

Public engagement in policy decisions

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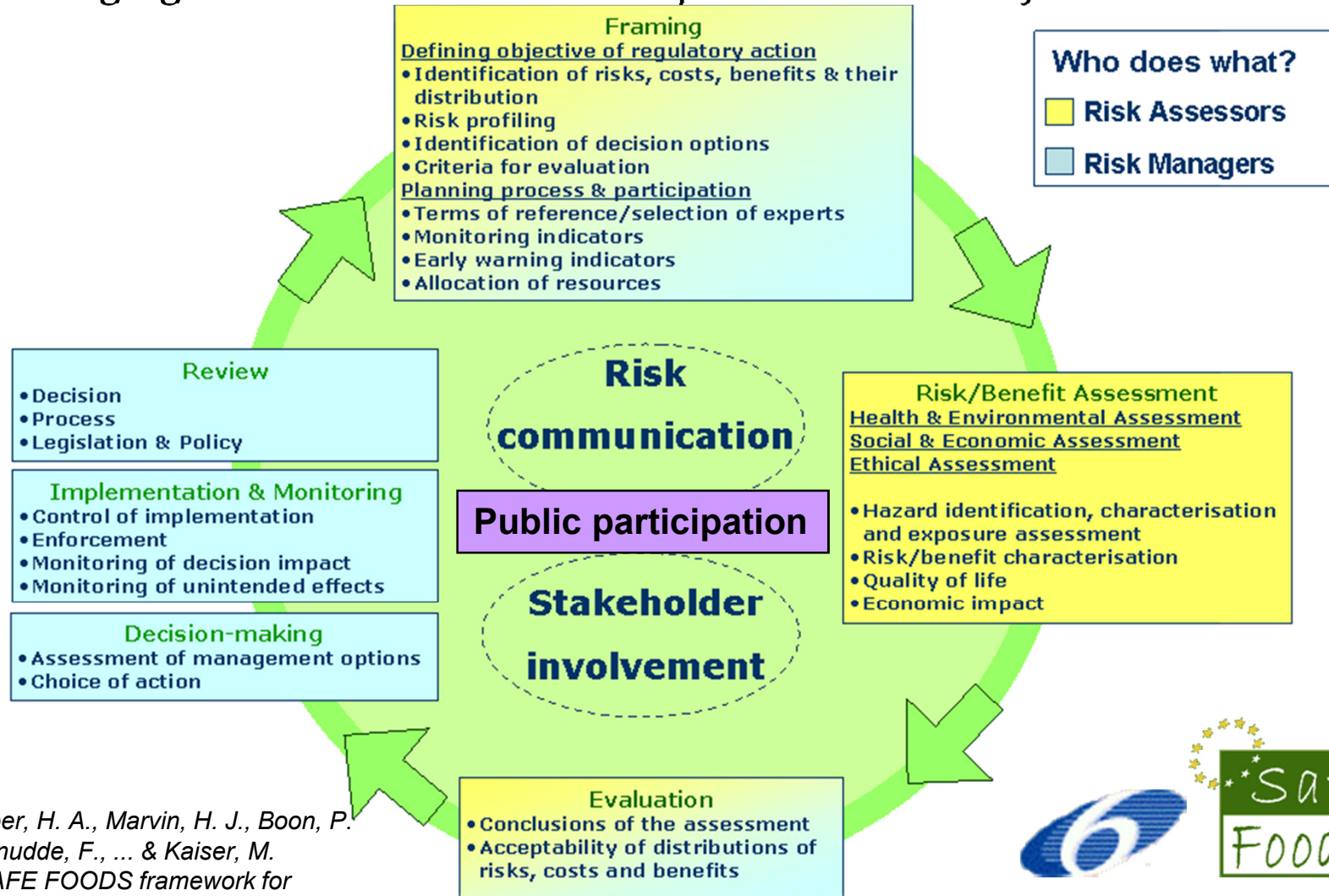
Public engagement

- The public represent a specific stakeholder group
- The focus of what follows will be on public, not stakeholder, participation
- Other methods may be more appropriate for effective expert stakeholder participation, such as Delphi methodology

Fischer, Arnout RH, Meike TA Wentholt, Gene Rowe, and Lynn J. Frewer. "Expert involvement in policy development: A systematic review of current practice." *Science and Public Policy* (2013): sct062.



Emerging risk identification and improved risks analysis model



König, A., Kuiper, H. A., Marvin, H. J., Boon, P. E., Busk, L., Cnudde, F., ... & Kaiser, M. (2010). The SAFE FOODS framework for improved risk analysis of foods. *Food Control*, 21(12), 1566-1587.



A typology of different societal engagement mechanisms

<i>Who is involved?</i>	<i>Consultation</i>	<i>Participation</i>	<i>Communication</i>
Citizens	Citizens panel	Action planning workshop	Cable TV
Public	Consultation document	Citizens jury	Drop in centres
Consumers	Electronic consultation	Consensus conference	Hotline
Stakeholders	Focus group	Deliberative opinion poll	Information Broadcasts
Experts	Opinion poll	Negotiated rule making	Internet information
	Referendum	Planning cell	Public hearings / Inquiry
	Survey	Technology Assessment	Public meeting
	Telepolling		
	Delphi		

Rowe, Gene, and Lynn J. Frewer. "A typology of public engagement mechanisms." *Science, technology & human values* 30, no. 2 (2005): 251-290.

Criteria for evaluating public participation (1)



Acceptance (fairness) criteria

- *Representativeness*
 - Participants should comprise a broadly representative sample of the affected public.
- *Independence*
 - The participation process should be conducted in an independent, unbiased way.
- *Early Involvement*
 - The public should be involved as early as possible in the process as soon as value judgments become salient.
- *Transparency*
 - The process should be transparent so that the public can see what is going on and how decisions are being made.
- *Influence*
 - The output of the procedure should have a genuine impact on policy.

Rowe, G. and Frewer, L.J., 2000. Public participation methods: A framework for evaluation. Science, technology & human values, 25(1), pp.3-29.

Criteria for evaluating public participation (2)

Process (competence) criteria

- *Task definition*
 - The nature and scope of the task should be clearly defined, so that participants understand what is required of them, and why.
- *Resources*
 - Participants should have access to the appropriate and sufficient resources (e.g. in terms of time and information) to enable them to fulfill their designated role.
- *Structured dialogue*
 - The exercise should use appropriate mechanisms for structuring dialogue to ensure fair and accurate information exchange.



Rowe, G. and Frewer, L.J., 2000. *Public participation methods: A framework for evaluation*. *Science, technology & human values*, 25(1), pp.3-29.

Genetically modified foods in Europe – consumer protest



The societal pressure for public participation into the UK GM debate

- The coming to an end of a *de facto* moratorium on GM crop cultivation
- The Labour government's administration's 'Modernising Government' programme
- A pre-occupation within government about loss of public trust
- A major review of the regulatory framework for biotechnology
- The establishment of the Agriculture and Environment biotechnology council
- The House of Lords report on Science and Society
- The impact of BSE and the Phillips report

GM nation-combined participatory methods

Focus groups

- Eight with ordinary citizens pre-selected to represent a spread of socio-demographic characteristics, 1 with GM stakeholders.
- Exploratory 'framing' of issues in preparation for the main debate process the following summer.

Open Meetings

- Tier 1
 - Major 'national' meetings organised by Steering Board executive (n=6)
- Tier 2
 - Meetings organised by local councils or national organisations and supported by Steering Board executive (n= 40 estimated)
- Tier 3
 - Local meetings organised by community groups, educational centres etc. (n=629 estimated)

Closed 'Narrow-but-Deep' Groups

- 10 re-convened focus groups held with 77 ordinary citizens pre-selected to represent a spread of socio-demographic characteristics.
- Each group met twice to deliberate on GM issues, with a period in between to gather information.



Rowe, G., Horlick-Jones, T., Walls, J. and Pidgeon, N., 2005. Difficulties in evaluating public engagement initiatives: reflections on an evaluation of the UK GM Nation? public debate about transgenic crops. *Public Understanding of Science*, 14(4), pp.331-352.

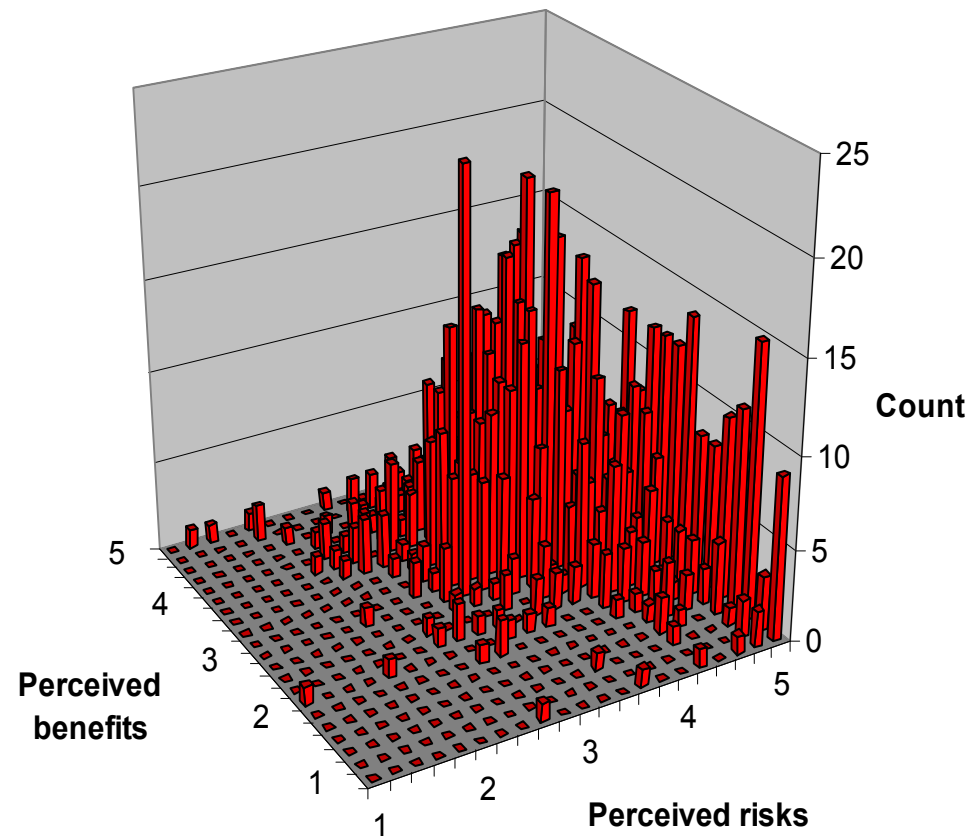
Survey research

- A national representative quota sample of 1,363 people aged 15 years and older was interviewed face-to-face in their own homes
- All Public Engagement participants completed the survey



(MORI, 2003; Poortinga, & Pidgeon,

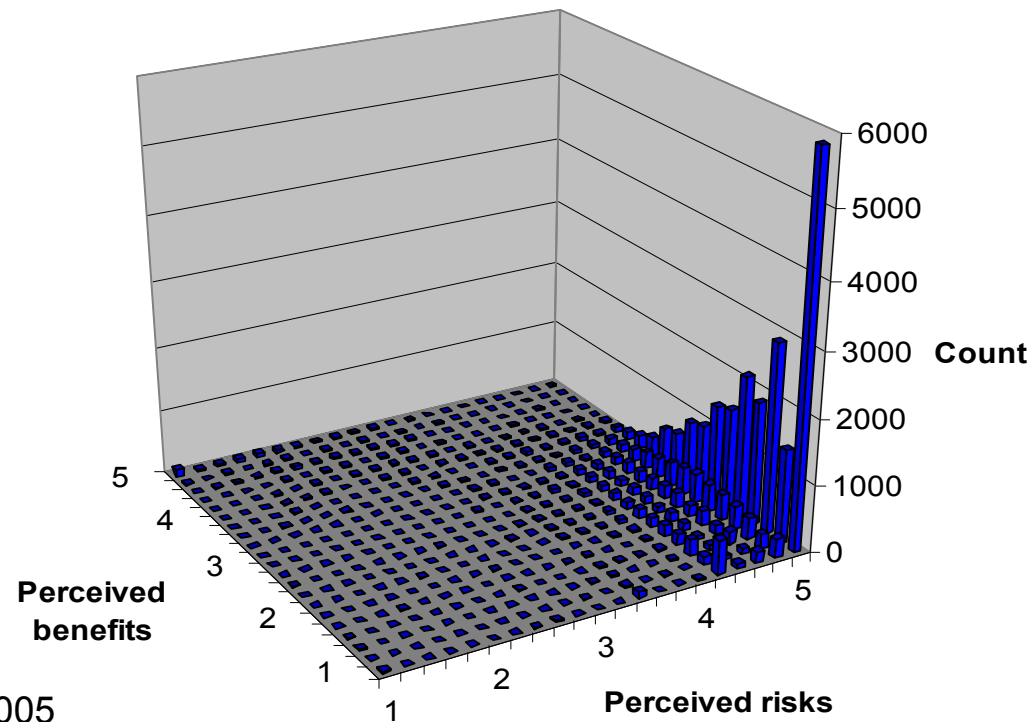
Distribution of perceived risks and benefits of GM crops (MORI 2003) (n=1,363)



(n=1,363)

Pidgeon et al, 2005

Distribution of perceived risks and benefits of GM crops for *GM Nation?* open questionnaires



(n= 36,557)

Pidgeon et al, 2005

Impact

- **Level of impact** on wider public uncertain
- **Impact on Government**
 - International and legal requirements undermine its relevance of the exercise
- **Cynicism** among both participants and the wider public about the likely impact of the debate on government policy



Policy

A policy described
government, private
"Statement of Inter
important organiza



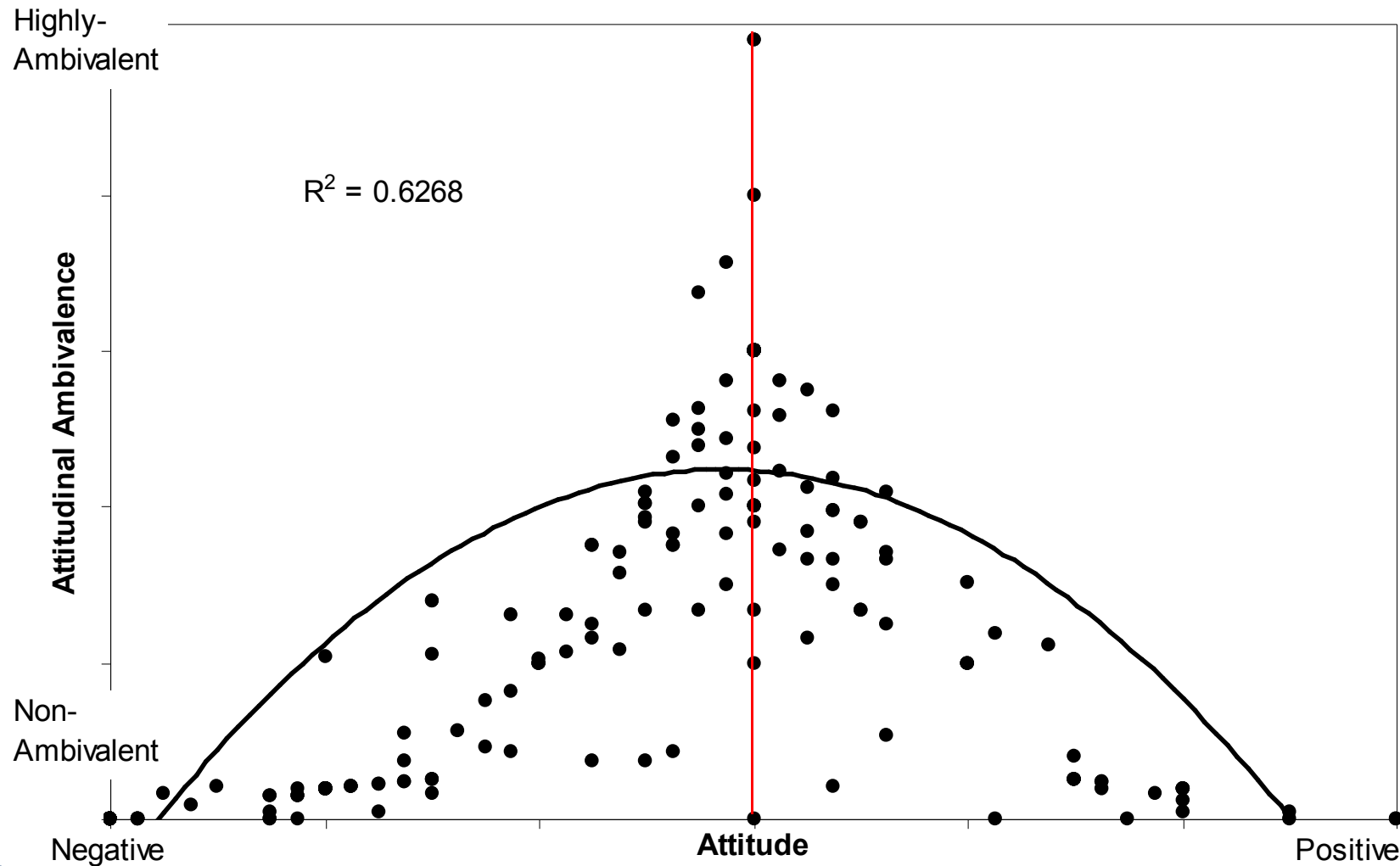
Risk-benefit communication

- Ambivalent negative attitudes (*nanotechnology*).
 - People more amenable to be influenced by whatever information becomes available

How are attitudes towards nanotechnology distributed *post risk-benefit information provision*?

*Fischer, A.R.H. van Dijk, H.J de Jonge, J., Rowe, G. and Frewer. L.J.
Attitudes and attitudinal ambivalence change towards nanotechnology applied to food production.
Public Understanding of Science 22, no. 7 (2013): 817-831.*

Inverse U-shape relation between attitude and attitudinal ambivalence



Individual differences in attitude

Three “segments” of consumers

- *Group 1 (42%) became more negative*
 - *Less / average education*
- *Group 2 (46 %) didn't change*
 - *Less / average education*
- *Group 3 (12%) became more positive*
 - *Younger or older*
 - *Male*
 - *Highly educated*

Conclusions - GM nation

- There were significant flaws with the event e.g. extent of outright opposition to GM food and crops amongst the UK population is probably lower than indicated in the GM Nation?
- Against this, people who are interested are more likely to participate
- Results did not align with government policies therefore discounted?
- Public participation needs to be conducted and independently evaluated

Rowe et al (2005)

Recommendations

- Independent evaluation of both the process and impact of a specific public engagement or consultation exercise against theoretically underpinned criteria
- Sponsor willingness to re-specify direction and goals of research and development based on the outcomes
- Identification of the most appropriate mechanisms to apply to public engagement given the context of the exercise

Conclusions

- Past failures in managing food-related hazards (and in other policy domains) has undermined public trust in policy makers
- The traditional one-way model of communicating to the public is no longer appropriate
- A new tradition of public (and/or stakeholder) engagement has arisen
- Many mechanisms have been developed to enable such involvement
- Evaluation has lagged behind practice
- Systematic evolution of the benefits of engagement are scant
- Further research is needed
 - to define what is a good outcome of engagement
 - to develop ways to measure outcomes (and processes)
 - to evaluate real-world examples

How to create policy impact from PE

- There is a lack of published evidence which demonstrates the impacts of public engagement (PE) in science and technology policy.
- This might represent
 - the failure of PE to achieve policy impacts
 - a lack of effective procedures for discerning the uptake by policy makers of PE-derived outputs.
 - while efforts have been made to identify and categorize different types of policy impact, research has rarely attempted to link policy impact with PE procedures, political procedures, or the connections between them.

Emery, S.B., Mulder, H.A. and Frewer, L.J., 2015. Maximizing the Policy Impacts of Public Engagement A European Study. *Science, Technology & Human Values*, 40(3), pp.421-444.

How might Public Engagement deliver policy impact?

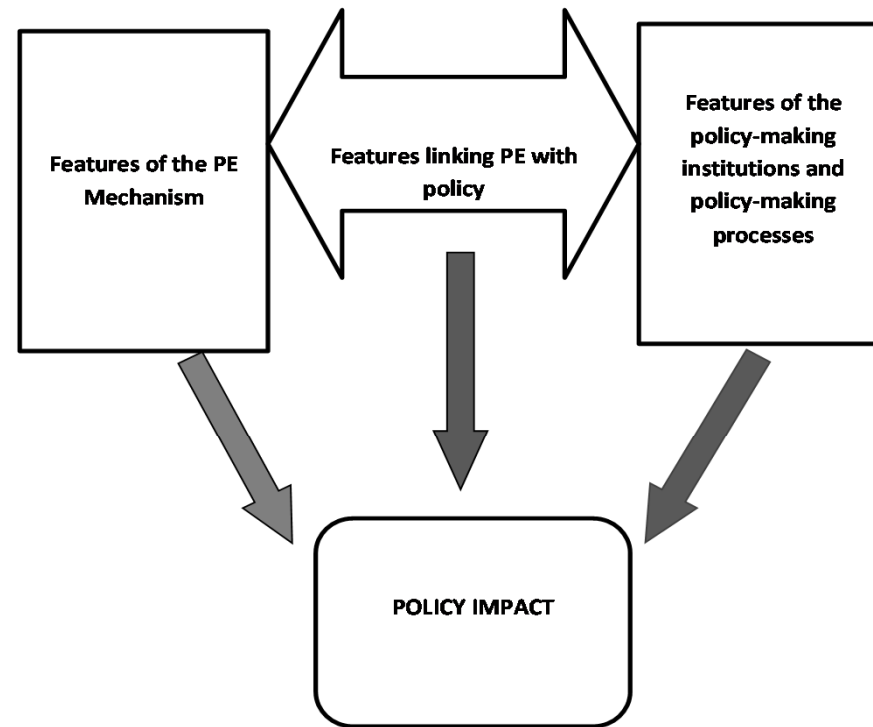


Figure 1: The three realms of PE-derived policy impact.

Emery, S.B., Mulder, H.A. and Frewer, L.J., 2015. Maximizing the Policy Impacts of Public Engagement A European Study. Science, Technology & Human Values, 40(3), pp.421-444.

Conceptual model of policy impact

Based on semi-structured interviews with both policy makers and **Public Participation** practitioners

- The role of PE practitioners in realizing impacts through their interactions with policy makers in the informal “in-between” spaces of public engagement is important
- The main barrier to the identification of policy impacts from **Public Participation** may lie within policy processes themselves.
- **Political institutions** have responsibility to establish formalized procedures for monitoring the uptake and use of evidence from Public Participation in their decision-making processes

Maximising impact (1) Features of the PE Process

- There needs to be “**upfront**” agreement on
 - the intended outputs of the public engagement activity
 - how these outputs will be used
- The **scale, topic** and **timing** of the engagement must be optimised to fit the relevant policy context
 - If the results are delivered too late to influence a policy decision, the public will be frustrated.
- The engagement **must** be seen as legitimate in the eyes of policy-makers
- Public engagement **practitioners** should monitor their impact on policy
- **Public engagement** practitioners need to have political capacity and awareness
- The **topic and outputs** of Public Engagement must be framed appropriately for uptake into policy-making
- The **limitations** of outputs derived from Public Engagement need to be communicated to policy-makers



Emery, Mulder and Frewer (2015)

Maximising impact (2) Features linking Public Engagement and policy

- Public engagement is frequently formally attached to the political agenda (policy-commissioned, or policy-driven)
- Policy-makers themselves are in some way directly involved in specific public engagement exercises and are genuine in their involvement
- The process of engagement builds relationships between stakeholders, public engagement practitioners and policy-makers that outlast the engagement itself
- Public engagement practitioners engage with policy-makers in informal settings to forge relationships and build trust and communication channels



Maximising impact (3) Features of policy making

- Policy makers must regard Public Engagement as having genuine inputs into policy
 - Public Engagement should not be a “tick box” requirement
- Public engagement needs to be **anticipatory** of a policy decision where possible
- Procedures for the commissioning and use of Public Engagement are standardised across different political divisions and departments, with guidance provided on the triggers for, methods of and means of assimilating outputs from Public Engagement
- There are transparent procedures (such as during policy impact assessment) for **tracking the use** of Public Engagement derived evidence in decision-making
- There is a system for the **retrospective evaluation** of decision-making procedures and their incorporation of different evidences

The public are engaged..

**But should we worry about *effective*
public engagement in policy
decision–making practices?**

Thank you for your attention!

