely to lead to a more lasting and stable relationship.

To understand the origins and dynamics of these long-term interactions, Braun distinguished two logics that jointly explain the enduring and often stable nature of policy networks (2013). She distinguishes between the logic of anticipatory behavior and habitual behavior. In brief,

"the logic of anticipatory behavior refers to maintenance of interactions because of future costs associated with ending current interactions" (2013: 6). For instance, it might be costly to end existing relationships because there are few alternative stakeholders who can supply relevant expertise or legitimacy and since cooperation of particular societal actors and organizations is imperative to (future) policy success. While more long-term strategic considerations are at the core of this logic of anticipatory behavior, the logic of habitual behavior clarifies how interactions are shaped by patterns and legacies from the past. Rather than following from specific policy objectives or policy needs, interactions are mostly driven by organizational routines, which is likely to further solidify existing relationships and thus benefits external stakeholders who have already acquired the status of policy insider.

Stakeholder Perspectives

From a stakeholder perspective, involvement in the agenda-setting phase is crucial as key decisions are made by policymakers at this early moment that often cannot be substantially changed in the following stages of the policy cycle. This is also the stage of the policy cycle that provides most opportunities for shaping the specific content, scope, and focus of new policy proposals. If we conceive interactions between policymakers and external stakeholders as an exchange that works best when (stakeholder) supply meet (policymakers') demand, those stakeholders who are able to provide critical exchange goods such as expertise and legitimacy are most likely to have a listening ear among policymakers. In the following paragraph, we relate this discussion to the variety of policy goods that external stakeholders can provide, their central objectives for participating in policy consultation, and the use of different consultation approaches.

It is important to look beyond the classic expertise-legitimacy distinction and consider in more detail the variety of policy goods, or policy capacities, that external stakeholders may provide. For instance, Daugbjerg et al. highlight not only societal legitimacy and expert knowledge but also assistance in implementation, the provision of services to citizens, the mobilization of a particular constituency, and the ability to discipline members or ensure compliance within a certain profession or industry (2017). These policy goods can be linked to different policy capacities of external stakeholders, such as analytical (e.g., expert knowledge), operational (like assistance in policy implementation), or political (skills such as societal legitimacy or the ability to mobilize a particular constituency). The value of these policy goods and capacities and the extent to which they are in high demand among policymakers are likely to be shaped by institutional factors (such as the policy capacity of government departments, the specific phase of the policy cycle, and whether patterns of interest intermediation resemble neo-corporatist or pluralist patterns), as well as more contextual policy-related factors (such as the complexity, salience, and conflictual nature of an issue and the number of external stakeholders who participate in a specific consultation process) (Klüver et al. 2015).

A fundamental question is which consultation approaches or tools are most suitable to acquire specific goods. As clarified by Bryson (2013: 27) "specific stakeholders may be involved in different ways at different steps or phases of the processes", as the needs of policymakers might shift and therefore other consultation approaches become more suitable. For instance, whereas the EU Commission relies on expert groups and workshops to acquire detailed policy information, the main goal of its online consultations is the involving of a larger set of external stakeholders (European Commission 2017: 385). From a stakeholder perspective, this also implies that the value of policy goods (and participation more generally) will vary across different consultation approaches.

From a stakeholder perspective, the value of consultation processes is often linked to the extent to which these interactions provide opportunities to influence policymakers. This is also

the dominant focus in many studies, even though the reasons external stakeholders participate in policy consultation and value being involved in this early stage of the policy process might be much more multi-faceted. For instance, while Lundberg acknowledges the role of political influence and the opportunity to shape government public policy as key drivers for stakeholder participation in consultation processes, he also highlights role of communicative influence, in which stakeholders consider consultations as a means to generate media attention.

In addition to these external considerations, Lundberg argues that more internal motives can be an important motivation for external stakeholders. That is, consultation processes also require stakeholders to engage in internal deliberation and discussion with members (or internal stakeholders), determine policy positions, and declare public statements (see also Halpin and Fraussen 2017). More generally, it can even be seen as part of a "civic duty" for external stakeholders, as they consider this part of their mission and responsibilities.

It is important to distinguish between the value of specific consultation tools for exercising policy influence and their usefulness for signaling policy preferences (toward policymakers and the broader public). While open consultation approaches with a more public and transparent character (such as online internet consultation that afterward provide an overview of all input to the general public) might be very effective for clarifying the policy position of a specific stakeholder to a broad audience, closed approaches (such as expert councils, advisory councils or informal direct meetings) are likely to provide better opportunities for policy influence. As Binderkrantz et al. argue, participation in open approaches is relatively easy and low cost for external stakeholders, and requires no pre-existing relationships with policymakers (2020). In contrast, closed approaches often involve considerable investment in terms of policy preparation and building and maintaining relationships. Yet these fora also provide opportunities for more frequent interactions with policymakers as well as unique opportunities to monitor and discuss policy developments. Therefore, we can expect a strong preference among external stakeholders for closed consultation approaches as these approaches enable the formation of more enduring relationships and limit the competition of other stakeholders who might have different viewpoints. These closed settings with few participants might also bolster more mutual understanding and trust between external stakeholders and policymakers.

At the same time, the evaluation by external stakeholders of the legitimacy of consultation tools and approaches might be shaped by other considerations and factors. For instance, the extent to which external stakeholders can be considered policy insiders or policy outsiders might shape their perceptions of particular consultation regime (but see Bunea 2017 for contrary findings). A similar dynamic has been demonstrated in research on the legitimacy of participatory processes as the perception of individuals of the legitimacy of the procedural features of the process is strongly shaped by the outcome and the extent to which the final policy proposal or decision aligns with their preferences (e.g., Esaiasson et al. 2019). In that regard, an assessment of losers' (those with different preferences or with less strong ties to policymakers) perception of consultation approaches might provide a critical test for their legitimacy (Werner and Marien 2020).

Consultation and Agenda-Setting: Fairness and Inclusiveness

When designing consultation processes, determining specific approaches, and selecting particular tools, a central point of attention involves the extent to which they create an equal playing field among external stakeholders. This notion can be related to the treatment of policy participants and the way in which their input is processed, as well as to the open nature of the process and the ease of participation. In this final section, we address these two key characteristics of consultation processes and their fairness and inclusiveness.

Fairness

The question of the fairness of the consultation process relates to the extent to which participants feel that there is an impartial and just treatment of all participants and the input they provided.

As regards an impartial and just treatment of all participants, open approaches by definition score higher in terms of fairness then closed approaches. If we consider, for instance, online public consultations, all participants have an equal chance to participate and provide their input in a similar way. Yet the treatment of their provided input is likely to differ as some viewpoints might align closer with policymakers' preferences and will therefore be better reflected in proposed policy. Even if these procedures are highly transparent, there still is a considerable black box between the provision of input by external stakeholders and the policy proposals that policymakers subsequently put forward based on the variety of input they have received.

This black box challenge is also critical for the legitimacy of democratic innovations, such as mini-publics of citizens, collaborative stakeholder platforms, or cocreation and codesign as participatory tools for agenda-setting. While these tools are often used to "generate" demands by external stakeholders rather than "routinizing" or "regularizing" them, if often remains unclear to what extent, how, and at what stage of the policy process policymakers need to engage with the outcomes of these participatory processes (e.g., Jacquet and van der Does 2021). An adequate "coupling" of these initiatives with legislative procedures not only requires particular institutional mechanisms but also "requires actors to step outside their comfort zone to build new relationships and engage in new spaces with different sets of ideas, actors and rules" (Hendriks 2016: 57).

The use of these latter tools also often implies a shift in the position and role of public authorities and government officials (Ansell and Gash 2008). While they occupy a central or even gatekeeping role in more classic and routinized forms of consultation, such as advisory councils and expert committees, they often take up a more facilitative or even neutral role in more collaborative settings. Furthermore, while policymakers often determine the focus or scope of consultation in the context of traditional tools (by determining questions from an online consultation or asking advice of expert committees on specific aspects of policy proposals) and thus constrain the opportunity to put new issues on the agenda or formulate policy proposals that deviate substantially from the status quo, their ability to shape the agenda and policy discussion is reduced as tools put more emphasis on collaboration and deliberation.

Inclusiveness

The importance and value of an inclusive consultation process is frequently highlighted. For instance, Nabatchi argues that by consulting broadly and involving a diverse set of actors and organizations, public officials "give voice to multiple perspectives and different interests, allowing for more thoughtful decisions that take a broader view of those who will benefit or be harmed by an action" (Beierle and Cayford 2002; Sirianni 2009). Public policy also might benefit from a more inclusive set of policy participants as this might "generate better projects and policies, secure buy-in for decisions, and limit delays, mistakes and lawsuits" (Burby 2003)," especially if these processes become more inclusive (Bryson et al. 2013: 28; see also Feldman and Quick 2009).

Findings on the implications of consultation approaches for stakeholder diversity are mixed. Some research clarifies how consultation regimes could alleviate inequalities and generate a more equal playing field between insiders and outsiders (Bunea 2017). Yet most work points in a less positive direction as consultation practices reinforce existing practices and the policy

status quo as (also more open) consultation procedures are dominated by established (and often economic) organizations that represent business interests. Rather than being a tool for policy change, consultation instruments thus become "a primary mechanism of policy reproduction" (Howlett and Cashore 2009).

If we consider the distinct consultation approaches described earlier in this chapter, open consultation approaches naturally enable the participation of a larger set of stakeholders than closed consultation approaches as participation is "self-selected", and the number of contributions quasi-unlimited.

The possible relation between consultation approaches and the diversity of participating stakeholders is less straightforward. One the one hand, the involvement of more external stakeholders in open approaches might lead to a greater diversity of interests that engage with policymakers. Such an approach implies that opportunities to participate are equal and characterized by low thresholds. Moreover, there is no gatekeeper who decides who is included and excluded from the process. One the other hand, the increase in the number of participating stakeholders might have a negative relation to diversity. Rather than involving a broader field of actors, those stakeholders who dominate closed approaches could also be well represented in open approaches, or even become more dominant. In that scenario, those societal groups that suffer less from collective action problems and have higher levels of organized representation (such as business and professional interests) might be even more numerous and dominant in consultation approaches with an open-door policy.

This last expectation is also confirmed in recent work that examines the use of consultation tools by the European commission in the context of 41 regulations and its implications for stakeholder diversity, in particular business bias or the extent to which business interests dominate the set of organized stakeholders (Fraussen et al. 2020). As regards the applied consultation strategy, a purely open approach was rare and only found in 3 regulations. In the majority of cases, the EC applies either a closed approach (19 regulations) or a hybrid approach (19 regulations). As expected, hybrid approaches, which combine tools related to closed (such as an expert committee) and open approaches (internet consultation), attract much larger numbers of external stakeholders. Hence, to purely increase the number of involved stakeholders, hybrid approaches seem essential. Yet this higher level of engaged external stakeholders does not automatically result in a greater diversity of external stakeholders. Instead, closed approaches were characterized by higher stakeholder diversity (or less business dominance) than hybrid approach.

Hence, if we consider the relation between consultation approaches and diversity, we should be careful to draw strong conclusions regarding the possible benefits of more open or hybrid approaches and not underestimate the role that public officials might (or can) play in designing more closed approaches and enabling a more balanced set of participating stakeholders. While the role of gatekeeper is often discussed in more negative terms (as they, by definition, exclude certain actors and organizations from the policy process and rarely need to justify their choices), their possible contribution to achieving a more balanced or equal participation and (better) involving overlooked or marginalized constituencies, should not be underestimated and seems a promising avenue for further research.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we addressed different aspects of the consultation process. We addressed the proliferation of consultation tools and distinguished open, closed, and hybrid consultation approaches. After clarifying the consultation toolbox that policymakers have at their disposal, we examined different government strategies to manage the policy demands of external stakeholders

and considered the value of distinct consultation approaches from the perspectives of bureaucrats and external stakeholders. As designing consultation process also requires important democratic trade-offs, the last section addressed the fairness and inclusiveness of consultation procedures.

Whereas much scholarly attention has been focused on which societal interests are represented in the consultation process, a better understanding of this central component of contemporary governance and its implications for public policy also requires close attention to the motives of bureaucrats and stakeholders, as well as their perception of the value and limitations of particular consultation tool. Future work would benefit from better connecting the different strands of research that have been highlighted in this chapter, bridging the agenda-setting and policy formulation phase, and studying the implications of both institutional design choices and trade-offs made be external stakeholders and policymakers.

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