Invitation to Contribute

Special Issue: Interpreting Penal Policymaking

Editors: Harry Annison, John Boswell and Mark Telford

You are invited to contribute to a proposed Special Issue entitled ‘Interpreting Penal Policymaking’. This proposed Special Issue will examine interpretive approaches to political analysis and their utility in examining criminal justice policymaking. Interpretive approaches – the analysis of beliefs and practices of political actors – have become increasingly mainstream within political studies and have made an important contribution in a range of fields (eg foreign policy). However, notwithstanding notable exceptions, interpretive contributions to the criminological canon remain limited. The envisaged Special Issue will raise the profile of interpretive political analysis in criminology, with the collected papers thereby making an important contribution to the discipline. While an expansive conception of ‘interpretive analysis’ is encouraged, key reference points might include the work of Bevir and Rhodes, Wagenaar, and constructivist works within International Relations. It is anticipated that the resulting Special Issue will:

• Present findings from empirical research of penal policymaking at the local, national and international level;
• Present critical discussion of interpretive modes of analysis and their relationship with existing approaches to penal policymaking;
• Present reflections on the role, if any, of interpretive analysis in seeking to improve the politics of crime control

Questions to be addressed might include:

• What beliefs, traditions and practices have underpinned penal policymaking in different local, national and international contexts?
• Who are the key actors in defining penological problems and their solutions?
• How have political narratives and technical rationalities interacted in specific policymaking settings?
• How should interpretive modes of analysis intersect with alternative (legal, political, sociological, economic) approaches to the analysis of penological developments?

1 The term ‘penal’ is intended to include, but is not necessarily limited to, substantive developments in prison, probation and sentencing policy.
This proposal forms part of an ‘Interpreting Penal Policymaking’ initiative, co-funded by an ESRC Impact Acceleration award and the Political Studies Association Interpretive Political Science specialist group. In addition to policymaker-oriented activities, there is some scope for support of activities related to the proposed Special Issue. We will look to develop such activities – most obviously seminars and workshops – with confirmed contributors.

What should I do if I am interested?

1. Please contact us to register your interest by Friday 16 October 2015. Please include an outline (title and 150-word abstract) of your proposed contribution. You are also welcome to suggest refinements to the Special Issue proposal itself.

2. Once responses are received, we will send the revised proposal, including a provisional list of contributors and abstracts to a high-quality international journal. We have already identified a number of relevant journals, but would welcome suggestions in this regard.

3. Assuming a positive response from the journal, we will confirm timescales with confirmed contributors and, if necessary, seek further contributors. We anticipate a timescale of 12-18 months between acceptance of the Special Issue proposal and online publication of articles.

- Potential contributors should note that articles will be peer-reviewed anonymously in the usual way and there is no guarantee that any particular article will be accepted for publication.

We look forward to hearing from you and hope that you are interested in working with us in this important project. If you have any further questions or would like to discuss anything, please do get in touch.

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