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Production of Standards as stabilizer for deliberative policy instruments

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- Abstract -

Policy instruments are institutions that determine actors' behavior; they allow forms of collective action to stabilize; they include certain interests and actors and exclude others. Therefore the choice of an instrument is a political issue because it structures the political process and its results. (Lascombes/LeGales 2007)

Claiming on Dewey's call for new participatory forms of democratic governance and many other democracy and communication theory oriented approaches (e.g. Habermas, Dryzek) deliberative policy instruments emerged over the last decades. A huge spread of deliberation methods, tools, procedures on local, national or even international level can be observed (planning cells, citizen juries, scenario workshops, worldwide views etc.). Connected to this a "deliberative industry" is visible with instrument designers, facilitators and variety of applications and implementations who built a social life around those instruments. In this "industry" actors and networks are involved in cooperation and competition for enforcing the innovation processes of single instrument designs and bring them from invention to implementation and stabilization. This is nested in discourses of standardization of instruments.

This paper investigates the phenomenon of two trends in the field of deliberative procedures evolving in the last three decades. One is that there is a designer community of deliberative procedures (practitioners, facilitators) who developed and redeveloped concrete procedures as tools for implementation (sometimes even with protecting them as a brand with a trademark) that become de facto standards and another is an ongoing process of national and international standardization discourses about technical standards and quality standards that influences the designing process itself, the choice for instruments and finally its spread when policy instruments materialize with own dynamics in implementation contexts which allows them to become dominant designs.

In this paper an approach of mapping the genealogy of deliberative instruments is presented. Based on literature review 10 instruments and their historical genealogical innovation journeys, their standardization processes and its influence on their spreads are analyzed and interpreted.

Keywords: policy instruments, innovation journey, deliberation, standards, institutions

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