

T05P05 / Into the Light: Political Advisers in Contemporary and Comparative Perspective

Topic : T05 / Policy Formulation, Administration and Policymakers

Chair : Richard Shaw (Massey University)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

There was a time when they stood in the shadows of executive government but political advisers – variously known as special advisers, ministerial advisers or exempt staff – have long since stepped (or been dragged) into the light.

The scholarship on political advisers has also emerged into the light. Early contributions typically concerned arrangements in Westminster contexts; they also tended to comprise empirical descriptions of specific country cases, and/or to zero in on the issues of accountability raised by various *causes célèbres*.

A second wave of scholarly work on political advisers has since arrived, characterised by empirical studies from beyond Westminster, and deeper theoretical engagement with the core issues in the field and with proximate literatures. At least some of the roots of this new generation scholarship lie in ICPP 1 (Grenoble) and ICPP 2 (Milan). Clearly, impetus has also come from other sources, but both conferences featured panels bringing together researchers from Westminster and continental European jurisdictions and have generated – including through special editions of journals and a forthcoming comparative volume – considerable momentum behind the second wave literature.

In that context the core **objectives** of the panel we are proposing for ICPP 3 are to:

(1) Assess the empirical and theoretical progress made since ICPP 2. We wish to evaluate the extent to which the broad aims of (i) enriching the empirical palette; (ii) deepening the theoretical bases of the literature on political advisers; and (iii) building connections with proximate policy theories (e.g. policy advisory activity, the construction and management of policy agendas, and implementation studies) are being advanced.

(2) Chart the next phase of the research agenda. Without wishing to foreclose on other avenues, our sense is that the scholarly trajectory could usefully include (iv) empirical work from countries – including from Asia – that are not yet represented with regularity in the published record; (v) richer theoretical elaboration of political advisers in situ (drawing on literatures such as historical institutionalism, core executive studies, public service bargains, etc.); (vi) theory building in the wider public administration/public policy oeuvre drawing on the work of those researching political advisers; and (vii) comparative analyses which build on and extend country case-studies.

The **scientific relevance** of the panel includes deepening understanding of a significant and consequential element of the landscape of contemporary government and governance; contributing to theory-building (both within the specific field of policy advisers and in the wider literatures); furthering the impetus for comparative research; and fostering the epistemic community that is coalescing around the study of political advisers.

CALL FOR PAPERS

There was a time when they stood in the shadows of executive government but political advisers – variously known as special advisers, ministerial advisers or exempt staff – have long since emerged (or been dragged) into the light.

The scholarship on political advisers has also, in its own way, emerged into the light. Early contributions typically concerned arrangements in members of the Westminster community of nations (particularly Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom (UK) and New Zealand); they also tended to comprise empirical descriptions of specific country cases, and/or to zero in on the issues of accountability raised by various *causes célèbres*.

A ‘second wave’ of scholarly work on political advisers has since emerged, characterised by empirical

studies from well beyond Westminster, and deeper theoretical engagement both with the core issues in the field and with proximate literatures. In that context the core objectives of this panel are to assess the empirical and theoretical progress of the second wave of scholarship on advisers, and to chart the next phase of the research agenda.

To those broad ends we invite papers that:

- enhance empirical understandings of political advisers in situ – especially from scholars working in non-European or Anglo-Westminster jurisdictions;
- establish or deepen connections with proximate policy theories (e.g. those concerning policy advisory activity, the construction and management of policy agendas, implementation studies, etc.);
- bring insights from proximate literatures (e.g. historical institutionalism, core executive studies, public service bargains, etc.) to bear in theorising political advisers' roles and work, including in the interplay between different actors – administrative, political, and non-governmental – in the context of the core executive and/or the policy process;
- draw on the empirical study of political advisers to reappraise or refine either extant policy theories (e.g. policy learning, policy failure, etc.) and/or theoretical understandings of significant issues within the wider public administration/public policy fields (e.g. accountability and politicisation);
- advance the comparative analysis of political advisers (including via papers which establish frameworks for such analyses).

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Session 1

Friday, June 30th 10:30 to 12:30 (Manasseh Meyer MM 3 - 4)

The collaboration of civil servants with political advisers. What are the characteristics of in-house advice suppliers in Belgium?

David Aubin (Université Catholique de Louvain)

Marleen Brans (KU Leuven)

Gouglas Athanassios (University of Exeter)

Lev Lhommeau (Université catholique de Louvain)

Who's serving whom? Public service bargains between ministers, minders and mandarins

Richard Shaw (Massey University)

Chris Eichbaum (Victoria University of Wellington, NZ)

Experienced counsellors or adolescent claqueurs? Exploring the professional backgrounds of Australian ministerial staff

Maria Maley (Australian National University)

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Session 2

Friday, June 30th 13:45 to 15:45 (Manasseh Meyer MM 3 - 4)

The cabinetisation of the minister's court in Australia and Canada. What is it and why is it happening?

Gouglas Athanassios (University of Exeter)

Cohabiting the executive summit: Ministerial advisers and Top civil servants in The Netherlands

Caspar VAN DEN BERG (Leiden University)

Developing an Accountability Framework: Political Advisers in the Westminster System of Governance

Yee-Fui Ng (RMIT University)