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Hyper-active Governance

Hyper-active Governance is a new way of thinking about governing that puts debates over expertise at the heart. Contemporary governing requires delegation to experts, but also increases demands for political accountability. In this context, politicians and experts work together under political stress to adopt different governing relationships that appear more 'hands-off' or 'hands-on'. These approaches often serve to displace profound social and economic crises. Only a genuinely collaborative approach to governing, with an inclusive approach to expertise, can create democratically legitimate and effective governance in our accelerating world.

Using detailed case studies and global data sets in various policy areas including medicines, flooding, water resources, central banking and electoral administration, the book develops a new typology of modes of governing. Drawing from innovative social theory, it breathes new life into debates about expert forms of governance and how to achieve real paradigm shifts in how we govern our increasingly hyper-active world.

MATTHEW WOOD is Lecturer in Politics at The University of Sheffield. His work focuses on the authority and legitimacy of experts in the field of Governance and Public Policy. His doctoral dissertation (2014) received the Department of Politics' Andrew Gamble prize for best thesis, and his article 'Paradoxical Politics' was awarded the Harrison Prize for best article in Political Studies (2016). He has held visiting fellowships at Universitat Pompeu Fabra, University of Mainz, University of Canberra and Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, Mexico.

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Hyper-active Governance

How Governments Manage the Politics of Expertise

MATTHEW WOOD
University of Sheffield

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Preface

This is my first book, and the first of two monographs reflecting on the tension between our need to have experts involved in political decision-making and the normative necessity of securing democratic legitimacy for policy decisions. The first one has taken eight years to write, beginning at the start of my PhD and ending midway through a future research leaders award generously funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). I started out in September 2010 with two concepts, a stack of literature and a problem. The concepts were politicisation and depoliticisation, the stack of literature was as much as I could read about the relationship between expert-led agencies and government departments, and the problem (in circa 2010) was that the global financial crisis seemed to have made our reliance on unelected experts to make key policy decisions increasingly precarious. My task was to find out what the relationship is between depoliticisation and politicisation in contemporary governance, and what this means for the best ways of organising governing relationships in an era where we increasingly need expertise but also desire political control. This book is my first attempt at answering that question.

What kind of book have I written, and what kind of social science do I do? I thought long and hard about the contribution I was making and just what kind of political scientist and scholar of governance and public policy I see myself as. My (still reluctant and partial) conclusion is that I'm primarily an inductive political scientist. It means I start with broad analytical categories that help me frame the problem I'm interested in, collect data about very specific processes where that problem is especially pertinent, and where I'm likely to capture the nature of how actors act and think in those processes. I then present my analysis in a way that hopefully informs a novel or distinctive way of understanding and framing the broader problem.

This book is resolutely eclectic. Deductive theorising is crucial to the scientific enterprise, but it isn't *always* the best way of building upon

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existing theories in a way that addresses larger sociopolitical questions that structure and inform comparative public policy more generally. I see the best way of doing this as drawing on diverse theoretical and conceptual tools and using them creatively to frame a set of processes analytically, potentially building novel pictures of empirical relationships that can inform subsequent deductive theorising about those relationships. This isn't an approach everyone in the social sciences favours. It may be an ultimately subordinate approach to deductive theorising and testing. But it is, in my view, a legitimate approach and ought to be acknowledged as sitting alongside deductive theorising, at least in the discipline of comparative public policy.

Inductive or 'abductive' work can also lead to conceptual innovation that challenges established ideas from an unexpected and productive angle, often only after the research itself has taken place. The concept I develop in this book – hyper-active governance – did not emerge until my final two years of writing. It's not a deductively derived 'theory' of governance I set out to test and confirm/disconfirm. It is a metaphor based on my observations about the interrelationships experts and politicians develop as they struggle to respond to some of the most pressing, complex and intractable policy issues of our time. We live in a hyper-active world where we (academics, policymakers, the wider public) often fail to see the wood from the trees when it comes to our major policy challenges. We appoint expert committees and agencies to 'interactively' design evidence-based solutions to 'wicked' policy challenges, and then find those solutions can't gain legitimacy by themselves, but need political intervention and support. For some, this is simply a pragmatic trade-off between independence and accountability, and for them the hyper-active metaphor won't resonate. For me, and I hope for others, it's an intractable tension that reveals deep-seated problems inherent in our liberal democratic capitalist system, for which a 'hyper-active' metaphor and the diagnostic imagery it evokes are quite apt.

This isn't simply an academic problem either. Policymakers need an understanding of the tension between expertise and politics informed by social theory to grasp just how fundamental the contradiction is between expert authority and political legitimacy, and how they might navigate it. In Chapter 7, I draw on the idea of 'social acceleration' advanced by the social theorist Hartmut Rosa in an attempt to elucidate this tension, but practitioners might want to skip to Chapter 8

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where I set out which approach to coordinating relationships with expert bodies might work best, given the deep tensions addressed throughout the book. I genuinely believe that reflecting on the implications of social acceleration theory for their work can help policymakers seriously consider the trade-offs they are faced with when organising the relationship between government departments and arm's-length agencies staffed with professional and scientific experts.

Other scholars might want to pick up the theory of social acceleration and test under what conditions different forms of expert–politics relationships are best able to break the 'cycle' I identify and test which ways politicians might better organize their interaction with expert agencies. I might undertake this work, but in an inductive spirit, I might move onto the next attempt at building a broad picture of a policy problem in an effort to change the way we think about governing relationships in a world where we are faced with so many pressing sociopolitical crises.

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Academic research draws on so many favours and unacknowledged goodwill. During the past eight years, I've accumulated so many intellectual and personal debts of this kind that it's difficult to acknowledge even half of them. My first debt is to the Economic and Social Research Council for providing funding to conduct the research and write this book. Cambridge University Press also supported the project diligently and organized a stringently thorough refereeing process. Thanks also go to *Political Studies*, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* and *Public Administration* journals for permissions to reproduce figures and tables.

Professionally, I have had several mentors without whom this book would not have emerged. First, Prof Matthew Flinders had the confidence and trust in me to push my application for a PhD on depoliticisation and encouraged me to be conceptually innovative. He then reappointed me a postdoctoral associate and deputy director at the Sir Bernard Crick Centre for the Public Understanding of Politics after a brief spell at the University of Canberra. Others in the centre – Dr Kate Dommett, James Weinberg, Alex Meakin and Indra Mangule – have all played significant, often unacknowledged, roles in improving my thinking. Intellectually, Prof Andy Hindmoor and Prof Colin Hay have been deeply influential in how I approach scholarship. Andy in particular has been a source of invaluable professional guidance as I 'mainstreamed' my thinking after the PhD and matured as a scholar. It is a privilege to work in a Politics Department as supportive and rigorous as Sheffield.

In terms of this book, I first presented one of the case studies at the University of Canberra's Institute of Governance and Policy Analysis in 2013, and did much of the empirical work on the water governance case study while over there. Thanks must go to Dr Paul Fawcett, Prof David Marsh and Dr Selen Ercan for giving me the opportunity to visit and for taking such a detailed interest in my work, beyond the call of

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duty. My theoretical thinking was influenced by periods working at the University of Mainz with Prof Claudia Landwehr, working with Prof Paul Cairney on a similar project on policymaking under conditions of complexity and an intense presentation at the University of Manchester's Politics Department in Autumn 2017.

Much of my early thinking developed in particular from co-founding the Anti-politics and Depoliticisation Specialist Group, where as a team (myself, Dr Pinar Donmez, Dr Ross Beveridge, Dr Jim Buller, Dr Caroline Kuzemko and Dr Adam Standring) we worked up a lively interdisciplinary debate. Towards the end of the project, conversations with the 'Pace' group I organised with Prof Jack Corbett were especially productive, with deep feedback and engagement from Dr Thomas Elston, Dr Natalie Papanastasiou, Dr Dennis Grube, Dr Emily St Denny, Dr Cosmo Howard and Jack himself. Specific thanks in terms of commenting on the final manuscript should go to Dr Nicole Curato and Dr John Boswell.

More broadly, I need to thank those friends who keep me sane on a day-to-day basis. There are too many to name, but Joe Turner and Dan Bailey in particular are constant sources of good humour and camaraderie in the academy. They keep me going with healthy doses of sardonic wit, even in darker times. Last, and most importantly, personal thanks go to Heather, Alan, Susan, Kathryn and Stephen for their unrelenting confidence and support.

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Abbreviations

ACSEE	Advisory Committee on Social, Economic and Environmental Sciences
ACTO	Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organisation
ACUMAR	Matanza–Riachuelo River Basin Authority
AEMA	Alberta Emergency Management Agency
APF	Asset Purchase Facility
BoE	Bank of England
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CCA	Civil Contingencies Act
CDEMA	Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
CDM	Comprehensive Disaster Management
CEWH	Office of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder
COBRA	Cabinet Office Briefing Room
COHTA	Catalan Office for Health Technology Assessment
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
CTHAC	Council on Technology Health Assessment and Care
DEFRA	Department for Environment and Rural Affairs
DELWP	Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DH	Department of Health
DNRM	Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines

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DSEWPC	Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
EA	UK Environment Agency
EAA	Electoral Administration Authority
ECB	European Central Bank
EFRASC	Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee and the Environmental Audit Committee
EU	European Union
EUnethta	The European Network for Health Technology Assessment
FE	Fertility Europe
FEMA	US Federal Emergency Management Agency
FOI	Freedom of Information
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
GO	government office
HERA	Herceptin Adjuvant
HO	home office
HTA	health technology assessment
ICB	independent central bank
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ILO	International Labour Organization
INBO	International Network of Basin Organisations
IPSA	Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority
JPG	joint planning group
MDBA	Murray–Darling Basin Authority
MDBC	Murray–Darling Basin Commission
MDBMC	Murray–Darling Basin Ministerial Council
MP	member of parliament
MRC	Mekong River Commission
NaDMA	National Disaster Management Agency
NBAC	Northern Basin Advisory Committee
NEB	National Electoral Board
NGO	non-government organisation
NHS	National Health Service
NICE	UK National Institute for Clinical Excellence
OGD	other government department

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PCT	Primary Care Trust
RBO	River Basin Organisation
RCCC	Regional Civil Contingencies Committee
SCG	Strategic Coordination Group
SDL	sustainable diversion limit
SME	small and medium-sized enterprise
STA	single technology appraisal
UK	United Kingdom
WHO	World Health Organisation
Zamcom	Zambezi Watercourse Commission

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