

Abstracts

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Political Power and the Requirements of Accountability in the Age of Wikileaks

Through the massive leaking of classified government documents, WikiLeaks has provoked a debate on the link between transparency and political accountability. The central issues of contention in this debate are the degree to which secrecy is compatible with democratic processes and whether WikiLeaks meets its own standard of transparency. This paper examines a narrower, though related, set of questions. At the conceptual level it explores the link between transparency and accountability. Does an increase in the former necessarily imply an increase in the latter? At the empirical level, it examines whether WikiLeaks contributes to the public's ability to hold governments and organizations accountable by increasing transparency and providing necessary information. That is, do leaks shift the balance of power between publics and governments? If not, can we nevertheless regard internet-based digital leaking a symbolic act of political protest in support of a democratic ideal? The analysis is structured around five parameters, each of which relates to the ability of WikiLeaks to promote accountability via leaking. We find that although WikiLeaks increases the amount of information available to publics, it does not provide for transparency. On the one hand, the mere fact of leaking does not necessarily identify responsible government officials or force them to justify their policies. On the other, the information that is contained in the leaked documents has to be interpreted before it can be acted upon by interested citizens. The analysis leads to the conclusion that the sort of transparency promoted by WikiLeaks is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for political accountability.

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A typology for the comparative research on electoral systems

Multiple existing typologies of electoral systems each either focus on an electoral system's principle of representation as an overall goal or on its technical design. This multitude of approaches has made it difficult to categorize and compare electoral systems effectively as different analyses base on different typology approach-

es. This problem is tackled via the development of a general typology incorporating both the principle of representation and the technical design without a deterministic relationship between these dimensions. The result is an integrative typological framework for the comparative research on electoral systems. Applying the typology to actual cases highlights that considering the multidimensionality of electoral systems is a central requirement for fruitful analysis. Specifically, considering the overall goal of an electoral system allows for positivist performance-judgments.

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Does public participation in environmental decision making lead to more effectiveness and legitimacy?

Initial insights from a meta-analysis of 71 case studies of water governance

Participation of citizens and organised interests in political and administrative decision making is widely perceived as an important means to enhance the effectiveness and legitimacy of public environmental governance. Yet, these claims are not uncontested and lack a sound empirical basis. With this contribution we address some of the important questions around the implications of public participation in environmental decision making. We present early results of a larger meta-analysis on 71 published water-related case studies, each of these coded independently by three researchers using a comprehensive, theoretically informed coding scheme. Statistical analysis shows a positive relationship between the employment of participatory processes and the acceptance of environmental decisions. The findings further suggest that open, information-intensive procedures positively influence the environmental standards of policy outputs. Here, particularly the environmental preferences of stakeholders serve as an important predictor for process outputs.