

# WE NEED TO SHAPE POLITICS – NOT USE IT AS A BARGAINING TOOL

## BETTER POLITICS CALLS FOR NEW PROCESSES

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*A recent report by **Schöpflin Foundation** and the **Institut für Partizipatives Gestalten (IPG)** [Institute for Participatory Design] has criticised the way free-trade agreements are negotiated. The criticisms focuses on the structure of the process; on the methods and formats used for the actual negotiations; and on the overall organisation of the procedure itself. It is clear that these failings have led to a lack of knowledge and awareness, among the political class, of how best to design the processes and procedures needed to carry out free-trade agreements.*

*The report outlines various options for how political processes could be made to be more inclusive, more transparent and more participative. The aim is to create both greater legitimacy and – primarily – better results. The **Schöpflin Foundation** and the **IPG** are calling for a public discussion – based on this report – on the next steps needed in Europe's democratic evolution.*

The only way to develop coherent solutions is to have coherent processes. The same coherence should apply across the board: in other words, to local planning issues, such as wind energy projects for example; to national programmes, such as social policy legislation; and right through to international agreements on trade policy. In order for international agreements to be sustainable, fair, innovative, meaningful and democratic, politics needs to develop and adopt new and improved methods and formats.

And yet the negotiators in (international) negotiations seem to know very little about the planning and design of the relevant processes and procedures. Instead, their main area of knowledge seems to be the strategies they need to deploy in order to push through their respective positions.

**“Any outcome is ultimately a reflection of the inner logic of the process used to reach that outcome. If you negotiate as if you were in a market place, you might achieve a good price, but you won't create a new and innovative product. So, if our future depends on new and good ideas, we also need fundamentally new political processes,”** says Jascha Rohr, IPG's Managing Director.

The approach and methods used in any political process should support the aims and intentions that are being sought. If the aim is jointly to develop good solutions for complex challenges, then the processes themselves need to be transparent, participative, collaborative and innovative. The methods and formats used need to support these principles and make them a reality. Tim Göbel,

the Managing Director of the **Schöpflin Foundation**, commented: **“We believe the time is ripe for the design processes that for some time now have been successfully applied in community development and town planning, as well as in educational and sustainability projects, to be used in other contexts too – I’m thinking here of the EU level, for example.”**

In order to achieve this, the public space in which ideas and solutions for shared problems can be devised needs to be more strongly promoted and given greater prominence. The idea here should be to translate democratic innovations from the ground level up to the international and global levels. The **Schöpflin Foundation** and the **IPG** are developing approaches in order to leverage this new culture for politics and negotiations through to the European and international levels.

As part of the *“Cocreating European Trade Policy”* project, the **Institut für Partizipatives Gestalten (IPG)** and the **Schöpflin Foundation** have devised some initial approaches on how processes which lead to international trade deals can be designed in a more democratic, sustainable and participative way. The report contains ideas for change and a concept design for its *“European Days of Democratic Innovation”* project. The report describes what a European participative process would need to look like in order for it to develop innovative ideas on democratic development in the EU and in order to introduce a participative working method into existing institutions and their processes.

Click [here](#) to see the full report, *“Cocreating European Trade Policy”*.

The **Schöpflin Foundation** in Lörrach is committed to the building of a sense of critical awareness, a lively democracy and a diverse society. To this end, the Foundation takes various starting points and provides fresh impetuses designed to have a leverage effect. This project is part of the **Schöpflin Foundation’s** commitment to a fair and sustainable economy and society.

Tim Göbel, Managing Director / Schöpflin Foundation

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The **Institut für Partizipatives Gestalten (IPG)** in Oldenburg is a project that promotes participation, cooperation and social design. It has tackled a multitude of challenges and – together with players from civil society, politics, economics and science – develops sustainable and innovative concepts, products and ideas. The **IPG** has more than ten years’ experience of designing political and planning processes using collaborative methods.

Jascha Rohr is the founder and Managing Director of **IPG**. He is also the originator of the *‘Bundeswerkstatt’* (Federal Workshop) concept. See *“In unserer Macht”*, published by think-Oya, 2013

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