

SG Workshop 2025

Final programme

May 7, 2025

Welcome to the PSAI Standing Group on Public Policy Workshop 2025!

We are delighted to welcome you to the upcoming workshop organized by the PSAI Standing Group on Public Policy.

Below, you will find a brief overview of the latest workshop programme, followed by a detailed presentation of the submission abstracts.

Coffee and lunch will be provided at the venue. Please note that minor changes to the schedule may occur.

If, for any reason, you are no longer able to attend the workshop, we kindly ask that you inform us **as soon as possible** by contacting a.ershova@qub.ac.uk

Venue Details

The workshop takes place at [The National University of Ireland 49 Merrion Square, Dublin 2, D02 V583](#)



Figure 1. Participants of 2025 Workshop

1 Programme overview

Table 1. Workshop programme

Time-Slot	Session 1	Authors
9.30-10.00	Coffee	
10.00 -11.15	Session 1	Crepaz et al. Little Arlow
11.15-11.30	Break	
11.30-13.00	Session 2	Lima & Ildelfonso Callanan et al. Celebi & Yilmaz
13.15-14.15	Lunch	
14.15-15.45	Session 3	McMenamin MacCarthaigh Ershova et al.

2 Detailed programme

Session 1

1. *Author(s)*:

Michele Crepaz, *Queen's University Belfast*

Rasa Bortkevičiūtė, *Queen's University Belfast*

Wiebke Marie Junk, *University of Copenhagen*

Title: What is a Crisis? The Perspective of Interest Groups

Abstract: Interest groups play vital roles in representative democracies by bridging society and government, as well as providing support where state intervention is absent or insufficient. However, various types of crises impact these groups' ability to deliver essential services, engage in political advocacy, and conduct fundraising efforts. This impact can persist beyond the immediate crisis, potentially creating participatory biases in government affairs by privileging stronger organizations. Despite significant attention to interest groups' role in crisis preparation, management, and recovery, research on how crises impact their activities remains underdeveloped. The broader political science disciplines of public administration, crisis management, and organizational studies have paid more attention to crisis dynamics, leaving a gap in understanding the intersection of crises and interest group politics. Drawing on crisis management and interest groups research, the note explores how crises — defined as situations posing urgent threats to core community values or functions under conditions of uncertainty — affect interest groups. It outlines the dimensions of crisis impact on interest groups and theorizes response and coping strategies they employ in the face of various types of crises. By doing so, the note contributes to understanding how interest group organizations respond to crises, manage instability, and navigate recovery or termination. The research further highlights the importance of linking crisis politics with interest group studies to better understand the factors shaping interest group systems and their role in representative democracies that are challenged by different internal and external shocks. The research note may enhance established theoretical frameworks, such as disturbance theory, population ecology, and resource dependency, and lay the groundwork for further theorization and empirical testing across various contexts of representative democracy.

2. *Author(s)*: Jonathan Arlow, *University of Liverpool*

Title: The land of Saints and Shinnars: under what conditions does a radical left party restrain the policy moderation of a populist left-wing competitor?

Abstract: Sinn Féin is regularly categorized as a radical left party due to its populist rhetoric, militant past, strict internal party discipline, and the threat it poses to the constitutional status-quo in two countries. But since becoming a mainstream party, North and South, it has embraced a more moderate policy agenda. This could make it electorally vulnerable to a left challenger party through the processes of 'pasokification' and issue competition. The radical left Trotskyist group People Before

Profit – Solidarity (PBP-S) challenges Sinn Féin in its working-class support bases and regularly criticises its moves to the centre on policy. So, to what extent does PBP-S restrain the ability of Sinn Féin to move to the centre on key economic and social issues? And under what conditions does a radical left party restrain the policy moderation of a mainstream (but populist) left-wing competitor? This article draws upon datasets from the Irish Policy Agendas Project and the Public Policy Agendas on a Shared Island project which have coded party manifestos (North and South) based on the Comparative Agendas Project coding scheme. This data will be used to compare Sinn Féin’s policy agenda (North and South) to other left-wing parties in Ireland and Europe. This analysis will support a case study of electoral competition between Sinn Féin and PBP-S in two key constituencies: West Belfast and Dublin South-West. The article theorises that being outflanked on the left is harder when the internal supply-side dynamics of a left-wing party prioritise the preservation of a working-class activist base and populist ‘authenticity’.

3. *Author(s):* Conor Little, *University of Limerick*

Title: Institutions and policy agendas across the Irish border

Abstract: This paper makes use of the context provided by the island of Ireland to examine the role of institutions in shaping policy agendas. Ireland and Northern Ireland are two jurisdictions that differ substantially in their political institutions. They also share unique ‘cross-border’ institutional venues that were created as part of the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. This study uses policy agendas data on legislation and party manifestos in the North and South, and from cross-border ‘shared institutions’ to 1) show how institutional context shapes policy agendas by making comparisons between Ireland and Northern Ireland, between agendas, and over time during periods of institutional change; 2) to examine how institutions in Ireland, Northern Ireland and shared institutions moderate the effects of policy problems and partisanship; and 3) to ask whether these policy agendas data provide evidence of diffusion between North and South, and whether this is facilitated by shared venues. It aims to contribute to research on institutions in policy agenda-setting while also contributing to research on the policy agendas of cross-border institutional venues and the diffusion of policy agendas. Data for this project were collected with the support of the Irish Research Council and the Shared Island Initiative of the Government of Ireland.

Session 2:

1. *Author(s)*: Valesca Lima & Tracy Ildelfonso, DCU

Title: Improving Indoor Environmental Quality in Irish Social Housing: Policy Gaps, Maintenance Challenges, and Pathways to Sustainability

Abstract: This study examines the challenges of housing sustainability in Ireland's social housing sector, with a specific focus on Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ) and housing maintenance policies. Drawing from qualitative interviews with 28 key stakeholders, including Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs), Local Authorities (LAs), government representatives, private entities, advocacy groups, and social housing tenants, this research identifies critical barriers to achieving sustainability in social housing. Thematic analysis of interview data reveals core issues related to social housing sustainability, indoor environmental quality (IEQ) and maintenance challenges and among those we focus in this paper on two central findings: (1) IEQ remains a low priority despite growing health concerns, with policy and economic barriers impeding progress; and (2) sector-wide recommendations propose solutions such as proactive maintenance strategies, technological interventions, and stronger regulatory oversight. Findings suggest that while national policies prioritise housing supply, they often overlook sustainability concerns, exacerbating long-term public health risks. This paper argues for a major shift towards evidence-based housing policies that integrate sustainability and health considerations into social housing design and maintenance strategies. By addressing the intersection of environmental, social, and economic dimensions in housing sustainability, this research contributes to the broader literature on sustainable cities and resilient communities.

2. *Author(s)*: Mark Callanan (IPA), Gülfem Cevheribucak (UL), Stephan Köppe (UCD)

Title: : Innovation in a straitjacket – Dublin's social investment under restricted local autonomy

Abstract: Welfare state interventions and social investment strategies are typically studied at the national level, with a research gap on subnational programmes. This case study examines the nexus between local government and the social investment agenda in Ireland and specifically Dublin City Council. Ireland is a highly centralised state and a late-comer in adopting social investment strategies. However, our case study reveals that Dublin City Council uses their local autonomy to innovate in the areas of active travel and housing policy despite its policy-making limitations. Analytically, we draw on Scalise and Hemerijk's (2024) model of social investment strategies as stock (education), flow (labour supply) and buffer (income support). Our case study represents a counterfactual in terms of international research, given the low degree of local autonomy in Ireland compared to other countries, and the consequent dominance of national policies in shaping local social service delivery. We argue that the active travel plans aim inter alia for an effective labour supply in the immediate city centre and contribute to the flow of labour. The local housing policy also supports a local labour supply, but mainly focusses on the buffer function when prioritising affordable housing.

3. *Author(s):* Elifcan Celebi, *University College Dublin* & Volkan Yilmaz, *Ulster University Belfast*

Title: Narrative power in electoral autocracies: The policy narrative behind the success of a pension movement

Abstract: How did a pension movement construct its narrative around pension age, shaping its structure and content to influence policy change in an electoral autocracy? This article delves into the campaign of the Turkish pension movement, a single-issue movement self-identifying as “people stuck in the pension age barrier” [emeklilikte yaşa takılanlar (EYT) in Turkish], to analyze policy narratives in an electoral autocratic context. Employing the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF), this exploratory study dissects the Turkish pension movement’s policy narrative through an examination of nearly 2100 tweets, selected from a total of 64,980 tweets posted between 2020 and 2023. It shows how, in 280 characters, the movement challenged the long-established pension age. The article reveals that the EYT movement positions itself as the hero, using a victim-centered injustice narrative with the villain often left vague, likely to preserve dialogue with the government. The movement emphasizes the diffused benefits of the moral of the story, portraying its constituency as larger than it is and its base of allies as wide as possible, reflecting the movement’s strategic engagement with electoral politics. This study enhances the NPF literature by demonstrating how non-governmental actors construct influential narratives in electoral autocracies.

Session 3

1. *Author(s)*: Iain McMenamin, DCU

Title: Why do countries distribute public funding differently?

Abstract: Votes are the basic metric of democracy, but they have not featured prominently in the study of political finance. This paper employs a new statistic to measure whether distributions favour large or small parties. It is based on the area under the curve between cumulative vote share and the cumulative share of party income. Empirically, I study 219 parties in thirty-five countries from the Political Party Database. I find (1) that electoral systems are much more majoritarian than political finance regimes and (2) that majoritarian electoral systems compensate for their bias with public funding systems that favour smaller parties. Advocates of public funding often present or assume an egalitarian rationale. This research shows that this tends to be true only when the electoral system rewards larger parties.

2. *Author(s)*: Muiris MacCarthaigh, Queen's University Belfast

Title: A vicious cycle? How institutional implosion contributes to overburdening and administrative limbo

Abstract: How do reforms intended to set up government compensation for policy failures and disasters leave citizens in cycles of administrative limbo? When crises culminate, political urgency demands that redress protocols are set up to compensate victims. It is not uncommon for these hurriedly designed reforms to demonstrate various performance gaps, resulting in oversights and unexpected delays. The core of our argument is that these performance gaps can lead to a vicious cycle of reform, underperformance and administrative limbo. The goal of this article is to conceptualize and explore this vicious cycle, supported by evidence from secondary data and primary data interviews from a Dutch crisis revolving around man-made earthquakes (induced by gas extraction). We find that, as policy gaps leave citizens in limbo for prolonged periods of time, calls for reform to set up (more) effective redress mechanisms increase. In the short-term, this generates severe turbulence for public organizations, as they are urgently required to set up new protocols, working methods, systems and departments to implement these policy reforms. This sudden influx of policy and organizational reform can exceed public organizations' capacity to digest change, inadvertently causing further delays in citizen applications. Thus, paradoxically, the very reforms aimed at addressing the performance gap may in the short- to medium term exacerbate the state of limbo victims were already in. The end result is delegitimization and further calls for reform, producing a vicious cycle that benefits neither public organizations nor victims.

3. *Author(s)*: Aleksandra Khokhlova, Nikoleta Yordanova, Leiden University

Anastasia Ershova, Queen's University Belfast

Title: Just to be clear? European Parliament position-taking and public opinion

Abstract: The European Parliament has a treaty mandate to represent the will of EU citizens. However, our understanding of how the EP reacts to public opinion during the legislative process remains limited. In this paper, we analyze whether and, if so, when citizens' opinion affects the clarity of position that the EP advances in negotiations with the Council of Ministers. We argue that when public opinion on EU policy integration across the EU member states is divided, the EP will propose less concrete changes to the Commission's proposals. In contrast, when the views of EU citizens are more united, the EP will use more concrete language. In this way, it can strike a balance between avoiding an image of being disconnected from EU citizens given a divided public and acting as a competent and successful legislature in inter-institutional bargaining in the face of united public opinion. To test our argument, we measure the vagueness of the EPs' legislative negotiation positions formulated in 2009-2019 using dictionary-based content analysis and draw on the Eurobarometer indicators to measure public opinion division. The results support the hypothesis of EP public responsiveness in law-making, which decreases the democratic deficit in the EU.