

Benefits of Using Polis

Introduction

Polis is an interactive, inclusive, simple to use and fair online tool that helps groups of people have conversations and make decisions together. It's especially useful when you want to understand what a large group thinks about a certain topic.

Polis[1] is a powerful open-source platform for collective intelligence, revealing hidden areas of agreement on divisive and complex issues.

Unique to XR UK - we have our own version of Polis held on XRUK secure Swiss servers.

What Makes Polis Special?

- It listens to everyone equally.
- It allows for inclusion of anyone in deliberation on topics, wherever they are, over extended periods.
- It avoids arguments or trolls because there's no back-and-forth arguing.
- It helps us see what a whole community thinks, not just the loudest voices.
- It enables continued exploration of issues collectively for extended periods to find consensus.

Video

[Looking at Polis - a new tool hoping to reboot democracy and find common ground amongst even the most polarised views. Can Taiwan Reboot Democracy? - BBC Click \[7mins 38secs\]](#)

Potential

- For thousands of members of different organisation participating in an online deliberative democratic process with clear outcomes.
- Enable us to work better together by finding common ground and next steps actions with our members.
- To raise awareness of participatory deliberative democracy and its practice.
- To raise awareness, understanding and support of Extinction Rebellion's Third Demand; expanding public participation in decision-making in a Citizens' Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice.

- For UK-wide media coverage [due to uniqueness and potential levels of engagement].

Inclusive Participation

Polis is an interactive, inclusive, and fair online tool that helps groups of people have conversations and make decisions together[2]. Unlike standard polls, it involves people directly in the conversation by enabling them to contribute their own statements and ideas[5].

Understanding Group Opinion at Scale

It is especially useful when you want to understand what a large group thinks about a certain topic[2]. Polis is particularly valuable when you need to understand who exactly believes what within a larger group — for instance, identifying opinion clusters among people with varying levels of experience or background[3].

Transparency and Statistical Rigour

Polis produces reports both statistically and meaningfully, which allows for transparency throughout the process[2]. Only the most insightful statements, or those reflecting the views of many respondents, are placed back into the question pool to be voted on by other users[5].

This gives legitimacy and weight to any Polis deliberation process, supporting adoption by organisations and institutions.

Fundraising for XR UK

In addition, by XR UK having its own version of Polis, this could potentially support the Fundraising team's work by attracting donors and allies focused on deliberative democracy.

Policy and Community Applications

- It can be used as a stand-alone tool or in conjunction with community assemblies, strengthening those processes by "harvesting the wisdom of the crowd"[2].
- It has been applied to complex policy debates, such as data-driven political campaigning, where it allowed people to define key issues in their own words[4].
- It enables mapping of the values and motivations underlying people's beliefs, making it a useful tool for finding solutions to difficult policy issues[4].
- Tech upskilling makes system learners potentially more employable, which in turn, may make the democratic process attractive to a younger demographic.

Deeper Dive

Further info: [Consensus Building in Taiwan, the Poster Child of Digital Democracy](#) - by Sebastian Cushing Rodriguez, Democracy Technologies, Published: 4 October, 2023

Polis: Gamified Consensus Finding

Polis has been central to the success of vTaiwan. A topic is put up for debate and anyone with an account can comment and downvote or upvote other people's comments. While this may appear similar to other participation tools or forums, there are several features that set Polis apart.

First is that Polis does not allow users to respond to other people's comments, drastically reducing the risk of trolls disrupting the debate. Second, it turns the upvote and downvote feature into one that clusters people who vote similarly. A visualisation emerges highlighting where there are like-minded viewpoints and division.

As the debate begins, Polis draws a map showing all the different knots of agreement and dissent as they emerge. As views are expressed in greater numbers, the platform gives visibility to statements that find consensus not just among people within the same ideological bubble, but with those outside as well.

Polis in essence gamifies the process of finding consensus. It encourages users to propose and refine viewpoints to win greater support from all sides of a discussion. The greater the consensus around a viewpoint, the greater attention it gets.

As the avatars of each user cluster around specific viewpoints, the platform's design hides divisive statements, provocation and trolling. The debates are spared the toxicity prevalent on other platforms, which so often fail to foster civil discourse.

Eventually, a group of consensual statements emerge. The final viewpoints may not appear like any of the ones made at the beginning of the discussion. The new consensus can then be turned into laws and regulations.

Summary

As a digital engagement platform, Polis offers a powerful framework for collective decision-making and community governance on a large scale.

Sources

1. [Pol.is](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pol.is) - en.wikipedia.org
2. [What is Polis?](#) - Rebel Toolkit
3. [Polis: Why and How to Use it](#) - by brook, Chana Messinger, Tools for collaborative truth seeking, Effective Altruism Forum, Published: Feb 1 2023
4. [Polis and the Political Process](#) - by Harry Carr and Josh Smith in partnership with the Open Rights Group (ORG), Demos, Published: 3 Aug 2020
5. [A sophisticated conversation about misinformation via Polis](#) - by James Sweetland, Blog, Social Research Association (SRA)

[How do we find consensus?](#) - YouTube [42secs]
