

Anti-politics and Depoliticisation Specialist Group Newsletter

December 2014

Welcome to the Anti-politics and Depoliticisation Specialist Group (APDSG) Quarterly Newsletter for December 2014! This year has been a fantastic year for the Group, we have held two immensely productive seminars in York and Budapest, an intensive, prestigious ECPR-sponsored research workshop at Essex, and hosted panels at the International Political Science Association and Political Studies Association (PSA) Conferences. The APDSG has also been gaining national and international prominence and recognition in the press and online world. The most important update in our quarterly newsletter is that recent changes to PSA Specialist Group funding mean that funding is based upon the proportion of Group members who are also registered members of the PSA. We therefore encourage all APDSG members to sign up to be members of the PSA. Membership is good value for money and you can easily register for membership [here](#). We would also encourage interested members to get involved in the governance and organisation of the Group, which you can do by emailing us at apdsg.network@gmail.com. More broadly, the PSA will also shortly be launching two Chairs commissions looking at the future of the discipline and how the PSA can get best value for its members. We encourage members to apply to be on the commission, the closing date is Monday 12th January and you can find more information [here](#).

Thank you again for your support and we hope you enjoy the newsletter!

Best wishes,

The APDSG Organising Team

Pinar Donmez, Principal Convenor

Caroline Kuzemko, Finance Officer

Matt Wood, Public Engagement Officer

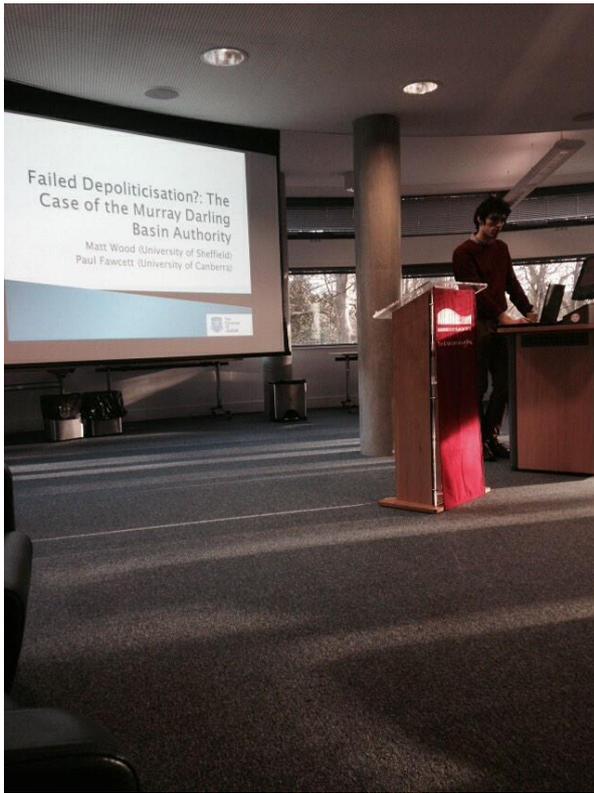
Jim Buller, Chair, International Advisory Committee

Ross Beveridge, Blogs and Social Media Officer

Adam Standring, Membership Officer

Jennifer Thompson, Postgraduate Officer

Workshop at the University of York



On 13th December we held our second annual workshop on depoliticisation, including contributors to our international comparative research project. There were a wide diversity of contributions, covering multiple policy sphere's countries and analytical approaches. There was a strong presence from the University of Sheffield, with Matt Wood from the Bernard Crick Centre presenting research on depoliticisation in water governance in south-east Australia, and Craig Berry and Scott Lavery from the Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute returned the analysis to political economy with their critical appraisal of Pete Burnham's theoretical approach. Staying within the field of governance studies, Jim Buller (York University) examined depoliticisation in the field of health technology regulation, and Stephen Griggs (De Montford University) examined aviation policy from a discourse-analytic perspective. The topics of political parties and voter behaviour were also addressed, by Karin Bottom's (University of Birmingham) analysis of party centralisation in the UK, and the analysis of Giorgos Charalambous (Prio Cyprus Centre and University of Cyprus) and Direc Kanol (Cyprus International University) on voter disaffection in Cyprus. There was also a provocative challenge from Professor Martin Smith (York University), who called for greater conceptual and analytical clarity in the study of depoliticisation.

The event provoked a lively discussion and debate about the added value of using depoliticisation as a concept as opposed to more traditional frameworks, and application at different levels of analysis (individual, institutional, and transnational). Future plans, including development of two edited books following from the workshop at Budapest, are already under way. We still welcome anyone interested in contributing to the edited books we are planning, and to the international comparative network on depoliticisation more generally. More news to come!

Call for Papers – 2nd International Conference on Public Policy, 1st-4th July 2015, Milan

The APDSG are running two conference panels at next year's ICPP Conference in Milan, and welcome applications from APDSG members on a range of public policy-related topics.

Panel 1: 'Depoliticization & Crisis: Contingency and Contestation in the Face of Policy Failure'

Crises have been said to provide politicians with a 'window of opportunity' to 'depolitize' an issue, but this process often has important consequences – including providing an opportunity for opposition groups to repolitize the subject. Earlier work on depoliticization has been criticized as being overly focused on a 'top down approach' as well as neglecting important counter-processes of politicization/repoliticization. We are, therefore, looking for papers addressing: i) how the recent crisis impacts on ongoing processes of depoliticization; ii) the manifestation of discontent to these processes, and; iii) (the variation in) the extent to which actors successfully repolitize crisis issues.

In particular, we welcome papers seeking to uncover the nature of domestic bargaining that takes place under the shadow of austerity and the dynamics of a discourse of 'no alternative'. Secondly, we welcome studies linking this process to manifestations of its discontent, such as declines in trust, abstention, protest movements or rise in populist parties. Examples of relevant questions are: Do policy-makers scapegoat the EU or the Troika to pass preferred reforms? Which groups mobilize to resist reforms? Which groups get heard and which are ignored? Why are some countries so diligent to embrace reforms while others are reluctant? Does the economic crisis undermine democratic accountability, and if so through which mechanisms? Is discourse strategically shaped to convince voters that there is no alternative? Is the increase of abstention a direct consequence of this process? What can explain variation in the occurrence, intensity and/or influence of protest movements?

Abstracts (up to 500 words) should be proposed before **15th January 2015** and should be submitted directly through the conference site (<http://www.icpublicpolicy.org/conference/article/article.php?conference=2&article=28>). For more information on the 2015 Milan conference please visit the conference website (<http://www.icpublicpolicy.org/-Milan-2015->) and any questions about this particular panel should be directed to adam.standing@gmail.com.

Panel 2: 'Examining the legitimization strategies of delegated agencies'

This panel examines delegated agencies, and more specifically, their governance style, engagement and coordination with, and of, broader publics. Recent literature in (multi-level) governance has recognized that delegated agencies perform important roles in actively facilitating the construction of policy fields, their (meta) regulation, learning across jurisdictions, and sometimes their democratisation. These are generally expert organizations with specialist knowledge of policy fields. By delegated agencies we mean semi-autonomous agencies at arms-length from the core of government by virtue of legislation or executive arrangement. Located at the intermediary between central government and broader publics (including professionals, industry, NGOs, service users, citizens and other agencies), delegated agencies are strategically placed to engage policy communities, also across jurisdictional boundaries.

Such engagement may include public consultations with stakeholders in the process of policy making, the explanation and justification of policies in the media, and facilitating exchanges about 'best practices' across differently placed policy actors and policy communities. It is an activity that comes, however, with perils particularly for delegated agencies themselves, as it challenges representative democracy and traditional notions of accountability. Delegated agencies engaging the public creates new political spaces for mobilising the commitment of publics to government initiatives, for policy learning, for contesting and reforming initiatives, and for, better or worse, informing the credibility and legitimacy of delegated agencies themselves.

The panel seeks papers that both theoretically and empirically examine, compare, and critically interrogate delegated agencies engagement of publics. It is interested in papers that adopt broadly political, sociological, pragmatic learning or rhetorical perspectives to analyse the way in which delegated agencies actively present themselves, and their functions or government policies, to broader publics, whether to facilitate learning or policy commitment. Beyond the nature of

agencies' engagement with publics, there is also an interest in conceptualizing and examining the conditions for maintaining agency credibility and legitimacy among the public, and their function in facilitating democratic deliberation.

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2015 Political Studies Association Panel

The APDSG will also be running a panel at next year's [Political Studies Association Conference](#) in Sheffield, which we encourage all members to attend. The panel is entitled 'Anti-politics and Discourses of Depoliticisation', and includes papers from Laura Jenkins (University of Birmingham), Jim Buller (University of York), Andrew Neal (University of Edinburgh) and Matthew Flinders (University of Sheffield), Adam Standring (Universidade Nova de Lisboa) and Steven Griggs (De Montford University) and David Howarth (University of Essex). Early bird registration is open now, and members can register [here](#).

Coverage in the Jakarta Post

The APDSG has received global recognition, appearing in a recent article in the Jakarta Post. Interestingly, columnist Veera Pandayan bemoaned the prevalence of political disputes in Malaysia, hoping the APDSG might be advocating:

"The United Kingdom's 64-year-old Political Studies Association has set up an Anti-Politics and De-Politicisation Specialist Group dedicated to providing a forum for researchers examining the trend.

According to the group, "anti-politics" appears to have marginalised political debates, taken power away from elected politicians and fostered an air of disengagement, disaffection and disinterest in politics.

The way politics is being played in Malaysia, I wouldn't mind a dose of it here."

I'm not sure we would agree totally with Veera on this point! There is however a lot of interesting research to be done on anti-politics in countries like Malaysia, particularly connecting to 'Western' analysis in the literature on governance. You can read more of the article [here](#).

Matt Wood writes for Policy Network

Our public engagement officer Matt Wood recently wrote for the prominent international think tank Policy Network on the topic of anti-politics, responding to an article by Anthony Painter on [The myth of 'anti-politics'](#). Matt [argued](#) that:

When commentators use the term anti-politics, they aren't dismissing the nationalist movements and populist parties in question as 'non-political' or less important. They are of course highly political. The point is they are against a particular form of politics, a politics which, they allege, is played out only by a small elite, distant from the rest of the populace.

Policy Network's research on anti-politics and the Populist Signal is very relevant to the APDSG, and we will be working to develop a range of publically-facing academic/practitioner events in the run up to the 2015 general election that develop their work on anti-politics and populism.

Blogs and articles

Anti-politics...not so new?, blog for the University of Southampton's project 'Popular Understandings of Politics in Britain, 1937-2014', <http://blog.soton.ac.uk/antipolitics/2014/12/19/anti-politicsnot-so-new/>

The Anti-politics Blog, blog on Human Trafficking run by Neil Howard, Marie Curie Fellow at the European University Institute, <http://blogs.eui.eu/neilhoward/>

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<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-856X.12062/full>

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<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=9439967&fileId=S0017257X14000372>