



Depoliticized policies, depoliticized citizens?

The politicization of the EU

A policy-centered perspective

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OVERALL OBJECTIVES OF OUR PRESENTATION

1. Sketch an overview of the state of the art of the research on EU politicization, highlighting that it has mainly focused on the input side
2. Develop our argument on the unexplored questions that we propose to investigate with a “policy-oriented political science”
3. Illustrate how theoretically this “policy-oriented political science” can contribute to our understanding of (de)politicization of ordinary citizens by studying the (de)politicization of public policies

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EU POLITICIZATION : STATE OF THE ART

Main hypothesis of existing literature :

The increasing authority of the EU fuels politicization

“We argue that the rising of politicization of European integration is primarily a reaction to the increasing authority of the EU over time. In short, the more influential the EU and its institutions become, the more they attract public attention and provoke both utilization and support, on the one hand, and counter reactions to the EU policies and the polity, on the other”

(De Wilde & Zürn, 2012: 140).



EU POLITICIZATION : STATE OF THE ART

“‘Politicization’ in general terms means the demand for or the act of transporting an issue into the field of politics – making previously apolitical matters political” (de Wilde & Zürn, 2012: 139)

Regarding European integration, politicization has been defined as a three-dimensional concept that can be empirically observed :

- (a) *the growing **salience** of European governance, involving*
- (b) *a **polarization of opinion**, and,*
- (c) *an **expansion of actors and audiences** engaged in monitoring EU affairs*

(De Wilde 2011; De Wilde and Zürn, 2012; Statham and Trenz, 2013; De Wilde, Leupold and Schmidtke, 2016).



EU POLITICIZATION : STATE OF THE ART

Coming back to the main hypothesis of existing literature :

The increasing authority of the EU fuels politicization

- This hypothesis is well suited for the meso level (media and political parties)
 - However, we know that there is a *differentiated politicization of European governance* (de Wilde, Leopold & Schmidtke, 2016)
- ➔ What about citizens and their politicization?
- ➔ Does the increasing authority of the EU fuels citizens' politicization ?



CITIZENS' POLITICIZATION : STATE OF THE ART

The increasing authority of the EU fuels politicization

The increasing authority of the EU has been addressed from the perspective of growing economic integration:

- On the one hand, the literature views the increasing authority of the EU as a process of denationalization, i.e. a process that leads to the lowering of national boundaries (Kriesi et al, 2012)
 - On the other hand, the transfer of authority as economic integration is considered as an exogenous process which limits national governments' capacity to deliver policies (Hellwig, 2014)
- ⇒ These literatures both consider the impact of the transfer of authority to the EU on politicization but with different conclusions that a growing politicization ...



CITIZENS' POLITICIZATION : STATE OF THE ART

*The increasing authority of the EU fuels **politicization** ?*

- Hellwig (2008, 2014) asserts that voters respond to the lowering of national governments' room of manoeuvre by **giving less importance to incumbents' economic records** (*responsiveness*)
- Lobo and Lewis-Beck (2012) show that European integration by increasingly constraining national governments' room of manoeuvre, also affect voting behaviours **by decreasing economic voting**
- Steiner (2010, 2016) and Le Gall (2018) demonstrate that economic integration ends up **reducing the individual propensity to participate in elections**



CITIZENS' POLITICIZATION : STATE OF THE ART

Moreover, when it comes to citizens reactions to EU politicization, previous studies have stated:

“Through increased controversiality and salience of EU issues, politicization functions *to highlight the importance of EU policies* for the daily lives of EU citizens and *the relative lack of influence they have on decision-making concerning these issues* (Follesdal and Hix, 2006; White 2010a, 2010b)” (de Wilde, 2011: 564)

“This book challenges the idea that a growing politicization at the meso level (media and parties) leads necessarily to a polarization of citizens’ attitudes towards the EU. Reactions to European integration cannot be reduced uniquely to a rise in Euroscepticism, but that indifference and ambivalence need also to be brought into the picture when studying EU politicization (Van Ingelgom, 2014)”



CITIZENS' POLITICIZATION : STATE OF THE ART

Moreover, when it comes to citizens reactions to EU politicization, previous studies have stated :

“This implies that unless it is possible to increase Europeans’ interest in the day-to-day operations of the EU, to make the effects of EU policies more palpable to the citizens, and to bolster their sense of political efficacy at the EU level, *the politicisation of European integration – when and where it occurs – is more likely to lead to a renationalisation than to a supranationalisation of European politics*” (Baglioni & Hurrelmann, 2016: 122).



CITIZENS' POLITICIZATION : STATE OF THE ART

Therefore, **at the level of ordinary citizens**, the extent to which politicization will further unfold depends:

- **How the EU – its politics AND its policies – is being politicized**
- **How citizens react to this politicization** (Costa Lobo & Karremans, 2017)

⇒ These two questions are empirical questions



FROM THE INPUT SIDE TO THE OUTPUT SIDE

Politicization is thus a characteristic of the **input side** of the political process

“In other words, politicization concerns policy demands being voiced and their effects on policy formulation processes and institutions involved in these processes” (De Wilde, 2011: 566)

On the output side, the EU has developed considerable effectiveness as a regulatory authority (Scharpf, 2009)

⇒ We suggest a **policy-oriented political science to study (de) politicization of the EU from the output side**
(Hacker & Pierson, 2014; Hay, 2007)



POLICY-FOCUSED ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

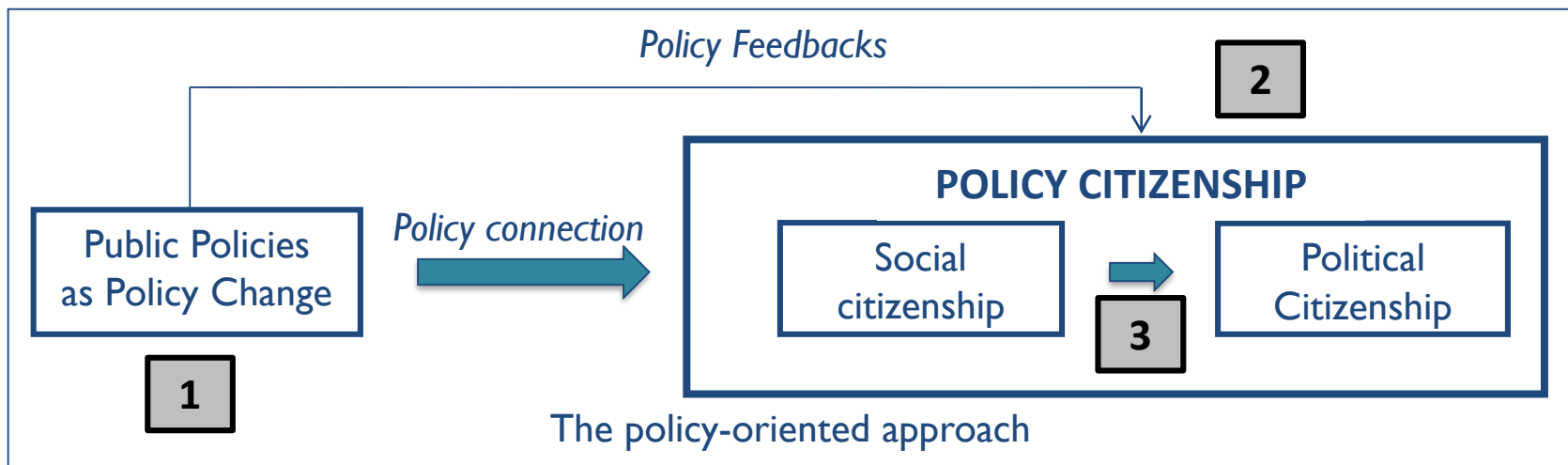
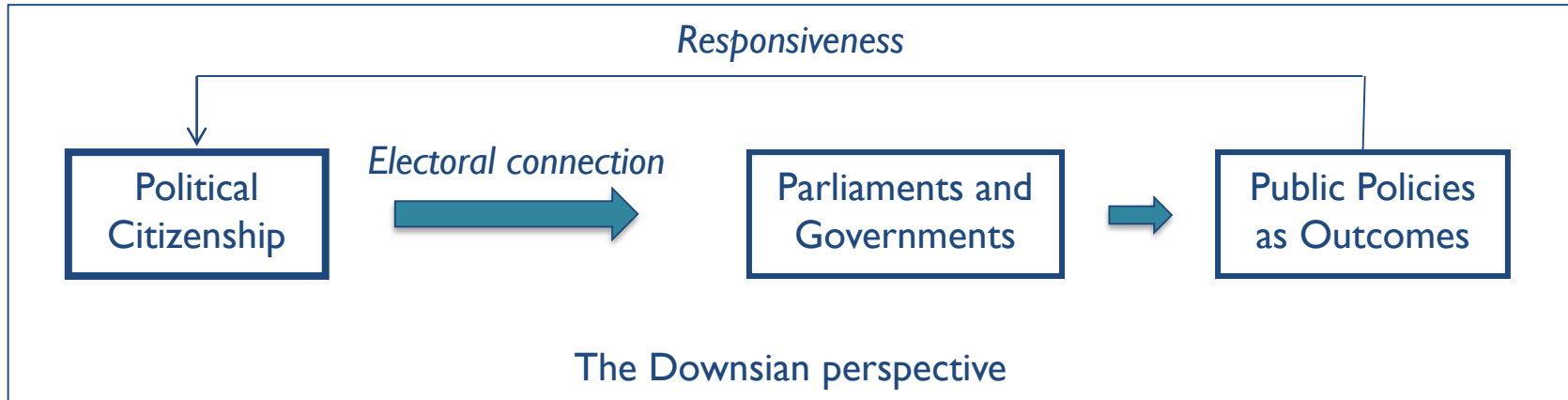
Hacker and Pierson call for a 'policy-focused political science' (2014: 643)
= **Bringing policy back in**

This framework distinguishes itself from the theoretical map that Downs drew (electoral connection and responsiveness)

Adopting this policy-focused analytical framework has 3 theoretical consequences when analyzing politicization of the EU at the level of ordinary citizens and its evolution over time:

1. Change in the direction of the public policy – public opinion nexus
2. (Re-)thinking the mechanisms by which change is taking place, namely policy feedbacks
3. And adopting an enlarged conception of citizenship that includes not only the electoral connection but also the policy connection

POLICY-FOCUSED FRAMEWORK





(EUROPEAN) POLICY CITIZENSHIP AS A FOCUS

Focus on (European) policy citizenship

⇒ **Policy citizenship is (or not) constructed through the interplay of public policies.**

- Policy citizenship is NOT political citizenship
- Policy citizenship is NOT social citizenship

⇒ But the interplay between both of them



POLICY CONNECTIONS AS POLITICAL LINKAGES

Policy connections are political linkages

Not only a matter of evaluation

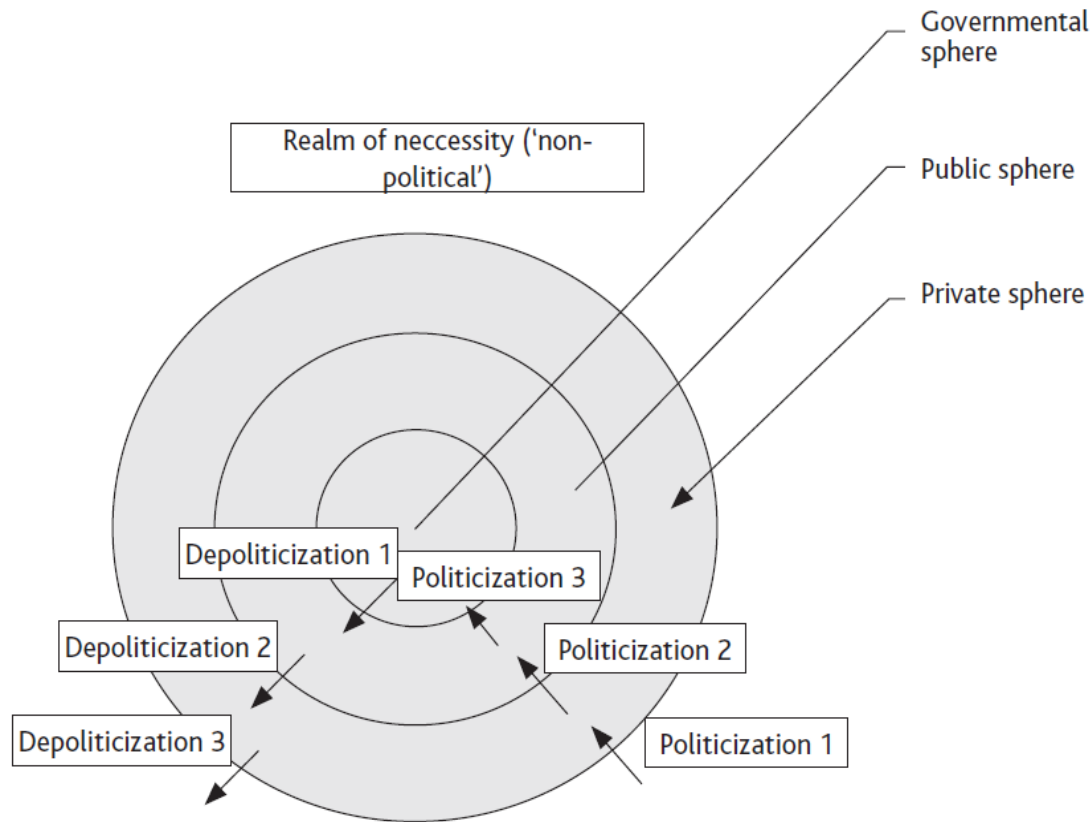
→ Linkage with the electoral system

Definition of what is political and what is not political

→ Boundary-building: what is collectively and publicly discussed and deliberated upon



CURRENT (EU) POLICIES DEPOLITICIZE PUBLIC PROBLEMS



Depoliticization 1: Delegation

Ex: hiving-off of functions to arm's-length agencies, boards or commissions

→ At the EU level:
important functions need to be sheltered from national politicians

Ex: Independence of the ECB in the name of expertise, efficiency and independence from politicking

Source: (Wood & Flinders, 2014, p. 154, based on Hay, 2007)



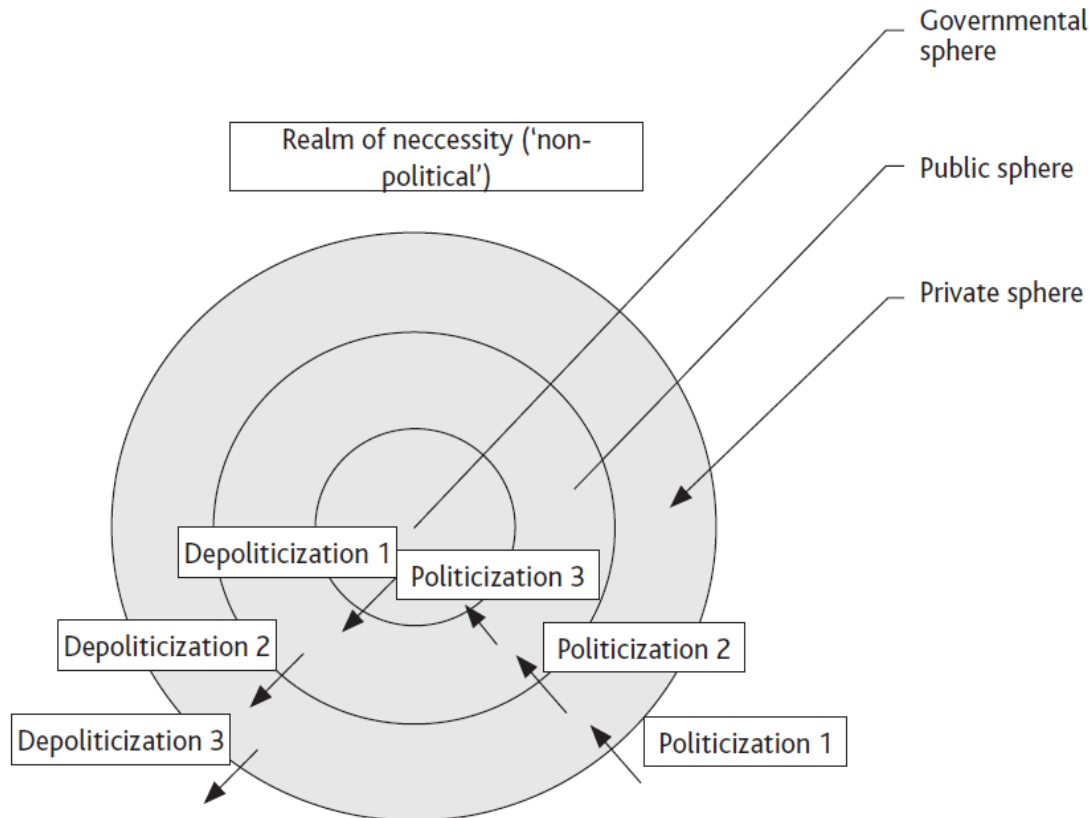
CURRENT (EU) POLICIES DEPOLITICIZE PUBLIC PROBLEMS

Depoliticization 2: Privatization

Ex: when access to a public service is displaced from the (collective) public sphere to the (individualised) private sphere

→ At the EU level:
Usages of Europe by national politicians

Ex: In Bismarckian welfare states, EU presented as responsible for cuts, retrenchement and privatization (Graziano et al., 2011)



Source: (Wood & Flinders, 2014, p. 154, based on Hay, 2007)



CURRENT (EU) POLICIES DEPOLITICIZE PUBLIC PROBLEMS

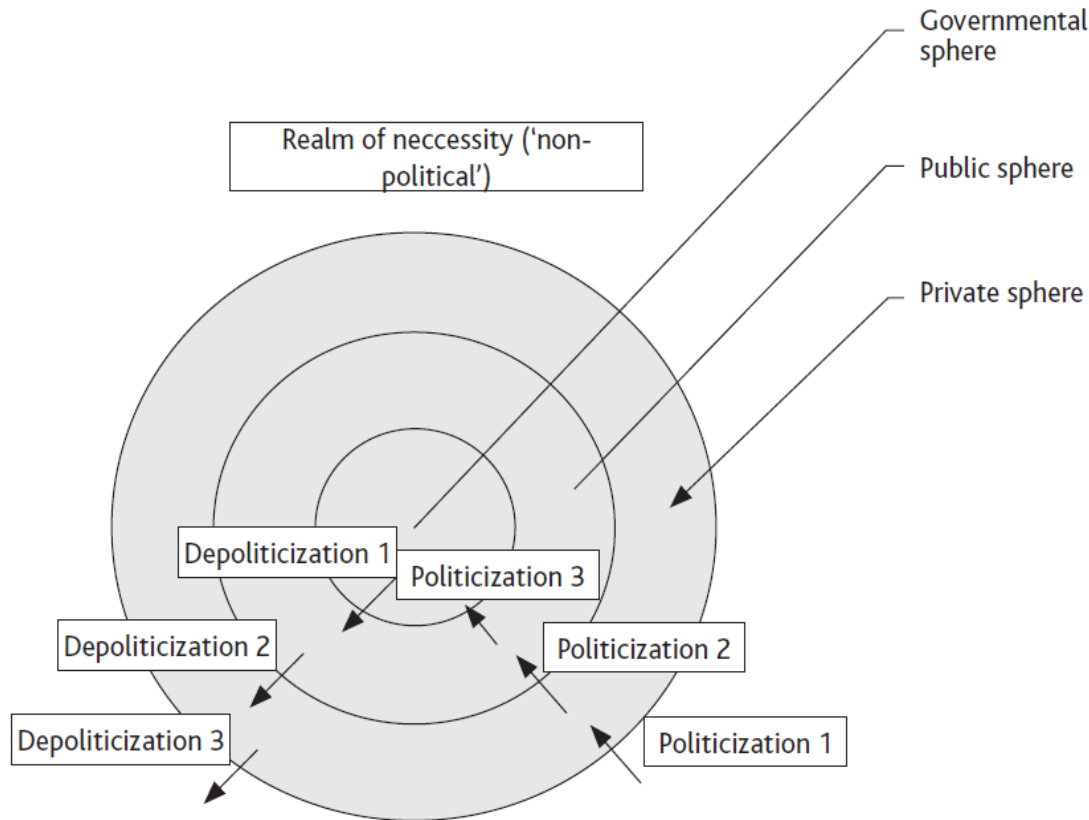
Depoliticization 3:

Denial of choice

Ex: need to cut fiscal deficit presented as common sense

→ At the EU level:
impact on the scope of politicians' agency

Ex: In debtor countries, public discourses about the lack of alternative to reducing public debt and deficit



Source: (Wood & Flinders, 2014, p. 154, based on Hay, 2007)

Policy connections are political linkages

Definition of membership: who is in, who is out

→ Inclusion/ exclusion to the political community

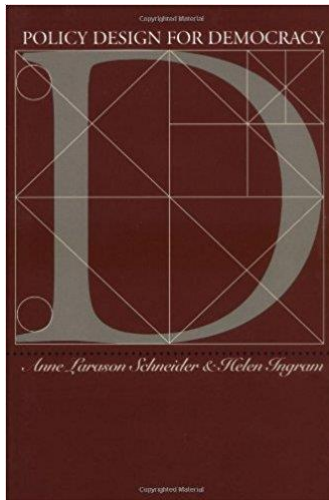


Ex: Welfare chauvinism : disagreement over the groups and individuals who may benefit from solidarity shared amongst members of a political community

Policy connections are political linkages

Groups identity building by public policies

→ Definition of in-group relationships



“**Policy designs** reflect the social constructions of knowledge, target populations, power relationships, and institutions in the context from which they emerge (...)”.

(Schneider & Ingram, 1997, p. 5-6)



POLICY CONNECTIONS AS POLITICAL LINKAGES

Back to Q1: How are the EU and its policies politicized?

→ Insights that EU policies are politicized in a depoliticizing manner



THE POLITICAL EFFECTS OF DEPOLITICIZED POLICIES

Q2: How do citizens react to this (de)politicization?

Policy feedbacks on mass publics: how public policy shape citizens' attitudes and behaviours

(e.g. Campbell, 2003, 2012; Kumlin, 2004; Soss & Schram, 2007; Mettler, 2004; Lerman & Weaver, 2014)

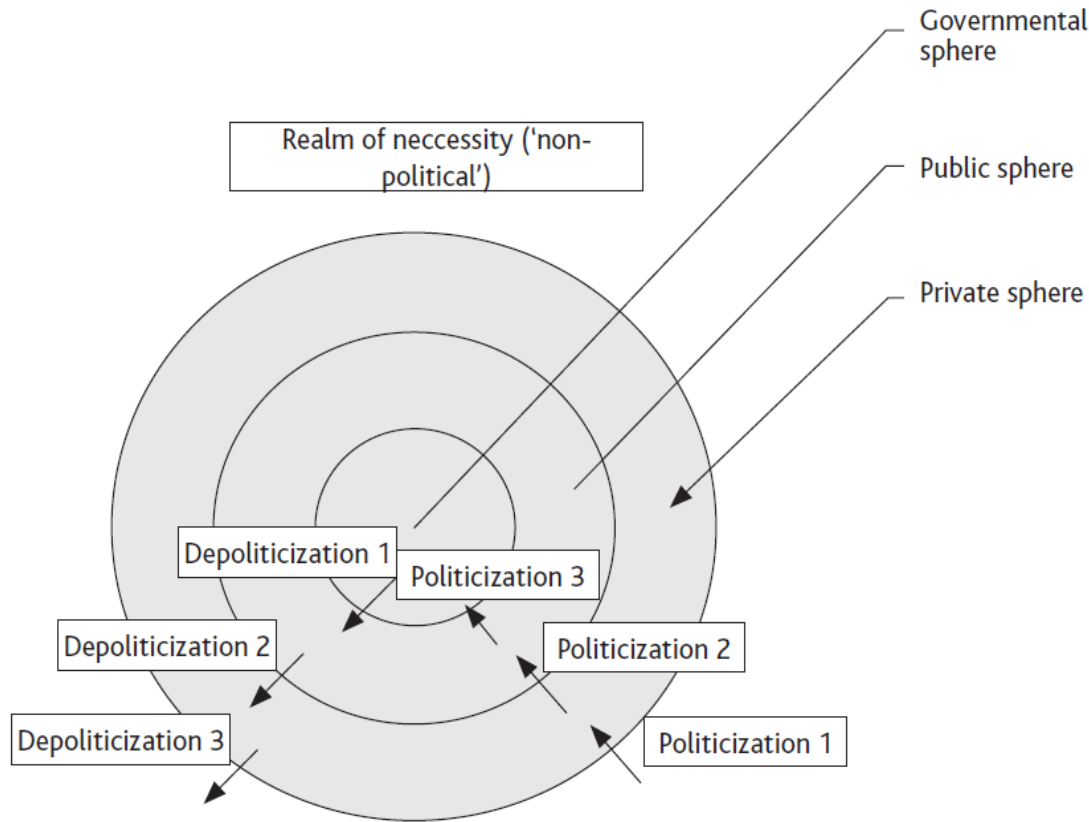
It's all about the mechanisms linking policies and citizens' experiences thereof

Visibility: 'voters must experience some discernable outcome that leads them to inquire about the cause of this outcome'

Traceability: 'the electorate must be able to link that outcome to some governmental action' (Pierson, 1993, p. 622)



THE POLITICAL EFFECTS OF DEPOLITICIZED POLICIES



Depoliticization 1: Delegation

Ex: hiving-off of functions to arm's-length agencies, boards or commissions

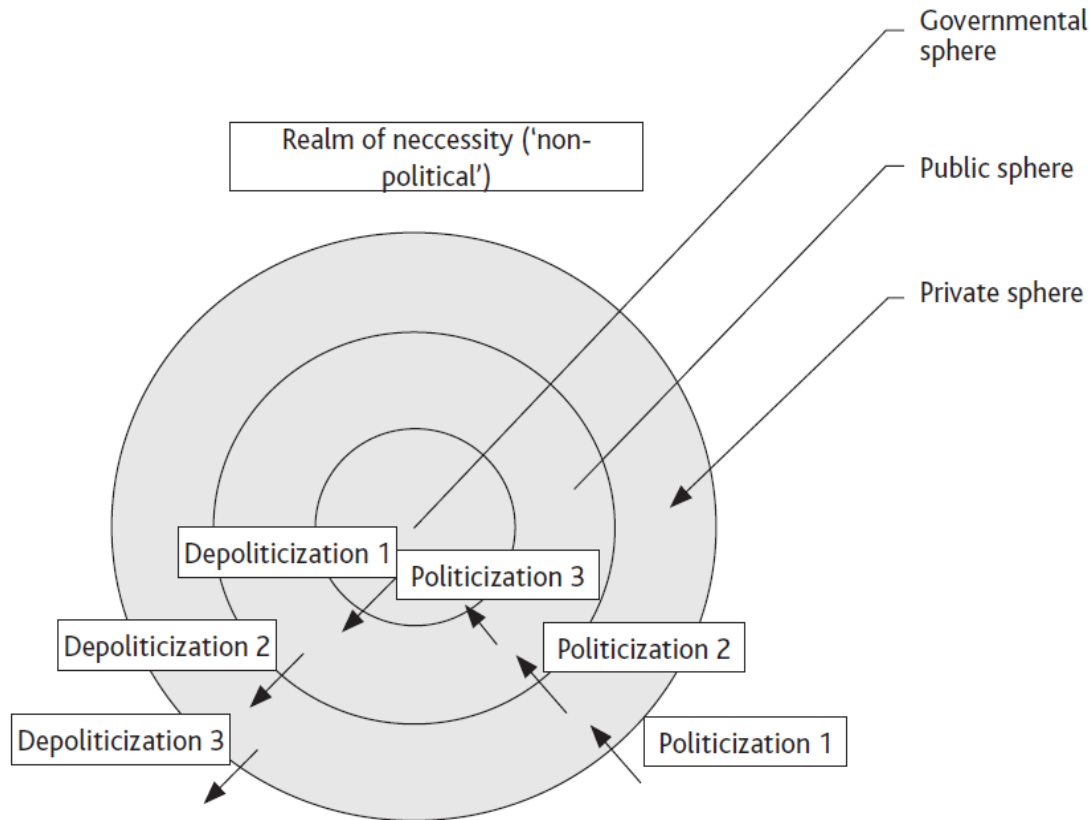
→ Impact on a **government's visibility**

Ex: Mettler, 2011, *The Submerged State*, feeds a general disinterest in politics

Source: (Wood & Flinders, 2014, p. 154, based on Hay, 2007)



THE POLITICAL EFFECTS OF DEPOLITICIZED POLICIES



Depoliticization 2: Privatization

Ex: when access to a public service is displaced from the (collective) public sphere to the (individualised) private sphere

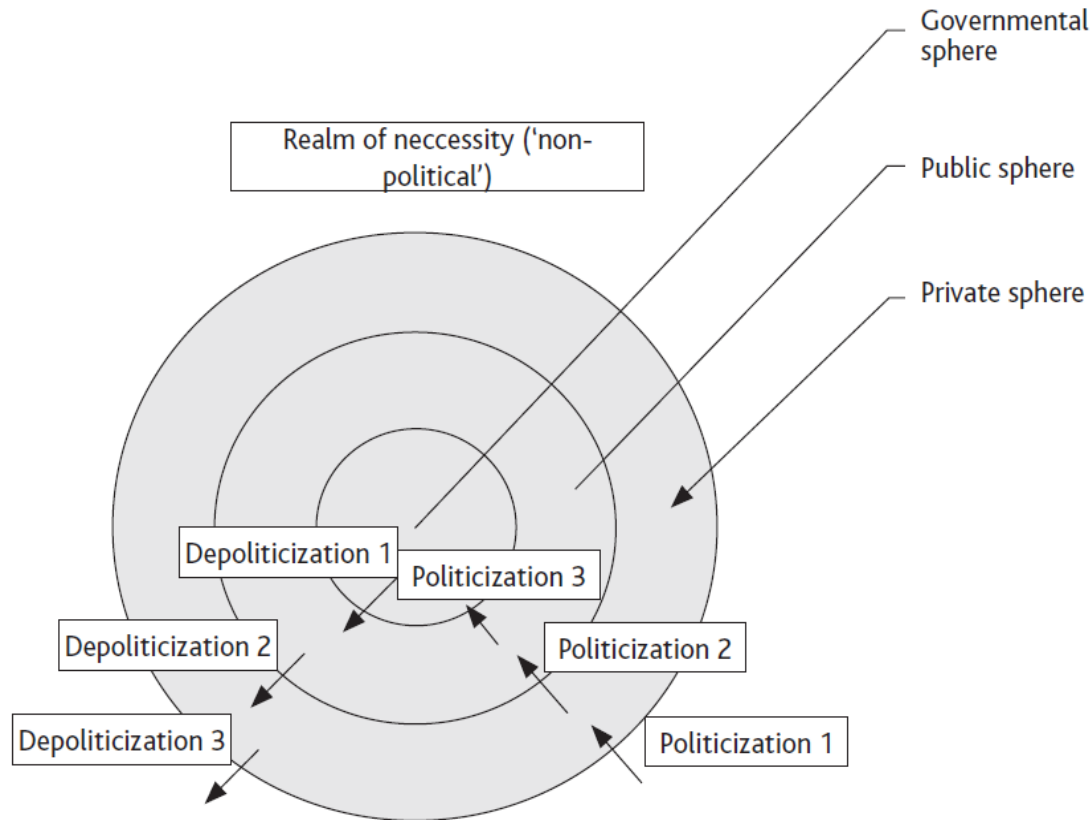
→ Impact on **the traceability** of governmental intervention

Ex: Gingrich and Watson, 2016, electoral accountability weakened, depressed political participation

Source: (Wood & Flinders, 2014, p. 154, based on Hay, 2007)



THE POLITICAL EFFECTS OF DEPOLITICIZED POLICIES



Depoliticization 3: Denial of choice

Ex: need to cut fiscal deficit presented as common sense

→ Impact on **the scope of politicians' agency**

Ex: Hay, 2007 *Why we hate politics*: politicians are useless, feeds disaffection toward politics

Source: (Wood & Flinders, 2014, p. 154, based on Hay, 2007)



THE POLITICAL EFFECTS OF DEPOLITICIZED POLICIES

Q2: How do citizens react to this (de)politicization?

→ **At the citizen level, insights that there is a distinctive depoliticizing effect of (national) depolitized policies**

The mechanisms at play: visibility and traceability of (EU) policies in citizens' eyes

What is likely to result from EU policies?

→ We need to capture citizens' perceptions of the policy environment they live in



(EUROPEAN) POLICY CITIZENSHIP

Capturing citizens and their various policy experiences

Socio-demographics, gender and ethnicity

Pensioners vs. convicts

Black single mothers vs. white care givers

(Campbell, 2003; Mettler, 2000; Lerman & Weaver, 2010; Bruch et al, 2010)

Generations of citizens

Policy change impact varies across generations – worldviews stick

Policy experiences stick

(Svallfors, 2010, Hay; Levitsky, 2014, Tiberj, 2017; Soss & Schram, 2017)



CONCLUSION

Public policies are agents of political socialisation

➔ POLICY CITIZENSHIP!

(De)Politicization studies need to account for what happens at the individual level (and not only political elites, parties or national media)

(De)Politicization studies must integrate the output side

➔ POLICIES must be brought in the analysis

THANK YOU

