

Institution: University of Southampton
Unit of Assessment: 21 Politics and International Studies
Title of case study: 21-02 Responding to Political Disaffection and Designing Civic Participation
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Research from the Centre for Citizenship, Globalisation and Governance (C2G2) led by Stoker and Smith has sought to understand disenchantment with politics in democracies and articulate responses to this condition. The work has focused initially on exploring the attitudes of governmental and non-governmental actors to issues of political disaffection and re-engagement. The research has been used by institutional actors to inform the design of participatory projects and other mechanisms as responses to the issues of anti-politics. In particular it has played a key role in the development of a web-based resource used to spread good practice in civic participation.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>This research by Gerry Stoker (Professor of Politics and Governance since 2007), Will Jennings (Reader in Politics since 2012-) and Graham Smith (Professor of Politics 1999-2012) is part of a broader agenda represented in the collectively authored C2G2 volume <i>Prospects for Citizenship</i> (2011) [3.1]. Three main projects express the research agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowering Communities to Influence Local Decision-Making (2009) undertaken for the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in conjunction with the Local Government Research Unit, De Montfort University [3.2] • Anti-Politics: Characterising and accounting for Political Disaffection (2011-12) with Colin Hay at the University of Sheffield and The Hansard Society [3.3] and follow-up studies in Britain (Stoker and Jennings) [3.4] and Australia (Stoker) in 2013 [3.5] • Austerity and Its Impact on Anti-Politics (2013) - a survey funded by C2G2 and YouGov reported by Will Jennings and Gerry Stoker. [3.6] <p>This research builds on earlier work by Stoker and Smith. Stoker has worked on issues of participation and decentralisation since the 1980s with a major and internationally-oriented statement emerging in his award winning <i>Why Politics Matters</i> (2006) which has been translated into four other languages, while Smith's report for the Power Inquiry on democratic innovation provided the empirical basis for Smith's book <i>Democratic Innovations</i> (CUP) in which, supported by a fellow-member of C2G2 (Owen, Professor of Politics 2008-), he developed an innovative and original methodological framework for the comparison and evaluation of different types of civic participation project.</p> <p>The Empowering Communities project investigated the role of citizens within their local communities in, for example, making decisions and running community facilities or regeneration projects. Through interviews with key stakeholders and an extensive literature review of both published and grey material, Stoker and Smith identified six key mechanisms for supporting community self-rule: asset transfer, citizen governance, electronic participation, participatory budgeting, petitions and redress. They used techniques of systematic review to establish the success factors behind the implementation of these mechanisms.</p> <p>The Anti-Politics project was developed with a leading think tank, the Hansard Society. It extends the survey analysis of the Hansard Society's annual audit of political engagement with a series of citizen focus groups to provide a more nuanced understanding of public cynicism towards politics and the robustness of such attitudes. Stoker and his collaborators found that a central source of disaffection is the popular judgment that too many politicians are self-serving and let special interest groups dominate decision-making. The role of the tabloid media in confirming the sense of anti-politics among citizens is also significant and was reported in evidence to the Leveson Inquiry.</p>

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Citizens' reform ideas were explored and found to diverge from the standard constitutional reforms on offer. Stoker has extended the analysis through a survey of the attitudes of Australian citizens and with Will Jennings further work in Britain in 2013 looked at the difference between active and "standby" citizens.

The Austerity project, developed by Jennings and Stoker with YouGov, explores factors that might explain why in the context of austerity, citizens might see politics as failing and finds that it is concern about the behaviour of politicians rather than fatalism about the capacity of government that matters.

3. References to the research

- 3.1 Gerry Stoker et al. (2011) *Prospects for Citizenship* London: Bloomsbury Academic
- 3.2 Lawrence Pratchett, Catherine Durose, Vivien Lowndes, Graham Smith, Gerry Stoker and Corinne Wales (2009) *Empowering communities to influence local decision making - Evidence-based lessons for policy makers and practitioners* Available at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/localdecisionlessons>
- 3.3 Key lessons from the research are captured in Gerry Stoker (2011) *Building a New Politics?* London: The British Academy. Available at http://www.britac.ac.uk/policy/Building_a_new_politics.cfm
- 3.4 Research reported in Hansard Society's *Audit of Political Engagement 10*. See: http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/blogs/press_releases/archive/2013/05/16/audit-of-political-engagement-10.aspx The work in Australia was with ANZSOG Institute of Governance at the University of Canberra <http://www.governanceinstitute.edu.au/>
- 3.5 Research reported in <http://politicsupsidedown.wordpress.com/2013/06/12/austerity-leaves-citizens-raging-against-the-short-sighted-self-serving-leadership-provided-by-politicians/>
- 3.6 Mark Evans, Gerry Stoker and Jamal Nasir (2013) *How Do Australians Imagine their Democracy?* Canberra: ANZSIG Available at: <http://www.governanceinstitute.edu.au/magma/media/upload/ckeditor/files/DEMOCRACY%20REPORT-%20UPDATED%20VERSION-27-6-13.pdf>

Grants

- G1. "Empowering Communities to Influence Local Decision-Making" (with Local Government Unit, De Montfort University), Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008-9, £175,000.
- G2. ESRC: "Anti-Politics: Characterising and Accounting for Political Disaffection". Stoker PI. Start date: 01 April 2010. End date: 30 June 2012. Funding: £77048.53.

4. Details of the impact

This research has had three distinct impacts:

- Shaping the understanding and attitude of governmental and non-governmental actors to issues of political disaffection and re-engagement.
- Informing the design of participatory projects and other mechanisms as responses to the issues of anti-politics by institutional actors.
- Playing a pivotal role in the development of a critical resource for designing civic participation.

Shaping understanding and attitudes

The credibility of asset transfer and community ownership and control policies that were key mechanisms in Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act (2009) was

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established by Smith and Stoker's research on Empowering Communities. The impact continues: as a leading civil servant commented: "*Southampton University's research has had a long-term impact on DCLG policy under Labour and Coalition governments. Gerry Stoker and his team have enormous credibility.*" (Ariana Haberis, DCLG) [5.1].

The anti-politics research led by Stoker provided the basis for an article published in the ESRC's annual newsstand magazine *Britain in 2013* which reaches a wide audience (15k copies sold and an average of two readers a copy). The evidence to the Leveson Inquiry on the role of the media was accepted [5.2] and its impact on politics was picked up and used by Lord Puttnam [5.3] in his campaigning around the issues. Stoker's British Academy publication led to an invitation in 2013 to develop with St George's House, Windsor Castle, a consultation with high-level governmental and non-governmental actors to discuss disenchantment with politics and its implications for democracy [5.4]. The Hansard Society used the research with Stoker to offer a range of workshops aimed at policy makers and practitioners in 2012/13 to raise awareness and inform practice.

International impact is concretely demonstrated by the decision of the German-based pan-European Bertelsmann Foundation to use Smith's research as the basis on which to develop criteria for the Reinhard Mohn Prize on innovative participatory approaches worldwide as part of their programme to raise awareness about citizen participation innovations among senior German politicians [5.5]. At the same time, the significance and reach of the research is demonstrated by invitations to address policy audiences concerning its finding. For example, in September 2012, Stoker presented findings on the causes of political disenchantment and how to respond under the auspices of the Australian and New Zealand School of Government in Auckland which led directly to a follow-up discussion of the research based on Australian data in Canberra in Parliament House on 26th June 2013 attended by a range of Federal-level politicians and civil servants as well as journalists [5.6]. In addition Stoker on 18th September 2013 presented the findings at an international symposium 'The Second Members Building of the House of Representatives' in Tokyo, Japan, which was attended by leading politicians and civil servants. [5.7]

Informing the design of civic participation by other institutional actors

The World Bank has taken up (and slightly adapted) the innovative analytical framework developed by Smith in order to compare and evaluate their own interventions, while Smith's research on 'mini-publics' as a form of effective public consultation has led directly to the Bank's advocacy of their use by a number of governments. The Bank is designing international pilot schemes directly based on this research [5.8]. Stoker's work on anti-politics and engagement led to an invitation to provide advice about the format (consisting of 33 politicians and 66 ordinary citizens selected at random) of a constitutional convention (CC) launched in the Republic of Ireland at a two day event in Dublin early in November 2012. The same work was used in 12 March 2013 in response to an invitation from the Brazilian Government to advise on public engagement strategies [5.9].

Playing a pivotal role in the development of a critical resource for designing civic participation

Participedia – an international, Harvard-led knowledge e-platform designed to provide information about global strategies in citizen participation to practitioners, activists and government officials – has adopted Smith's framework as the basis on which Participedia's own data collection is structured, and many of the innovations he researched have served as test cases for the project. Subsequently, in 2009, Smith was invited to join the steering board of Participedia which is supported and has been used by major organisations including the Chilean Innovation Programme, European Institute for Public Participation, Institute for Local Government (US), Involve (UK), Deliberative Democracy Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (USA) and Open Democracy (UK). The website has had more than 14,000 unique hits and traffic is consistently around 100 visits a day [5.10].

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5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 Interview with Arianna Haberis, CLG, June 2012. For details see Judith Smyth (2013), Achieving and demonstrating impact: a case study of Southampton University's C2G2 (Centre for Citizenship, Globalisation and Governance) p16. Available at C2G2 Website (<http://www.southampton.ac.uk/C2G2/>)
- 5.2 See evidence presented to the Inquiry at <http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/evidence/?witness=hansard-society>
- 5.3 See newspaper article by Lord David Puttnam <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/mar/22/press-regulation-royal-charter-democracy>
- 5.4 Email sent by Programme Director, St George's House, Windsor Castle, 30 May 2013.
- 5.5 See emails from Bertelsmann staff in Judith Smyth(2013), Achieving and demonstrating impact: a case study of Southampton University's C2G2 (Centre for Citizenship, Globalisation and Governance), p25
- 5.6 See <http://www.anzsoq.edu.au/events/events-calendar/2012/09/16/ssc-new-zealand-partnership-program-event/362/gerry-stoker-citizen-empowerment-and-civic-participation-auckland> and link to Canberra talk <http://www.governanceinstitute.edu.au/resources/media-centre/media-releases/27/australian-survey-of-political-engagement-findings-2013-released>
- 5.7 Conference brochure, Japan, 18 Sept 2013
- 5.8 See email from Tiago Peixote in Judith Smyth(2013), Achieving and demonstrating impact: a case study of Southampton University's C2G2 (Centre for Citizenship, Globalisation and Governance) p23
- 5.9 On the Dublin event see: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3E6Z_AW3CRk&feature=youtu.be and on the event in Brazil see <http://publicpolicy.southampton.ac.uk/innovationgovernancepractie/>
- 5.10 www.participedia.net. For quotes, see emails in Judith Smyth(2013), Achieving and demonstrating impact: a case study of Southampton University's C2G2 (Centre for Citizenship, Globalisation and Governance) pp23-4. See also <http://blogs.worldbank.org/category/tags/participedia>