



# TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC DECISION-MAKING

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## COLLOQUIUM ON TRANSPARENCY IN THREE DIMENSIONS

Once in a while, academics and politicians start repeating concepts that turn into commonplaces. In the field of democracy and good governance, transparency is one of those concepts. But fashionable concepts are somehow untouched by critical thinking. Transparency sounds like something good *per se* – a value that every democracy should pursue always – though it is not clear that it will always lead to the best public decision.

Transparency could serve different normative aims. It could be a useful tool for regulation, in the public or the private sector. It also promotes the cause of democracy, unveiling secrets and maximizing the conditions for public scrutiny on State activities. Transparency could narrow information asymmetries, favoring more efficiency and, finally, it can also be seen as a condition for the search of truth.

In Chile, the Transparency and Freedom of Information Act has been in force for five years now. Yet several challenges for transparency remain. The purpose of this colloquium is to shed some light upon the normative foundations of transparency, its aims, and how does transparency operates under modern decision theory. As professor Schauer has put it, transparency could lead to sub-optimal results in public decision making. Those who vouch for transparency, with no reservations, are looking “to prevent bad decisions even at the cost of preventing some good ones”. What type of errors we should prevent? At what cost? How we should deal with the conservatism model of decision based in transparent conditions?

The Colloquium will be developed in one afternoon session. Professor Schauer will discuss his main ideas on transparency and its challenges, as one of the conditions for public decision making. Two commentators will follow: a politician and an Economics professor. The basic reading for the colloquium will be “Transparency in Three Dimensions”, now translated into Spanish. The Colloquium is directed to practitioners in FOI requests and litigation, as well other professionals in the realm of public policies concerning corruption control, accountability and transparency in general. The number of participants expected will not exceed 35 persons.