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Democratizing policy debates: Experts, media & public involvement in the discourses of economy

Brendan K. O'Rourke

Technological University Dublin, brendan.k.orourke@tudublin.ie

John Hogan

Technological University Dublin, john.hogan@tudublin.ie

Joseph K. FitzGerald

Technological University Dublin, Joseph.FitzGerald@TUDublin.ie

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Democratizing policy debates: Experts, media & public involvement in the discourses of economy

Presentation to AltAusterity Conference 2020:
Rebuilding the Public Purpose, 28-29 February 2020,
McMasters University, Hamilton, Canada.

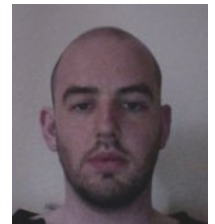


Brendan K. O'ROURKE, John HOGAN &
Technological University Dublin, Ireland.



Joseph K. FITZGERALD.

Brendan.K.ORourke@TUDublin.ie; John.Hogan@TUDublin.ie;
Joseph.FitzGerald@TUDublin.ie



Outline of Presentation

1. Public purpose required for public discourse.
2. Growing public purpose in discourses on the economy .
3. A Focus on budgetary processes?
4. Conclusions
5. References & resources

You don't how to make either on your own, but you choose which pen you want on your own



Specialization



Hyperspecialization

1. Public purpose required for public discourse.

- Increasingly, hyperspecialization means a dependence on others' **assessments** (Milgram, 2015), making us more dependent on expert discourse which we need to **trust**. This is particularly acute in an open FDI dominated economies
- Since hyperspecialization means we cannot judge outputs independently, markets/quasi-markets can't solve our dependence problem as they depend on easily accessible performance measures: Milgram's (2015) Great Endarkenment.
- Trust in experts (=Specialists) needs a benevolence (Baghramian, 2019) beyond the individual which neoliberalism solutions can not easily provide. Benevolence benefits from a sense of public purpose.

Public purpose required for public discourses

- Hyperspecialization in public policy means increased technocratization especially in economization of public service and media increasingly rely on experts (Bovens & Willie, 2017) - economists have had a particularly good crisis in Ireland (FitzGerald & O'Rourke, 2018)
- Everywhere hyperspecialization undermines administration as separate from politics, rules as separate from administration central to neoliberal idea of the state.
- Increased inequality unsurprisingly means greater distrust and greater inequality of trust (Edelman, 2020: p.5 & p.8)



Public purpose required for public discourses

- Marketized media cannot solve hyperspecialization problems
- Media-manipulations both commercially and politically motivated have reduced the trustworthiness and trust in both old and new media: particularly true in Ireland with only 37% trusting in media compared to 53% in Canada (Edelman, 2020: p.42).
- We need new mechanisms to provide a public sphere for policy discourses involving new organizations, public service culture and media institutions with a sense of public purpose.

2. Growing public purpose in discourses on the economy

- Though much of economics discourse is neoliberalized there have been major breakthroughs to broaden the public discourse.
- Some regrowth from the rotting heart of economics (Banerjee & Duflo, 2019; Economics student movements; Business School reforms)

Good
Economics
for
Hard
Times



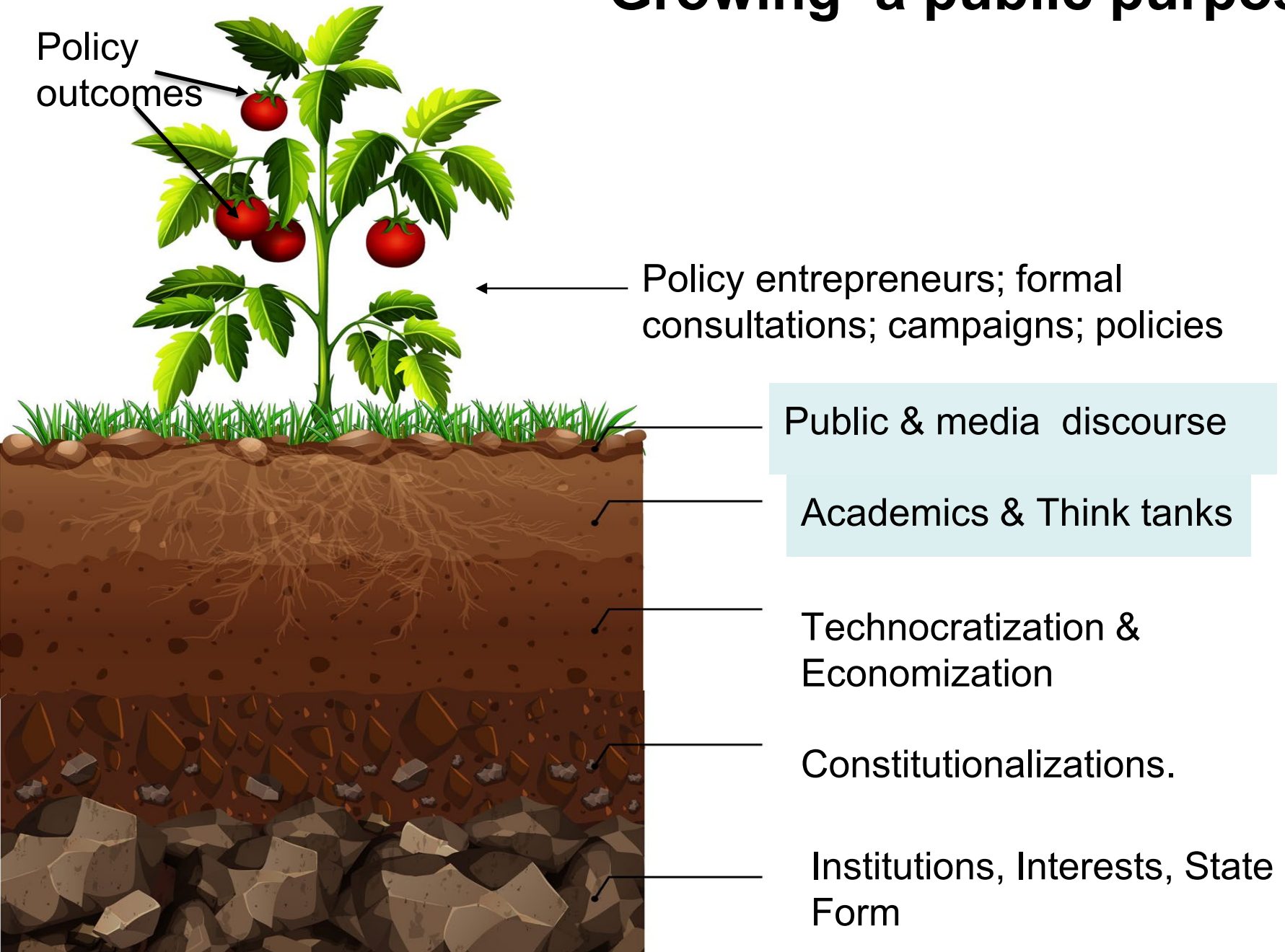
Esther Duflo



Growing public purpose in discourses on the economy

- At the heart of mainstream economics is the trope of efficiency –with its willful ignorance of distribution: understanding its appeal & problems may provide possibilities to grow concern for public purpose.
- AltAusterity & others have provided lots of resources for public purpose discussion on the economy to grow especially since the 2008 crisis .

Growing a public purpose



3. A Focus on budgetary processes?

- The budgetary processes face us head on with austerity big but its form is largely shared (across Canada, EU, UK, USA) problems for the public sphere
- Yet the budget is a public sphere issue with interest from the public, a need for public legitimization and one that provides a common and predictable focus for the media.

Outgoing Irish Finance Minister Donohoe



A Focus on budgetary processes?

- Our experience in learning on budget processes (Graham & O'Rourke, 2019; McBride, 2017; Loxley, 2003; MacDonald, O'Rourke & Hogan, 2019; Russell, 2014) .
- Important to Think-tank including partners /possible partners (NERI/C4TF/TJN/CCPA/FES) and neoliberal think-tanks.

A Focus on budgetary processes?

- The media loves Budgets and its public interest aspect means it's an in issue for public service media?
- Public service media is a hot topic with in Ireland (MacCraith Commission) & the UK.
- Are there new models of organizations for public service media based on public purpose that we can promote?

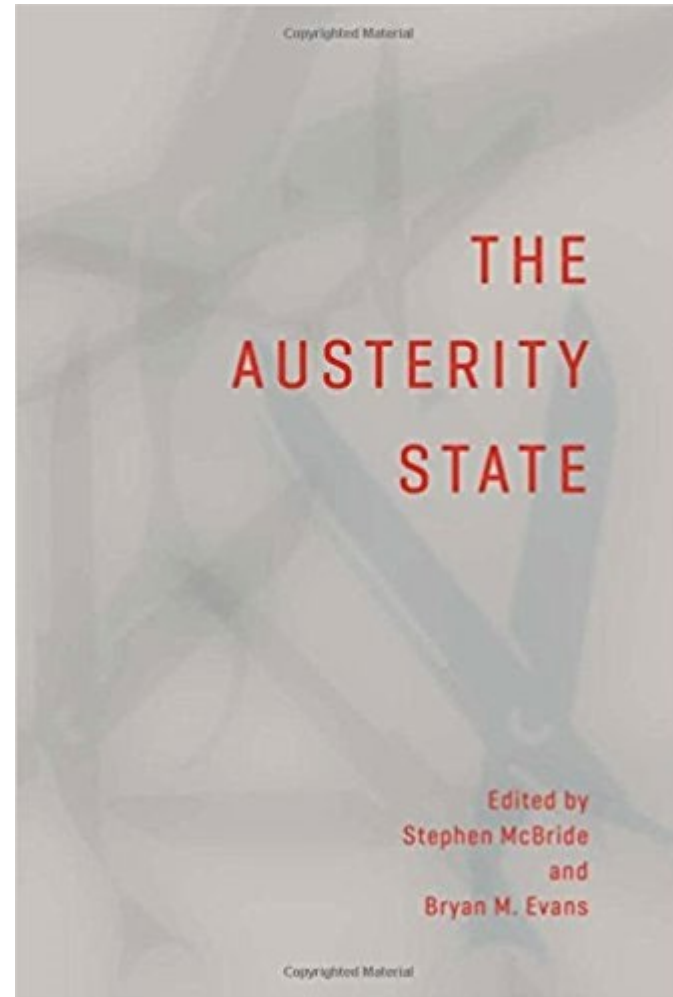
A Focus on budgetary processes?

- Ireland has had success with mini-publics in relation to constitutional changes (Harris, 2019)
- Ireland's limited participatory budgeting in local government (Shannon, O'Riordan, & Boyle, 2019).

4 Conclusions

- Growing public purpose in a garden designed by neoliberalism.

-
- Hyperspecialization demands new mechanisms of democratic accountability that go beyond output measures and that allow transparency, benevolent /representative deliberation.
 - Focusing on budgets might leverage our resources.



Thank you.



• <https://www.tudublin.ie/bss>



<http://www.dit.ie/researchandenterprise/researchgroups/dag/>

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