**Shaping Success: The Role of Decision-Making in Public Trust and Policy Outcomes**

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Does the process by which a policy is determined—including the level of participation in the policy-making process—affect the likelihood that people will believe the policy will succeed? This study examines whether the way policy decisions are made influences public perceptions of a policy’s success. An online conjoint survey experiment with 100 UK respondents asks them to choose their preferred policy scenario from a series of side-by-side fictional profiles. This method controls and assesses various attributes, including the government in power, the policy context, the wider political environment, and the decision-making process. Drawing on a broad body of literature on political trust and decision-making, this study is unique in using conjoint analysis to assess the impact of different decision-making methods—particularly participatory techniques—while considering political, policy, and demographic contexts. Underpinned by a constructivist realist epistemological standpoint, the research acknowledges that multiple factors shape individual preferences and perceptions of policy success, balancing objective political contexts with subjective interpretations. The study aims to provide insights into how decision-making processes influence public trust and perceptions of policy success, with implications for future research and public policy, particularly in the UK.

Tom Robbins is a civil servant currently working on museum funding and policy in the Department for Culture Media and Sport, with previous roles in arts funding, welfare role and education funding. Tom took an undergrad in Social Policy and Politics at Edinburgh University. Tom is fascinating about what shapes decision-making in a democratic context, and innovative approaches to how decisions can be made in an effective way, informed by evidence, and how bias can be mitigated.