

## <a>Experts: The Politics of Evidence and Expertise in Democratic Innovation

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### <b>Abstract

Experts can play a number of roles in democratic innovations. However, there are challenges to consider regarding the value of expertise, the definition of expertise, what constitutes evidence and how experts should be involved in the process and outcome of democratic innovations. This Chapter explores some of these issues before outlining some of the key practical and normative issues around involving experts in democratic innovations.

### <b>Introduction

Many democratic innovations involve experts, either in an advisory capacity or as evidence providers. There are many formats for expert involvement and for managing the evidence-giving process. The role of experts and expertise within deliberative democracy has been discussed by a number of prominent theorists (Habermas, 1996; Bohman, 1996; Fischer, 1999; Brown, 2014). However, to date there has been limited discussion of the relative strengths of different approaches, in terms of process and its outcomes, in relation to the participant's experience – from both the experts' and the citizens' perspectives.

This Chapter examines the roles that experts can play in democratic innovations, and the competing views on the place of evidence and expertise in democratic policymaking. First, we outline what is meant by 'expertise' and 'evidence', and uncertainties around these terms. We then introduce the role of - and challenges of - evidence and expertise in the current political system, and how they are conceptualised and implemented in participatory and deliberative processes, highlighting key differences. We outline the type of roles experts can fulfil in different democratic innovations and consider the relative strengths of these. To conclude, we explore the practical and normative implications for democratic innovation, and topics for future research.

### <b>Defining expertise and evidence

#### <c> *What is expertise and who is an expert?*

The term 'expert' is quite flexible, but generally refers to a person considered to be particularly knowledgeable or skilled in a certain field. There is significant diversity in the range of expertise in society. Lansdell (2011) identified four different types of experts that might inform decision making:

1. *Knowledge experts*: individuals with specialist knowledge on an issue or topic (be it scientific, technical, legal, economic and so on).
2. *Stakeholders*: representatives from interested parties (lobbyist or interest groups).
3. *Experiential experts*: individuals with knowledge about an issue as a result of direct experience.
4. *Representative experts*: individuals who may have no particular knowledge or first-hand experience of the issue, but who reflect some aspect of the wider public.

Despite the variety in the type and quality of expertise, the 'expert' status is most commonly attributed to the 'knowledge expert'. Much of this Chapter will focus on knowledge experts, which we refer to simply as experts.

An individual might be accepted as an expert by wider society through their experience, the position they hold or the authority that their knowledge earns (Fischer, 2009, p. 17). Since expertise is statutory but not standardised, defining who qualifies as an expert, and to whom, can be tricky. Different subject areas might have indicators of knowledge, accreditation or status (such as chartership, title/job title, specialist awards) or experience (such as advisory roles, authored work). However, the significance of accolades may not transfer beyond the boundaries of subject specialties, certain communities or internationally. There are no criteria within society which define the quality of expertise, though there has been much research around this topic (Cooke, 1991; Bolger, 2018).

### **<c> What is good evidence?**

Evidence can come in a number of forms (Flitcroft et al., 2011) and might be delivered via reports, published articles, books, presented by experts in lecture form, information leaflets, billboards, media/social media/press, education, or public dialogues. Majone (1989, p. 10) argues that ‘evidence is not synonymous with data or information. It is information selected from the available stock and introduced at a specific point in the argument in order to persuade a particular audience of the truth or falsity of a statement.’

Distinguishing good evidence from bad is privy to the person designated an expert. Evidence quality is also determined by its audience. Some audiences will receive evidence more favourably than others (Bäckstrand, 2003) because multiple factors affect how evidence is perceived, including the credibility of the author, the evidence format, timeframe of delivery and the fit with the audience’s views.

### **<b>The current political system and the role of experts**

The role of experts in democratic society has long been debated (Dewey, 1927; Dahl, 1989; Fischer, 1999). In modern society, professional experts have a prominent position in guiding policy making, as ‘science has been called on to provide a firm basis for justifying and making political decisions credible’ (Bäckstrand, 2003, p. 30). Habermas (1971) feels that such ‘technocratic decisionism’ or ‘scientism’, in which the knowledge and experience of scientific, technocratic and academic elites crowd out the voice of ordinary citizens, is undemocratic. As Fischer (2009, p. 23) observes, experts who work closely with governments and decision-influencers have a level of power and autonomy that no other groups in contemporary society do; they do not need to rely on electoral support like politicians (see Chapter 17 in this Handbook). Nevertheless, public opinion greatly influences which issues are on the political agenda, and the practical and normative challenges of influencing and connecting research and evidence to practice and policy are well documented (Nutley et al., 2010). Further, the degree to which experts and evidence influence policy is somewhat shrouded by lack of transparency in the political process: detailed reasoning is rarely provided to document and support policy progress, and so it is difficult to trace the impact and evolution of evidence.

The emergence of professional-led policy making is referred to by Fischer (2000, p. 14) as an ‘expertocracy’, where the boundaries between expert advice and policy making have become blurred and unclear (Bäckstrand, 2003, p. 27). Two key problems arise as a result. First, expert evidence is frequently forwarded as ‘fact’. Facts are information that is proven to be known (or true), rather than information that supports a certain position. It is a widely-held notion that science is – and should be – objective, and operates outside of politics (Bäckstrand, 2003, p. 27). It is this notion which renders science, and scientists, trustworthy (Reiss and Sprenger, 2017). However, knowledge is often limited to the bounds of current understanding, rather than ‘proven’ to be ‘true’. It is common for complex

political issues to be characterised by conflicting evidence due to scientific uncertainty, value judgements and bias, to the point that ‘science typically leads to *disagreement* and a lack of consensus’ (Aitken, 2009, p. 51). Indeed, van Wesep (2016) argues that experts should be expected to be systematically biased since they believe the outcomes of their work will be fruitful. Conflict between expert views challenges the perception that science or research is objective and certain, particularly because in such cases the reason for conflict cannot be dismissed as simply due to a lack of knowledge (Brown, 2014, p. 59). As such, conflict and uncertainty weaken the perceived integrity of experts, and of research more generally. This is exacerbated by a lack of open discussion about the source of disagreement (e.g. differences in research approaches, assumptions, scope or opinion) in spheres that are accessible to lay citizens (Brown, 2014, p. 54).

Secondly, expertise has become politicised. Habermas (1996, p. 351) tells us, ‘As soon as specialized knowledge is brought to politically relevant problems, its unavoidably normative character becomes apparent, setting off controversies that polarize the experts themselves’. This has drawn attention to the social dimension of science and technology and, as such, diminished its authority (see Chapter 20 in this Handbook). As Abels (2007, p. 104) explains, contradictory claims reveal that science is not an objective and value-free endeavour, but itself a social construction. Indeed, objectivity itself is a socially defined value (Reiss and Sprenger, 2017), and so the legitimacy and reliability of expert analyses will never be as strong as desired or perceived. As a result, the status of expertise itself becomes contested, and, as articulated by Bäckstrand (2003, p. 30), ‘when the public experiences that science can be both contested and uncertain, the policy-process, which relies on purportedly objective knowledge, loses credibility’.

The rise of expertocracy places citizens in a disadvantaged position through several means. Firstly, in the current political process, experts can affect political issues at local to international scales in a number of ways. Mechanisms for information exchange have been encouraged and developed in the UK, including formal dialogue (briefings, advisory panels, expert working groups, policy debates), secondments and exchanges, new platforms (e.g. ClimateXChange, What Works Network), events (conferences, workshops and exhibits) as well as informal interactions. Experts are encouraged to engage and influence through media (see Chapter 18 in this Handbook) or other bodies and can work with NGOs, think tanks and so on to influence policy indirectly (Brown, 2014; Habermas, 1996). This is all in addition to usual pathways for citizen representation, such as responding to consultations and so on. The professional expert is a respected position within society (Fischer, 2009, p. 19-21), and demand for an individual’s expertise allows them greater influence and power (Solimano, 2010, ch 6). Further influence will be drawn from individuals with networks, social connections, resources, and superior communicative and management skills, as with any profession (Mosca, 1960). Yet, there is a fine line between providing evidence and lobbying (Clayton and Culshaw, 2009), and few formal mechanisms for governing experts; professional peers, learned societies and research councils cannot prevent experts from becoming involved in political matters. Thus, it can be argued that the professional expert is part of an unusually influential elite.

Secondly, an ‘unequal communicative relationship’ has been created whereby citizens struggle to comprehend the technical language and administrative goals set by experts (Fischer, 2000, p. 18). As Simis et al. (2016) observes, experts are oftentimes ill-equipped to communicate with members of the public. Faced with conflicting evidence, and with limited knowledge and understanding of the complexities of a topic, non-experts cannot dispute or challenge the expert opinion and so citizens must ‘surrender their autonomy to experts’ due to the disparity in knowledge (Bohman, 1996, p.168). This ‘social-epistemic problem’ (Almassi, 2012, p. 33) is further exacerbated by the ‘dialectical superiority’ that many experts possess, which enables them to discuss complex issues with ease. In turn, the elegant articulation of arguments enhances how persuasive and believable the expert and

their evidence are, so placing the non-expert at further disadvantage (Goldman, 2001). These inequalities have arisen because lay citizens are not equipped to become more informed on complex political issues. There are limitations on how much evidence citizens can gather owing to the enormity of - and evolution of - the subject, and also restrictions on their ability to collect empirical evidence (Almassi, 2012, p. 31). How then can non-expert audiences resolve competing expert claims?

As such, there has been a parting of ways, and now the lay citizen is reliant on experts or expert bodies for information, which Hardwig (1985) refers to as 'epistemic dependence'. There are more information sources and formats available than ever before; and citizens are challenged to recognise expertise in a given field, and distinguish good evidence from bad (Ahn et al., 2014, p. 45). In addition, if these limitations are not reconciled, the wider public will become increasingly disillusioned with the technocratic expert (Fischer, 2000, 2009). This sentiment was mirrored in a statement made during the EU referendum campaign by a high-profile British politician that the UK public 'have had enough of experts' (Financial Times, 2016).

### **<c> What then for the future?**

Much of what citizens know about political issues has been highlighted by experts and informed by the work of expert groups. Although the narrative surrounding the expert has become progressively critical (Fischer, 2009, p. 20), experts are deemed necessary to shape policy making as they are more qualified and knowledgeable on topics, or aspects of topics, than the public at large (Fischer, 1999, p. 294; Brown, 2014, p. 50). In the current political system the issue is not the involvement of experts, but the lack of transparency and the level of authority that experts have, and the subsequent exclusion of the voice of non-experts, including citizens. After all, citizens can improve the technical quality of decisions by offering a level of scrutiny from a completely new perspective (Weale, 2002, p. 41) and contributing valuable knowledge of their lived environment.

The challenge is to reconcile experts, citizens and policy makers and construct, through the co-production of knowledge, new forms of expertise and citizenship. Here, democratic innovations may offer a resolution. But, how should expert and public knowledge be married together in these processes?

### **<b> Democratic Innovations and the role of experts**

It is intended that decision outcomes from democratic innovations will be more democratic and stronger than traditional methods because they have been influenced by citizen perspectives, and by the nature of deliberation and collective thinking. Citizen participants will have differing degrees of prior knowledge about the subject at hand, and the framework or context in which it sits. Therefore one of the primary steps of many democratic innovations, and in particular mini-publics (see Chapter 3 in this Handbook), is to support participants become more informed about the subject matter and its complexities. Experts are usually involved in this process. Given the issues presented by 'expertocracy' it has been suggested that public views should be collected and considered *completely separately* from experts (Habermas, 1996), or that public opinion should be considered in direct opposition to technical expertise (Manin, 1987, p. 355; Fung, 2003, p. 343). However, this is difficult in practice: even if experts weren't to select or present information to participants, the process would still have expert influence, for example, the knowledge already held by citizens is likely to have been sourced from experts, and for legitimacy mini-publics are steered by an Oversight Panel (or equivalent) comprising of a range of experts and interest groups. Further, providing evidence in democratic innovations aims to equip and empower the citizens to make informed choices, and to ensure that the outcomes are useful for decision making (Abels, 2007; Brown, 2014). Excluding expert input could challenge the legitimacy and relevance of democratic innovation outcomes. That said, since experts

are involved in some democratic innovations from the very start and may seed the arguments which the citizens take forward, care must be taken to manage the process to be citizen-led. **Table 15.1** compares the role of experts and evidence in traditional democratic forums and democratic innovations.

**Table 15.1:** *The role and format of information, experts and citizens in traditional democratic forums and democratic innovations.*

\*\*INSERT TABLE 1 HERE\*\*

Experts can fill a multitude of roles within democratic innovations, some of which are summarized in Table 15.2. These roles can be formal or informal. Formal involves information delivery alone, conveying information in a one-way model ('informers' or 'teachers'; Table 15.2), whereas informal involves two-way discussions to guide the citizens as a 'technical friend' ('informers and listeners' or 'participants'; Table 15.2). As shown in Table 15.2, the extent to which the democratic innovation outcomes are generated independently of experts depends on the roles that experts fulfil in the process, as well as the characteristics of the expert.

**Table 15.2:** *Different roles that experts can fill in deliberative processes. Adapted from Lansdell (2011, p. 14-6). Disconnect refers to the difference between the roles of the expert and the citizens.*

\*\*INSERT TABLE 2 HERE\*\*

Table 15.2 outlines the range of roles that experts and evidence can have in the suite of processes that democratic innovations encompass (see Chapter 1). In general, the expert(s) support democratic innovations by providing information that deepens participants understanding of the topic and its complexities. The experts are rarely remunerated for their contribution, their 'incentive' is the opportunity to influence policy (so, for their work to have impact) and to engage with the publics. The expert uses their knowledge and judgement to select and synthesise key information, and, in a suitable and comprehensible manner, communicate this information and tease out relevant wider complexities. In addition, for some democratic innovations, the expert must be ready to respond to any questions or discussion topics that arise. Participants' knowledge and understanding developed through the democratic innovations, along with other qualities, such as critical thinking and self-efficacy (Roberts and Escobar, 2015), transforms them. They no longer represent the lay public, and so, like the experts themselves, their views as participants are not representative of the public at large (Flynn, 2009, p. 59; Bohman, 1996, p. 64).

**Table 15.3:** *The variety of roles for experts and evidence for a selection of democratic innovations.*

\*\*INSERT TABLE 3 HERE\*\*

### **<b> Practical and normative implications for democratic innovation**

This Chapter has outlined how democratic innovations present opportunities for experts to work alongside, and for, citizens in a transparent process. However, issues around experts and evidence present many challenges for democratic innovations and their organisers (see Chapters 12 and 13 in this Handbook) and participants (see Chapter 11). Thus, how effective experts are at equipping participants for deliberative discussion, how empowered participants are to make (useful) recommendations, and the degree to which the outcomes of democratic innovations are independent from the experts themselves, is shaped by how the deliberative forum is structured and managed.

In this section, through a series of prompt questions, we highlight key issues or talking points to consider during the conception and design of democratic innovations, some of which are more relevant to some democratic innovation formats than others.

**<c> 1. How do you identify and select experts?**

*<d> a) Who should identify and select the experts?*

For some democratic innovations there will be experts whose involvement in the process is implicit, or self-explanatory. For example, personnel from the authority that is giving financial autonomy to the citizens in participatory budgeting projects (see Chapter 5 in this Handbook), and those sharing decision making power through collaborative governance (Chapter 4) and mini-publics (Chapter 3).

Other experts are usually identified by the project Oversight Panel (or equivalent) or the organisers. The composition of the Oversight Panel is therefore crucial to ensuring that the experts represent a range of positions and the process outcomes are credible (Roberts and Lightbody, 2017). Another option is to allow participants to choose, either by identifying the experts that they wish the organisers to approach, or by selecting which experts that they want from a broad 'menu' of pre-selected experts. The latter shares the responsibility between the organisers, the Oversight Panel and the participants, and so reduces tensions between deciding who the participants *should* hear from (to ensure that vital aspects or perspectives are heard, and so safeguarding the legitimacy of the process outcomes) and who the participants *want* to hear from.

*<d> b) What sort of experts should be involved?*

It is crucial that a range of views are presented to the participants. This becomes particularly complex for topics, such as climate change, where there is a consensus view and alternative minority perspectives. However, previous democratic innovations have found that the process is weakened if some perspectives are left out (Hendriks et al., 2007, p. 374), for example, the deliberation quality can be lowered (Warburton, 2008).

It is important to consider whether the democratic innovation would benefit from knowledge experts, and/or experiential experts or representative experts, and whether they should come from affiliated institutions, academia, community groups and so on (Anderson, 2011). The affiliations of experts can affect how they are received by the audience, and different groups welcome or criticise different affiliations (Bäckstrand, 2003). It is therefore sensible to include or offer a range of actors, and support the participants to be aware of the biases of themselves and of others (see 2d).

Finally, should the experts be those who have strong views on the matter? Passion and interest in the topic might be an inherent quality of professional experts engaged in political matters. However, mini-publics have found that experts who are 'undecided' or 'neutral' (i.e. well-informed but undecided about the issue at hand, and so do not advocate a particular position) can act somewhat like a 'technical friend' or 'informer and listener' and can help participants to understand technical aspects and, more importantly, explore relationships between values, priorities, and evidence, and provide examples of trade-offs (Gastil et al., 2015). This type of expert may be more inclined to 'exhibit deliberative virtues' (Brown, 2014), including open discussion on various approaches and outcomes and inviting disagreement and admitting mistakes or limitations (Goldman, 2001). That said, identifying impartial or 'neutral' experts that are engaged and knowledgeable on a topic can be challenging.

*<d> c) How many experts should be involved?*

For collaborative governance and participatory budgeting processes, the number of expert participants should be equal to, or less than, the number of citizen participants; an expert dominated

democratic innovation would have questionable democratic qualities. For democratic innovations involving expert speakers, too few experts and the participants won't get a fair overview of the topic, which may diminish the legitimacy of the democratic innovation outcomes. Too many experts, and the value of evidence is reduced; participants can become progressively disengaged or detracted from the purpose of the democratic innovation (Lansdell, 2011, p. 7). Mini-publics typically include at least five witnesses, though the number is partly dependent on the length of the democratic innovation (Roberts and Lightbody, 2017).

## **<c> 2. How should information provision be managed and monitored?**

Providing information to participants in democratic innovations is ineffective if the content or arguments cannot be understood by the lay audience; either because the information is not communicated appropriately or because the citizens are not supported to understand and weigh up the perspectives shared. The democratic innovation should be managed so that the experts understand the level at which to pitch the information, the evidence can be shared effectively, and also the participants are able to absorb the information.

### **<d> a) How should different perspectives be shared?**

Information can be delivered verbally (through talks, lectures or Question and Answer (Q&A) sessions), through learning activities, audio-visual formats and written information (infographics, articles, information sheets and so on). A single professional could present all the various perspectives to participants. However, due to difficulties around defining neutrality and impartiality, this approach is unlikely to satisfy the Oversight Panel and the participants, and so a range of expert participants tends to be preferred. A Q&A or debate style format of interaction can make for a lively environment. However, it can encourage emotional expression and foster the perception that the best arguer is right, undermining the quality of evidence and the argument itself. However, useful interaction between experts with divergent views will help to draw out where disagreements lie, which can be valuable for participants (Roberts and Lightbody, 2017). To manage this further, participants can be supported to understand that there is no 'right' and 'wrong', but a range of evidence and arguments and thus an array of viable outcomes (see 2d below).

### **<d> b) Evidence quality**

It is interesting to consider the shape of 'good quality evidence', how this is judged, and by whom. The experts are responsible for selecting quality evidence, and this can be overseen or vetted by those in governance roles (Oversight Panels, editors or web hosts and so on). The credibility of evidence is determined by the source of information and format in which it is published. Experts may question one another's evidence (Roberts and Lightbody, 2017; Brown, 2014), but ultimately evidence quality is weighed up by participants whose protocols may differ from experts (Bäckstrand, 2003). It helps if experts demonstrate quality arguments, provide evidence to support claims and standpoints, and make information sources clear.

### **<d> c) Language and communication**

Some individuals will be more positively received by the virtue of various factors, such as their style and communication skills (Lansdell, 2011). How relatable the evidence provider is to the citizens ('one of us' or 'one of them') is determined by the expert's personal qualities and communication style, which also significantly affects how audiences absorb and assess the information they present. This is as relevant to verbal presentations and written information as it is for videos and other information formats. In democratic innovations, experts must communicate evidence in a way that is fair to participants; i.e. they must communicate the arguments effectively and minimise technical language

or 'jargon', without dumbing down the complexity of the issue. Minimising the energy required from the viewer or reader to process the argument enhances how it is received by the audience (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2010). Jargon, if not explained or introduced, can be intimidating, exclusionary, annoying, and distracting. Facilitation tools (such as a 'red card system') can signal when the choice of language is inappropriate (Lansdell, 2011; Roberts and Escobar, 2015).

The storytelling and performance skills of experts are variable, as is the manner in which they engage in sustained deliberation (Gastil et al., 2015). Experts can range from being soft-spoken, to loud and authoritative, dull or animated, humorous or serious, personable or business-like, calm or agitated, confident or anxious. This is to be expected, and differences can be managed by supporting the expert to prepare for their role, effective facilitation and supporting participants (see below) (Roberts and Lightbody, 2017). Although the expert testimonials should be engaging, emotive communication techniques and language should be discouraged, including phrases such as '*you can't argue with the facts*', '*the science says*', or '*the evidence is incontrovertible*', which create barriers and inhibit dialogue (Lansdell, 2010).

*<d> d) How can participants be supported to make sense of evidence?*

Technical argument and conflicting views can be puzzling for participants and encourage emotional assessment of evidence or disconnect. Further, when citizens are more sceptical of one expert over another, they may be reacting to their lack of trust in the expert, or scepticism of the position that the expert advocates (Roberts and Escobar, 2015; Howell et al., 2014). Participants can be encouraged to critically interpret evidence through the way the process is managed or through the support of 'technical friends' and similar roles (Lansdell, 2011). Some democratic innovations have started with activities that develop the critical thinking skills of participants, supporting them to weigh up evidence, and be mindful of bias (their own, and experts) (Gastil et al., 2015; NewDemocracy Foundation, 2016). These efforts help participants to understand that there is no 'right' and 'wrong', but a range of evidence and arguments and thus an array of viable outcomes (YourSayNuclear, 2016).

***<c> 3. How can the process appeal to experts?***

There are tensions between managing what the expert gains from the experience, the level of input that the experts have, and the autonomy of the citizens. Experts may be reluctant to 'power share' with citizens (Hendriks et al., 2007, p. 368). The demands on the expert, and their reward, depends on the democratic innovation, their role and their preferences. A negative experience might limit their support for the democratic innovation, negatively affecting the legitimacy of its outcomes.

*<d> a) How can expert recruitment be facilitated?*

Recruiting experts can be problematic (Hendriks et al., 2007; Roberts and Lightbody, 2017). By and large, the expert role does not attract a fair representation of the range of different experts, in terms of affiliations, age and gender and other demographics, and also different types of communication and engagement style. The role typically attracts individuals who are passionate about the topic, already engaged in political discourse on the topic, and suitably advanced in their career (i.e. a professional knowledge expert) (Roberts and Lightbody, 2017). Democratic innovations demand much from experts, including time commitments, the ability to coherently communicate to an audience of non-experts on complex issues, and to respond to differing perspectives and ways of learning (Roberts and Escobar, 2015, p. 33). Experts do not always receive remuneration for their efforts and can be frustrated by the lack of clear political outcomes. Thus, some experts are underrepresented in these forums. Ensuring that all views are valued is a considerable aspect of any democratic innovation, whether as a participant or as an evidence provider.



Future research should consider how experts and expertise are utilised within democratic innovations, design aspects that appeal to different experts, and ultimately, how to reduce barriers to expert participation without undermining the legitimacy of the expert and the democratic innovation.

*<d> b) How can experts be supported in their roles?*

Practitioners must consider how to support the expert witnesses to prepare for the democratic innovation and the demands of their role. Not only should the experts' expectations be managed, and appropriate support be offered to facilitate their preparation, effort should also be made to ensure that the process is fair for them. Following the democratic innovation, engagement with the experts should continue, enabling them to reflect on their experience, and keeping them informed of the outcomes of the democratic innovation and its impact (Roberts and Lightbody, 2017).

**<c> 4. How can we effectively utilise digital form of expertise and evidence?**

Digital participation supports and complements all forms of participation (see Chapter 7 in this Handbook), including traditional models and democratic innovations shown in Table 15.3. It widens access for people, enabling them to raise issues and areas which require more attention, express their views, learn what democratic innovations mean for them, find out how they can get involved in democratic innovations, and learn the outcomes of democratic innovation processes. This means that not only is participation more easily accessed by citizens, but also different types of experts and sources of evidence are available and more easily accessed in a variety of formats. However, digital participation has challenges; not everyone is competent at utilising online tools or navigating the digital sphere. In this way, it can be elitist. Further, ensuring that online evidence is transparent and legitimate is difficult; it may be possible to refute people's claims in a 'comments section' or write a blog responding to incorrect information, but it might not be read by the same community of people. This raises the need to facilitate ways in which blogs, conversation and opinion posts are reviewed, to help flag up falsities or 'alternative truths'.

**<b> Conclusions**

Much of what citizens know about political issues has been informed by experts and the work of expert groups. Although the narrative surrounding the expert has become progressively critical, experts are necessary to shape policy making. Therefore, the issue with the current policy process (see Chapter 19 in this Handbook) does not lie in the involvement of experts in decision making, but the level of authority that experts have, and the subsequent exclusion of the voice of - and expertise of - citizens. Here, democratic innovations may offer a resolution as they bring experts, citizens and policy makers closer together to facilitate the co-production of knowledge and new forms of citizenship. Many democratic innovations involve experts in various roles and with various purposes, which we summarise in this Chapter. We also highlighted key challenges that experts and evidence presents for democratic innovations and their organisers and participants. These issues are important to consider during democratic innovation design, to ensure that the process outcomes are useful and legitimate. Finally, we stress the importance of evaluating democratic innovations, and sharing the strengths and weaknesses of the adopted approaches, so that the learnings can shape democratic innovations into the future.

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