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22. Contested climate policies and public participation: an equal-opportunities- and values-based approach (EVA)

Goda Perlaviciute, Lorenzo Squintani and Lu Liu

INTRODUCTION

Climate change is one of the most extreme crises that human society has ever faced, demanding immediate and stringent measures in order to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels (IPCC, 2021). Countries across the globe aim to reach net-zero carbon emissions by the mid-century, including the United States and member states of the European Union by 2050, and China by 2060 (Fay, Hale, Lang, & Smith, 2021; IEA, 2021). Energy generation from fossil fuels makes a major contribution to global carbon emissions, hence achieving climate goals requires reducing energy use, using energy more efficiently, and switching to low/zero-carbon energy sources, such as renewable energy sources (Perlaviciute, Steg, & Sovacool, 2021).

By changing their behaviours, individuals and households can contribute to using and producing energy more sustainably (Perlaviciute et al., 2021). People can reduce their energy use by changing their mobility behaviours (e.g., living car-free, reducing air travel), using less energy at home (e.g., reducing the thermostat temperature in winter), and switching from an animal- to a plant-based diet. Next, people can use energy more efficiently by refurbishing their homes and adopting energy-efficient appliances, among other things. In addition, people can contribute to clean energy generation, for instance by putting solar panels on the roof, switching to green energy providers, and/or buying shares in renewable energy projects. Importantly, people's motivation and ability to implement such behavioural changes depend largely on climate policies that are being implemented (Stern, 2000). Specifically, climate policies shape people's behaviours by providing incentives for environmentally friendly behaviour (e.g., subsidies for solar panels) and disincentives for environmentally harmful behaviour (e.g., increased prices of meat products). Next, climate policies are imperative for developing more sustainable infrastructures (e.g., public transport) and technologies (e.g., smart energy systems) that make sustainable behaviours possible. Furthermore, policies can lead organisations and businesses to provide more sustainable services and products from which people can choose.

In order to be implemented, climate policies need not only to be economically and technically feasible, but also need to be acceptable to the public. The Yellow Vests movement in France, initially sparked by a tax on fossil fuels, and anti-wind-turbines protests across the globe, are a few examples demonstrating that climate policies can be stalled if there is resistance from the public. Politicians may be reluctant to implement climate policies if they anticipate strong opposition from the public, which can paralyse the realisation of national and international climate goals, most notably those set in the Paris Agreement. Therefore, it is

critical to understand which factors influence public acceptability of climate policies, and how to develop and implement climate policies that are widely accepted in society.

Public acceptability refers here to the extent to which people favour or disfavour climate policies (Perlaviciute & Steg, 2014). We use climate policies as a broad term that encompasses general agreements, visions, and programmes (e.g., the Paris Agreement, national environmental policies) as well as specific measures that derive from them (e.g., renewable energy siting in specific locations). We refer specifically to climate policies aimed at mitigating climate change, while acknowledging that such policies are not always strictly pro-environmental, as they may reduce greenhouse gas emissions but have other negative environmental impacts (e.g., possible negative effects of wind parks on bird populations, Román, Salinas, & Araújo, 2020). Rather than comprehensively assessing the multiple aspects of any climate policy, the aim of this chapter is to zoom in on one key factor that can influence public acceptability of various climate policies, namely public participation in decision making.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

People are likely to oppose climate policies if they think that they are excluded from decision making and their interests and concerns are not taken into account (Carattini, Kallbekken, & Orlov, 2019; Gross, 2007). A widely advocated way to incorporate public interests and concerns in decision making is by replacing the traditional top-down, decide–announce–defend approaches with more public participation in decision making (Bidwell, 2016; Devine-Wright, 2005; Dietz & Stern, 2008; Wolsink, 2007). Here, public participation means processes organised by responsible parties (e.g., elected officials, government agencies, other public- or private-sector organisations) to engage the public in decision making on climate policies (Dietz & Stern, 2008).¹ Public participation is rapidly entering the agendas of climate policymaking. For example, the Dutch Climate Agreement and the Dutch Environmental and Planning Act urge responsible parties to engage citizens in decision making, assuming this will create wide public support. The French Citizens Convention for Climate in 2019–2020 is another example, where randomly selected citizens proposed measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat, n.d.).

The advocacy for more public participation in environmental decision making rests on the three praised functions of public participation (Fiorino, 1990):

- *Normative function*: democratising the decision making and enabling citizens to exercise their right to influence decisions that affect them;
- *Substantive function*: increasing the quality of decisions by incorporating the knowledge and expertise of citizens that experts could otherwise miss;
- *Instrumental function*: making the decision-making process and its outcomes more legitimate and acceptable to the society at large.

In particular, the instrumental function refers to the potential to develop more socially acceptable climate policies through public participation; yet the three functions are highly intertwined, since people are more likely to accept policies that come from fair and just decision making (normative function) that delivers high-quality outcomes (substantive function) (Fiorino, 1990).

The question is when public participation will lead to democratic, substantively good, and legitimate decisions about climate policies. An important starting point is transitioning from one-way to two-way communication between responsible parties and the public. Notably, in practice, public participation is often limited to information provision, such as information meetings, drop-in sessions, public exhibitions, websites, and newsletters (Aitken, Haggett, & Rudolph, 2016; Barnett, Burningham, Walker, & Cass, 2012; Devine-Wright, 2011). Information is a necessary pre-condition for public acceptance: perceived openness and transparency are positively associated with public acceptability of climate policies (Bernauer, Mohrenberg, & Koubi, 2020; Firestone, Kempton, Lilley, & Samoteskul, 2012; Walker & Baxter, 2017), while perceived secrecy evokes public resistance (Gross, 2007). However, information provision reflects one-way communication – from responsible parties to the public – without the possibility for the public to express their opinions and concerns regarding the policy. Consequentially, people may feel that there is an absence of public participation and that developers only want to “sell” their already-made decisions, which can fuel public resistance. Two-way communication – from developers to the public and the other way around – is therefore a necessary starting point for public participation to be effective in serving its expected functions (Arnstein, 1969; Habermas, 1984). Yet, even with two-way communication, public participation can still face three major challenges, namely a) exclusion, b) polarisation, and c) fake participation, as outlined below.

Exclusion

Public participation is often dominated by homogeneous, privileged groups, such as white men with relatively high education and income (Entradas, 2016; Hall, Wilson, & Newman, 2011; Squintani, 2017; Squintani & Schoukens, 2019). Privileged groups are more likely to make use of extensive participation opportunities, while lower socio-demographic groups are more likely to feel overwhelmed and unable to participate, experiencing democratic fatigue and refraining from participation altogether (Kern & Hooghe, 2018). If certain groups are excluded from decision making and their interests are undermined in the final decisions, this could fuel public resistance, especially among those underrepresented. Indeed, the French Yellow Vests movement was sparked from lower socio-economic classes, especially in rural areas, feeling disproportionately disadvantaged by the rise in petrol prices. Another example is opposition to renewable energy projects from local rural and/or indigenous communities in developing countries who are disproportionately affected due to, among other things, loss of livelihoods and forced resettlement due to hydropower projects (e.g., Del Bene et al., 2018), “land grabbing” for bioenergy crops (e.g., Hunsberger et al., 2017), large-scale solar (e.g., Yenneti et al., 2016) and wind (e.g., Avila, 2018; Zárate-toledo, Patiño, & Fraga, 2019) energy projects, and the benefits of clean energy flowing to urban and industrial contexts rather than to the local communities (for an overview, see Temper et al., 2020).

Polarisation

Participatory practices provide opportunities for deliberation, which entails participants actively processing balanced information, weighing and reflecting on different perspectives, and justifying their own preferences for climate policies (Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2019). Proponents argue that being exposed to different perspectives and having to justify one’s

own position motivates people to accept less simplistic and more common-good orientated solutions (Fishkin, 1995), including in climate policymaking (Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2019). The underlying assumption is that people are open to different perspectives and willing to incorporate them in their own positions. However, bringing different perspectives to the table in participation procedures can come with a major risk – polarisation. Polarisation means that people’s pre-existing opinions become more extreme and opinion divides become deeper during public participation (Sunstein, 2002). Literature on negotiations shows that when people perceive others as holding different values from their own, they are less likely to negotiate and more likely to end in a stalemate (Harinck & De Dreu, 2004; Schuster, Majer, & Trötschel, 2020). As such, public participation can aggravate clashes between, for instance, supporters and opponents of climate policies (e.g., Gross, 2007), hindering the chances to find solutions that are acceptable to many.

Fake Participation

The seminal participation ladder ranks public participation procedures from *non-participation* to *tokenism* to *citizen control*, based on how much decision-making power citizens have (Arnstein, 1969). Even if people are informed and can express their views and concerns regarding climate policies (i.e., two-way communication), but do not have real influence on final decisions on those policies, this can be experienced as fake participation (i.e., tokenism on the participation ladder; Arnstein, 1969) and fuel public resistance (Colvin, Witt, & Lacey, 2016; Gross, 2007; Reilly, O’Hagan, & Dalton, 2016; Terwel, ter Mors, & Daamen, 2012). It is widely assumed that only higher steps on the participation ladder, such as partnership (i.e., shared decision-making power between citizens and developers), delegation (i.e., citizens have delegated power), and, ultimately, citizen control (i.e., citizens take all decisions) (Arnstein, 1969) can increase public support for climate policies (Colvin et al., 2016; Gross, 2007; Rand & Hoen, 2017; Terwel et al., 2012).

Whereas the participation ladder accounts for how much decision-making power people have, we argue it is also important to consider which decisions people can influence when, in order to fully grasp the challenge of fake participation. Specifically, climate policies are embedded in a decision-making chain – from general policy visions (e.g., the Paris Agreement, national environmental policies, setting reduction targets and the envisaged transition to renewable energy sources) to programmes and concrete projects, and from national or international to regional and local levels (Perlaviciute & Squintani, 2020; Squintani & Perlaviciute, 2020). If public participation takes place at the end of the decision-making chain, such as in local projects (e.g., a wind energy park in people’s neighbourhood), many important decisions (e.g., selecting locations for renewable energy siting) will already have been made earlier in decision making. Even if people have real power over decisions at the level of local projects (i.e., higher ranks on the participation ladder; Arnstein, 1969), those decisions may be of relatively minor importance (e.g., whether local inhabitants can pause a wind turbine for a given number of minutes each year to reduce nuisance such as flickering). At that stage, people may no longer influence the decisions made at an earlier stage (e.g., selecting the locations for wind energy siting). Consequently, despite citizens having decision-making power, the challenge of public participation being perceived as fake might remain, which, again, might fuel public resistance.

All in all, public participation is rapidly entering political agendas, with hope from policy-makers and other practitioners that it will lead to more democratic, substantively better, and, eventually, more socially acceptable climate policies. Yet, in its actual form, public participation is not a silver bullet and can be plagued by exclusion, polarisation, and fake participation – all of which can hinder the laudable functions of public participation (Figure 22.1). The question is therefore how to overcome the ailments of public participation and reap its benefits. We argue that both the way participation is regulated and organised, on the one hand, and public preferences for whether, when, and how to participate, on the other hand, influence the effectiveness of public participation.

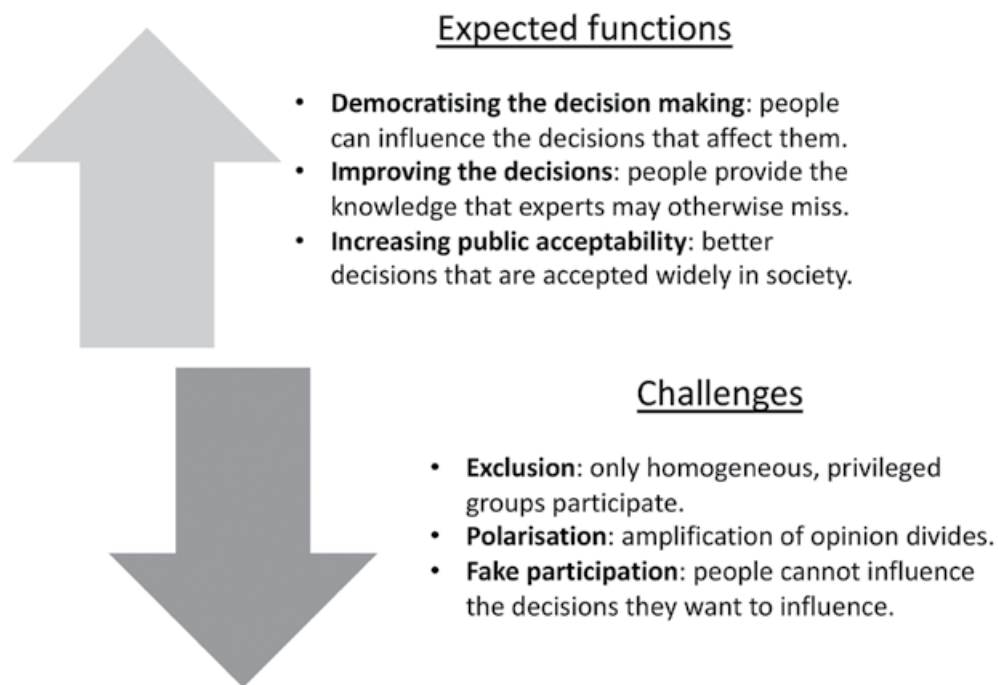


Figure 22.1 The main expected functions and main challenges of public participation in decision making

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Social sciences insights about public participation were adopted in legal frameworks, with the United Nations Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (the so-called Aarhus Convention) from 1998 being the major example of such formalisation of public participation insights (see also Perlaviciute & Squintani, 2020; Squintani & Perlaviciute, 2020). The Aarhus Convention recognises the importance of early and meaningful public participation by mandating “reasonable time-frames” to inform the public and to allow for a response, at a time when “all options are possible” and participation can be “effective”, and that responsible authorities should “take the

views” expressed by the public “in due account” (Perlaviciute & Squintani, 2020). However, even if responsible parties comply with the Aarhus Convention requirements, it does not yet guarantee that the three challenges mentioned above will be avoided. The Aarhus Convention can thus be used as exemplification of whether legal frameworks enhance effective public participation. In particular, while generally speaking the Aarhus Convention enables public participation, some of its elements are not optimal in order to enhance the effectiveness of public participation (Squintani, 2021), as explained below.

First, although the Aarhus Convention prohibits discrimination, it does not as such (explicitly) mandate the adoption of so-called “positive action”, namely additional measures targeting marginalised societal groups and aiming at increasing their ability to partake effectively in participatory processes (Squintani & Schoukens, 2019). Scholars have proposed interpretation of some key provisions of the Aarhus Convention so as to allow room for positive actions in public participation (Squintani & Schoukens, 2019), and the recent EU Commission document on Better Regulation explicitly refers to the importance of positive action to empower marginalised societal groups during public participation in the energy transition (European Commission, 2021; Jendroška, Reese, & Squintani, 2021). Yet, these works are theoretical and political in nature and not yet part of the actual legal framework. The *de facto* exclusionary effects of public participation procedures highlighted above are thus not halted by the mainstream reading of the Aarhus Convention.

Second, the Aarhus Convention does not regulate the manner in which public participation events must be organised in practice. Deliberative theory outlines a set of guidelines to facilitate polarisation-free deliberation, such as giving balanced information, establishing discussion rules (e.g., respect the opinion of others, justify own opinion), and having neutral moderators to ensure that everyone gets a word and that different perspectives are represented (Grönlund, Herne, & Setälä, 2015). However, the Aarhus Convention addresses the deliberation criterion mostly by requiring responsible parties to inform the public about the project and the decision-making procedure, to take public opinion into account, and to explain how the input of the public has been addressed (Squintani & Perlaviciute, 2020). It does not set standards about moderators or about how to manage the discussion. Furthermore, it does not set any requirements for the public about how to deliberate. For example, from a legal perspective, it is perfectly fine if a participant, or even all of them, simply states “no, no matter what” towards a proposed policy or project, without engaging in any deliberative process. Whereas considered fine from a legal perspective, such practices can lead to polarisation and hinder the achievement of the benefits associated with public participation. Our point in this regard is that the Aarhus Convention has no requirement aimed at avoiding polarisation.

Third, the mandatory requirements about public participation in the Aarhus Convention are more extensively regulated, and thus demanding on responsible parties, at the level of decisions about concrete projects (Article 6) than at the earlier stages of the decision-making chain (i.e., policy visions, plans, and programmes) (Perlaviciute & Squintani, 2020). Most notably, there are no specific requirements for public participation as regards policy visions (the first stage of the chain of decision making). Moreover, as regards decisions about concrete projects, the Aarhus Convention has specific requirements for timely notification, access to information, the public being able to submit their views, and responsible parties having to justify how public views were considered. These requirements are more loosely formulated as regards public participation vis-à-vis plans and programmes. This means that the more abstract the decision-making level, the less legal requirement there is about the manner in which public

participation is organised (Squintani & Perlaviciute, 2020). This finding is relevant because options discussed earlier in the decision-making chain, for example when establishing general policy visions, do not need to be discussed again during participatory processes in later stages of the chain, such as most notably the stage of concrete local projects (Perlaviciute & Squintani, 2020; Squintani & Perlaviciute, 2020). Hence, when people ask to discuss again an option discussed in a policy document or plan and strategy (e.g., amount of renewable energy that should come from wind energy), during a participatory process concerning a concrete local project, responsible parties can simply reply that this subject matter has already been discussed and it is no longer open to debate, potentially fuelling a sense of fake participation among the public (Perlaviciute & Squintani, 2020).

PUBLIC PREFERENCES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Next to the way participation is regulated and organised, it is also important to understand public preferences for whether, when, and how to participate. In fact, public preferences for participation may exacerbate the key challenges, namely exclusion, polarisation, and fake participation, and jeopardise the realisation of the expected functions of public participation.

First, exclusion might prevail not only if people are not able to participate, but also if (some) people are not motivated to participate. Indeed, even if offered the opportunity, people often do not show up in participation procedures (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; Ruostetsaari, 2017) and sometimes favour one-way communication (e.g., visiting websites) over a dialogue (Langer, Decker, & Menrad, 2017). More importantly, opponents of climate policies may be more motivated to participate in decision making than supporters of those policies, as people are generally more motivated by anticipated losses than gains (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Indeed, people with more negative (vs. positive) attitudes towards nuclear energy were more willing to take action against (vs. in favour of) nuclear energy and to participate in decision making about nuclear (research) installations (De Groot & Steg, 2010; Hoti, Perko, Thijssen, & Renn, 2021; Turcanu, Perko, & Laes, 2014), and opponents seem to sometimes dominate decision making on renewable energy projects (Colvin et al., 2016). Such public preferences for whether or not to participate can aggravate exclusion, as opposing opinions may be over-represented in participation procedures, while supporting opinions may be underrepresented.

Next, if mostly opponents participate in decision making, it is very likely that people will be exposed to like-minded people and a limited pool of arguments (Sunstein, 2002). As a result, the arguments against the policy may dominate the discussion, leaving little to no room for discussing possible reasons to accept the policy. This can make opponents' initial opinions even more extreme, as they may perceive great support from other like-minded people. Interestingly, initial evidence suggests that people who are most willing to participate in the decision making may at the same time be least willing to engage in constructive deliberation about the respective policy (Liu, Perlaviciute, & Squintani, 2022). Specifically, especially people who thought a wind energy project is not acceptable under any conditions were more likely to participate in decision making, compared with those who thought the project might be acceptable if certain conditions are satisfied (Liu et al., 2022). If participants think the project is never acceptable, they may be not willing to discuss any possible reasons and conditions to develop the project. This might prevent other (possibly more positive) perspectives from

being considered in participation procedures, and might aggravate polarisation between, for example, supporters and opponents.

Moreover, as introduced earlier, the seminal participation ladder implies that the more decision-making power people have, the better it is for preventing fake participation and enhancing public acceptability of policies (Arnstein, 1969). However, a study showed that being able to take the decisions themselves (i.e., citizen control) did not result in people accepting the decision-making process nor the renewable energy project more than being able to take the decisions together with responsible parties (i.e., partnership). This suggests that people may not necessarily want to have as much decision-making power as possible (Liu, Bouman, Perlaviciute, & Steg, 2021). One possible reason could be that people think citizens involved in the decision making lack competence and expertise to take good-quality decisions about climate policies. Indeed, a decision-making panel comprising both experts and citizens was evaluated as having more expertise, and being more capable to take high-quality decisions, compared with a decision-making panel comprising only citizens (Liu et al., 2021). Furthermore, people prefer to participate later rather than earlier in the decision-making chain, namely in decision making on local projects (e.g., building wind turbines in their neighbourhood) rather than on national or regional policy visions, plans, and programmes (e.g., how much CO₂ needs to be reduced to mitigate climate change) (Perlaviciute & Squintani, 2020). At the same time, however, people find energy projects more acceptable when they can influence *major* decisions (e.g., the location of solar panels to be installed) rather than *minor* decisions (e.g., the colour of solar panel facilities) (Liu, Bouman, Perlaviciute, & Steg, 2019). This creates a participation paradox – people want to influence major decisions, yet they prefer to participate at the latest stages of the decision-making chain (e.g., local projects) where they may no longer be able to influence those decisions. As a result, they may experience public participation as fake, which might fuel public resistance.

EQUAL-OPPORTUNITIES- AND VALUES-BASED APPROACH TO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (EVA)

Public participation is expected to lead to more democratic and better-quality decisions about climate policies, and eventually to more public support for those policies. However, public participation also faces challenges of being exclusive, polarising, and seen as fake, all of which can fuel public resistance against climate policies. Legal frameworks could be better tailored to protect public participation from its possible ailments. Yet, legal frameworks may be ineffective if they do not account for whether, when, and how people want to participate in decision making on climate policies. Meanwhile, public preferences can frustrate effective public participation, if some people want to participate more than others, if people are not open to different perspectives, and if they want to participate too late in decision making. Our proposed novel, interdisciplinary approach to public participation – the equal-opportunities-and values-based approach (EVA) – is the first effort to reconcile legal frameworks and public preferences for public participation in order to enable as well as motivate people to participate effectively. It does so by, on the one hand, promoting equal opportunities for different societal groups to effectively participate, and, on the other hand, by incorporating people's different values in public participation procedures, as explained below.

The inclusion of different societal groups in participatory practice can be promoted via a positive action approach, namely

the deliberate use of any socially conscious criterion for the specific purpose of benefiting those groups of society that have previously been disadvantaged in the area of public participation in environmental matters on grounds of social characteristics, such as the level of education or wealth. (Squintani & Schoukens 2019, p. 28)

Specifically, this entails both equality of opportunities, which means placing all parties on *de facto* equal starting position, and equality of outcomes, which means that marginalised groups gain more resources or benefit otherwise out of the participatory procedure (Dworkin, 2002; Phillips, 2004). By tailoring the participation procedures to the specific needs of marginalised societal groups, the chances that people belonging to a marginalised group effectively partake can be increased (Squintani & Schoukens 2019). Multiple strategies can be used to strengthen the starting position of marginalised groups, such as purposive sampling, accessible participation events at different times and locations, and communication through different channels that are user-friendly for different groups in society (Beierle & Cayford, 2002; Dietz & Stern, 2008; Fishkin, 1995). The equality of outcomes, on the other hand, can be promoted, for instance, by weighting the input from marginalised societal groups more than that from non-marginalised societal groups. One example of an equality of outcomes approach concerns engaging lower-educated and indigenous peoples in participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, which resulted in more funds being allocated to poor, problematic neighbourhoods (Pateman, 2012).

The above strategies are laudable as they can increase the inclusiveness of demographically diverse groups in participatory practices. Yet, they are also limited, because they do not consider people's core values that influence public acceptability of climate policies. Values are general, situation-transcendent goals or ideals that serve as guiding principles in people's lives, guiding individuals' decisions, attitudes, and behaviours (Schwartz, 1992). Four types of values can influence public acceptability of climate policies (Perlaviciute, Steg, Contzen, Roeser, & Huijts, 2018):

- biospheric values (caring about nature and the environment),
- altruistic values (caring about the well-being of others and society),
- egoistic values (caring about personal resources),
- hedonic values (caring about one's pleasure and comfort).

The extent to which people perceive climate policies as having negative or positive implications for their core values influences public acceptability of those policies (Perlaviciute & Steg, 2014, 2015). For example, renewable energy sources are typically more favoured by individuals with stronger biospheric values and weaker egoistic values (Bidwell, 2013; Contzen, Handreke, Perlaviciute, & Steg, 2021; Perlaviciute & Steg, 2015). This is probably because renewables are seen as helpful in combating climate change, but costly for consumers. Conversely, nuclear energy is more acceptable to those with stronger egoistic and weaker biospheric values (De Groot, Steg, & Poortinga, 2013; Perlaviciute, Steg, & Hoekstra, 2015). This is probably because people associate nuclear energy with a secure supply of relatively cheap energy, but also with potential environmental hazards. This suggests that people are more likely to support climate policies when they associate such policies with benefits for

their core values; examples include reduced CO₂ emissions for biospheric values, reduced energy poverty for altruistic values, reduced energy costs for egoistic values, and increased comfort and quality of life for hedonic values. Given the central role of values in public acceptability of climate policies, it seems critical that values are incorporated in participation procedures (Perlaviciute, 2019). Accordingly, we propose that by integrating equal opportunities and values, the EVA approach can help ensure that people are both able and motivated to effectively participate, thereby combating the challenges of exclusion, polarisation, and fake participation, as explained below.

Combating Exclusion: Inclusion of Different Groups and Values

Both equal opportunities and values can complement each other in promoting diversity and preventing exclusion in public participation procedures. First, even if different groups are *able* to participate (i.e., due to positive actions), they may not be *motivated* to participate because they do not recognise the implications of climate policies for their core values (Dietz, 2013; Perlaviciute, 2019). Explicating such value implications of climate policies could therefore be an effective strategy for motivating different people to participate. Since people are more motivated by the prospect of losses than gains (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), explicating in particular value threats could motivate people to participate. For instance, discussing not only the consequences if a climate policy is implemented (e.g., price premium) but also if it is not implemented (e.g., failed CO₂ reduction targets) could possibly motivate not only those who care most about egoistic values, but also those who care most about biospheric values to participate, respectively. In this way, EVA could help combat the exclusion challenge of public participation through enabling as well as motivating diverse groups to participate.

Besides, incorporating values in public participation can serve as a positive action that improves the starting position of different societal groups, by creating a level-playing field for everyone to participate. Notably, the four types of values – biospheric, altruistic, egoistic, and hedonic values – are considered universal, as people across the world endorse them to some extent (Steg & de Groot, 2012) and there are no major differences in how strongly these values are endorsed by societal groups that differ in age, gender, income, education level, and household composition (Sargisson, de Groot, & Steg, 2020). Hence, values can provide a common language for different societal groups – including marginalised groups – to engage in participatory practice, thus lowering a *de facto* participatory threshold. Indeed, participants no longer need to translate factual information to their own value understanding by themselves, something that could be more challenging for some people than for others.

Furthermore, the equal-opportunities approach can in turn help ensure that the implications of climate policies for different values – and of different groups in society – are addressed. Whereas different groups may hold similar values to a similar extent (Sargisson et al., 2020), they may nevertheless experience that climate policies affect their values differently. For example, a price premium for green electricity has stronger negative impacts for egoistic values of people with lower income than higher income. This does not mean that lower-income people care less about the environment, but rather that their egoistic values are threatened more. Unmasking such different, possibly unequal, consequences of climate policies for the values of different societal groups is an important step towards a true representativeness of different groups and their core values, and towards developing climate policies that are acceptable to the society at large. The EVA approach therefore extends current approaches to

public participation by ensuring that a broad range of consequences for different values (i.e., biospheric, altruistic, egoistic, and hedonic values) and for different groups are articulated.

Deliberation without Polarisation

People's position in favour or against a climate policy can be an important part of their identity, accompanied by anger at the opposing group (Bliuc et al., 2015; Postmes, 2015). Discussing these positions during deliberation might activate such partisan identities and instigate intergroup conflict. Especially when people perceive others as holding different values than their own, this might lead to impasses in public participation (Harinck & De Dreu, 2004; Schuster et al., 2020). Yet, although values may therefore seem to be the key drivers of polarisation, values can also be keys to the solution to address the potential polarisation. Notably, biospheric, altruistic, egoistic, and hedonic values are important to most people, only the way they prioritise these values might differ (Sargisson et al., 2020; Steg & de Groot, 2012). This provides a unique possibility to emphasise shared values, which could in turn instigate common goals (Kenter, Reed, & Fazey, 2016) and motivate people to collaborate, for example in achieving better climate policies (Frieling, Lindenberg, & Stokman, 2014; Kovacheff, Schwartz, Inbar, & Feinberg, 2018). We therefore advocate a transition in deliberation from opinions (e.g., in favour vs. against) to the underlying values and how to accommodate different values in climate policies.

Through the EVA approach, people may realise that themselves and others hold more similar values than they initially anticipated. For example, people tend to underestimate how strongly others endorse biospheric values (Bergquist, 2020; Bouman, Steg, & Zawadzki, 2020), and this perception can sometimes be aggravated during public participation. Notably, seeing that someone opposes renewable energy may lead to an assumption that the person does not endorse biospheric values. However, more accurate perceptions could be facilitated by probing people's underlying values, as this could unveil that people may disagree based on the same rather than different values. For instance, people may support renewable energy because it reduces CO₂ emissions, but people could also oppose renewable energy because it threatens local ecosystems (i.e., the two conflicting positions can both be rooted in biospheric values).

Next, the EVA approach could enable and motivate people to take the perspective of others, which might in turn facilitate compromises (Trötschel, Hüffmeier, Loschelder, Schwartz, & Gollwitzer, 2011). For example, someone might oppose renewables not because the person does not care about the environment, but primarily because renewables seriously threaten their other important values (e.g., reduced quality of life), possibly because the person lives in an area that already faces a lot of industrial developments. Realising that other people – including marginalised groups – face such value threats could foster mutual understanding and a discussion on how to accommodate different values, overcoming polarisation.

Preventing Fake Participation

We propose to apply the EVA approach – namely to discuss the implications of climate policies for the various values and for different groups in society – throughout the entire decision-making chain. This could enable and motivate people to discuss the decisions that are important to them, namely that have implications for their core values, at the time when those decisions can still be influenced.

In particular, early in decision making, the discussion is highly abstract (e.g., CO₂ targets, sustainability goals) and full of uncertainties. As a result, at an early stage of decision making, it might not be very clear to people what consequences the policies will have for them, which could reduce their motivation to participate. When policies turn into concrete projects, oftentimes particularly negative consequences become evident (e.g., noise from wind turbines, threats to local ecosystems), which might make people want to participate at this level (Perlaviciute & Squintani, 2020). Opponents may want to participate more than supporters, in order to prevent the negative consequences (De Groot & Steg, 2010). Explicating the implications for different values, such as impacts on the economy, employment, and personal finances (egoistic values), local and global environment (biospheric values), everyday comfort and quality of life (hedonic values), and social justice and democracy (altruistic values), could motivate people to participate from early on in decision making (Demski, Butler, Parkhill, Spence, & Pidgeon, 2015; Keeney, von Winterfeldt, & Eppel, 1990).

Even if people can discuss the implications for their different values, they may still see participation as fake if different values are not taken equally seriously in shaping the final decisions. Whereas the Aarhus Convention does not set guidelines for value integration, other related legal frameworks may lead to under-consideration of certain values. For example, the EU Habitats Directive mandates public authorities to give precedence to nature conservation values over other values when deciding about projects significantly affecting the integrity of natural habitats protected under the Directive (Squintani, 2020). Such a legal requirement limits the ability of decision makers to account for public opinions that prioritise the implications for other values, such as recreation (implication for hedonic values) and economic growth (implication for egoistic values). In this case, even different implications for biospheric values would be ranked differently, as combating climate change would rank lower than specifically nature conservation. Incorporating different values – biospheric, altruistic, egoistic, and hedonic – in public participation procedures and eventually in the final decisions could help prevent people thinking that their core values have been bypassed, thereby preventing the impression of fake participation.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE

We proposed the EVA approach to increase the effectiveness of public participation; Table 22.1 lists the design principles derived from this novel approach, aimed at combating the key challenges of public participation. These design principles are targeted at scientists, policy-makers, NGOs, businesses, interest groups, and other parties wanting to effectively engage the public in decision making on climate policies.

CONCLUSION

Climate policies are needed to create the necessary conditions (e.g., sustainable technology, infrastructure, consumer products and services) and to incentivise (e.g., subsidies) people's sustainable behaviour. However, climate policies may halt if there is not enough public support. Engaging the public more in decision making is widely expected to strengthen public support for climate policies. Yet, public participation is not a silver bullet and, if not done

Table 22.1 *Design principles for public participation, based on the equal-opportunities and values-based approach (EVA), to combat the key challenges of public participation*

Combating the challenge of exclusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailor participatory opportunities to the needs of different societal groups to increase effective participation of marginalised groups • Emphasise the implications of climate policies for different values to motivate people who care about these different values to participate • Use values as a common language to facilitate the participation of different societal groups • Unmask possibly unequal implications of climate policies for different values and for different societal groups
Combating the challenge of polarisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unveil the values that underline people's different positions to clear misperceptions about the values of others • Emphasise value similarity among those participating to instigate common goals • Discuss value threats for different societal groups to facilitate perspective taking and mutual understanding
Combating the challenge of fake participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply EVA throughout the entire decision-making chain to enable and motivate people to participate at a time when they can still influence the decisions they want to influence • Take different societal groups and all values equally seriously in shaping the final decisions

properly, can result in exclusion, polarisation, and fake participation, which can fuel public resistance. The effectiveness of public participation depends on how it is regulated and organised, as well as on public preferences for whether, when, and how to participate. We have provided concrete design principles for effective participatory practices, based on promoting equal opportunities and incorporating people's different values (i.e., the EVA approach).

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NOTE

1. The focus in this chapter is on public participation organised by responsible parties; grassroots participation such as social movements and energy communities are beyond the scope of this chapter.

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