

What is your position or specialism on this topic?

How do you think we could improve the way we receive news about politics?

I'm the Co-Author of *Poles Apart*, a book which looks into why we divide and what can be done about it and the President of Accord. Accord helps organisations and leaders understand, manage and respond to conflict. We work with people from the UN to small NGOs and big business. I was also born in Pontypool and lived in Wales for 30 years, including running the campaign to bring in opt out organ donation. While I now live in California, so won't be joining you for many sessions, Wales very much remains home.

The way we process information and division are intimately related. Think about a time when someone who you think of as from another group (rival rugby team, political party etc) says something you agree with. Does it irritate you? When we are divided we devalue expertise and rely more on group identity (people like us or not like us) to decide what we think about information. It makes it really difficult for neutral arbiters (the BBC) to operate, because there is very little middle ground.

There's lots of ways we could improve how we think about politics:

- slow down as we process news. It's easier to overcome these group biases when we think slower
- prime areas where people have issues in common as well as division. This means local newspapers can be really important
- make it ok to say I don't know. Getting people to take a quick judgement can compound things. Think about how much harder it is to say I got this wrong, than I don't know (yet)

What would your critics say about your position?

People (including me) like to think they take issues carefully and weight up the costs and benefits. Instead, we all use many shortcuts to make decisions, but it can make us a lot less rational than we would like to be. That's uncomfortable – for me too!

Thinking about your critics and/or alternative positions to yours, how would you respond?

Ask them to think about the last time they changed their mind and why. How much did it have to do with the facts and "rationality". How much was it to do with the messenger? With the environment they were in? etc etc

Initial Recommendations

- local news support
- the role of talk radio
- building diverse (cognitively) teams
- showcase times people have changed their mind/said I don't know