
CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN STI POLICY

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Manchester International Summer School on Emerging Technologies
8-13 June 2014, University of Manchester, UK

Overview

- Problem definition & background
- Theoretical considerations
- Contextualisation
- Research gap
- Open questions

Problem Definition

Starting point:

**Mismatch between ambitious demands
placed on participation activities and what they actually achieve**

Relevance: evolving conceptualisations of responsible research and innovation ...

»We suggest that to innovate responsibly entails a collective and continuous commitment to be [...] **Deliberative** – inclusively *opening up* visions, purposes, questions, and dilemmas to broad, collective deliberation through processes of dialogue, engagement, and debate, inviting and listening to wider perspectives from publics and diverse stakeholders. « (Owen et al. 2013)

Background

Changing relationship between science, politics and society

- Autonomous relationship between politics and science was increasingly questioned in the 80s
- Normative calls for more open decision-making processes in science
- Claims for participatory relationship since 70s, technological criticism of social movements of late 60s and 70s
- Claims for inclusion of diverse stakeholders including citizens

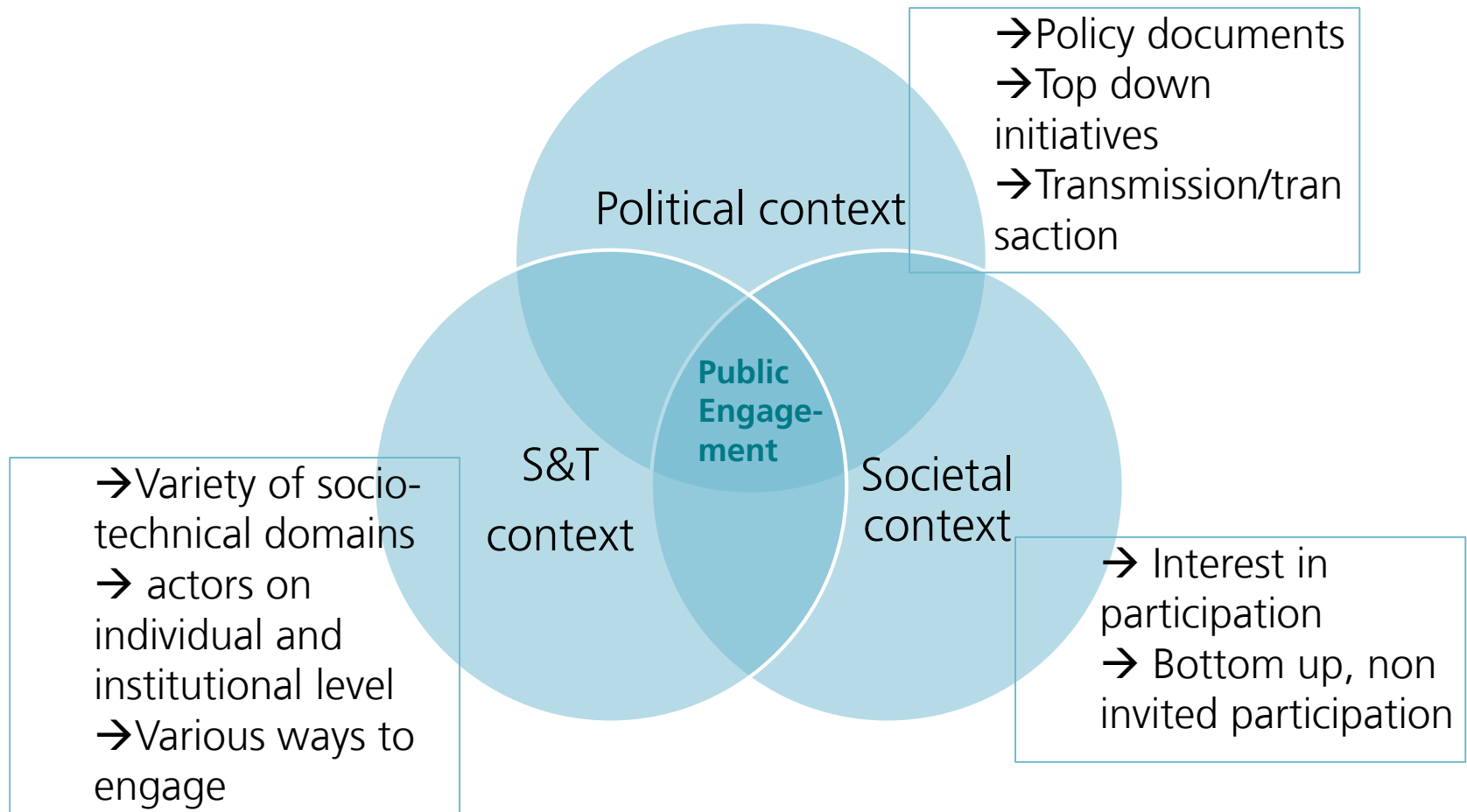
Common rationales for public engagement

- Substantial, instrumental and normative (Fiorino 1990/Stirling 2008)
 - Increased acceptability and legitimacy of political decision making
 - Increase of quality of political decision making
 - Absorption of creative potential
 - Prevent market failure
 - Broadening the knowledge and value base
 - Initiation of learning processes and citizen empowerment

Theoretical considerations

- Participatory technology assessment: new TA concepts evolve in the 80s
- Macro sociological perspectives: recombination of science and society relationship
 - Nowotny et al: Mode II science
 - Funtowicz/Ravetz: post-normal science
- Deliberative turn in theories of democracy in the 90s
- Participatory Governance
- Debates about expert and lay knowledge
- ...RRI

Contextualisation – three interwoven spheres



Empirical realities - findings

- Methods: e.g. consensus conference, citizen jury, citizens consultation, citizens participating in expert meetings, science festivals, deliberative panels, small scale informal discussions
- Indication that hopes placed on participation activities have hardly been fulfilled

- Public engagement activities are often instrumental
 - Window dressing (policy maker, scientists)
 - Aim of participation is often unclear, instead participation as such is the aim
- ... nevertheless, indirect impacts are possible
 - institutional reflection; Increased self-efficacy of participants

Research gap

- A lot has been done in terms of evaluating single participation activities, less is known about the broader governance context
- A need for contextualizing the science governance landscape with a focus on public engagement activities exists
 - Need to take into account the politics of public engagement and questions of power
 - Multi actor, multi level, interdisciplinary approach is necessary

What to do?

- Learning *through* and learning *about* public engagement
 - Learning *through*: how is a PE process embedded and positioned in the broader governance arrangement?
 - Learning *about*: conditions or actors involved in successful (or less successful) engagement procedures
- To bridge STS research and political science research
- To review and evaluate existing actors, practices, interactions, degrees of institutionalisation, impacts
- To analyse relationship between deliberative activities and the institutional structures of representative democracies

Thank you!

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