

National Identities and Allegiances

DiPs at *The Blue Mugge* pub Mon 17th October 7.45pm > 9.15pm

This was planned to be an 'In the News' discussion - no notes, with participants coming prepared to discuss big issues from the few days...

At our last Mugge meeting, 3rd October, on Brexit Issues, the group discussed the first three questions on the notes provided and decided that this evening we should continue working through the big issue of National Identities.

We will then combine our 'In the News' approach with that proposal.

- i) Going round, those who wish, describe/define your own 'identity': family, local, regional, national, gender, international, whatever...
- ii) With any allegiances (social, political, cultural, religious) that follow from your 'identity' are these limited or compromised in any way by personal and social pressures in your daily life?
- iii) Follow through on 'distant' Mugger Michael Whitfield's notes on cynicism about 'experts' and a *post-Truth culture*...
- iv) Given everything in the news within the last week, what are the key issues related to national identities and allegiances?

Take Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP's position on Brexit, for example... Several other up-dated controversies on Brexit... before now engaging with David Whalley's notes below moving on from our last meeting:

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- 4) **Identities:** What is the nature of 'English' identity ... those who self-identified as 'British' largely voted Remain and those who self-identified as 'English' largely voted to Leave ... also, identity is steadily transferring from the collective to the personal (eg gender politics) in a way that reinforces neo-liberalism and the fragmentation of society ... "Is it possible that national identity has also become individualised' or 'privatised' in this way?"
 - 5) **Communications:** It is a commonplace that means of communication are changing very fast. Regis Debray [a contemporary French intellectual] argues that the pamphlet is a genre which makes possible the educative function of parties and other movements, centred on discussion groups and seminars.) Alan Finlayson, (see below) argues that the role of social media is quite different. Initial analysis suggests that *Leave* dominated on social media. We need to understand what these changes mean for conducting public policy in any Brexit process, too.
 - 6) **Technologies:** The ideological counterpart to an emergent regime - of the internet, robotics, big data and surveillance - is Silicon Valley libertarianism: something evident on the *Leave* side in the persons of Steve Hilton and Dominic Cummings. In turn this is leading to "a kind of experiment in new fusions of technology, science, policy and regulation, driven by entrepreneurs whose main ambition is to destroy the status quo." "The referendum gave voice to a desire to 'take back control': it meant many things but the phrase resonates with many of us for whom the workplace is dominated by technologies which monitor, measure and evaluate."

Professor Alan Finlayson's **conclusion** is here:

These themes are clearly not the whole account of post-Brexit Britain. We will need much hard thinking from many disciplines. But, "one of the achievements of Thatcherism was to separate scholars, activists and publics". Scholars are crushed by their workloads and assessment exercises; activists are shorn of their ideological traditions; publics have been encouraged to dismiss all experts. Against that fragmentation, we must understand our continuing collective life.

An up-date on AF's position can be read here:

https://www.lwbooks.co.uk/sites/default/files/ren24.3_01editorial.pdf

Discussion on these big issues are likely to continue....

