

# editorial

This issue of *risk&regulation* is devoted to the theme of capacity. Capacity – the availability of resources to detect, assess and affect in meaningful ways – is a central theme in contemporary debates about risk and regulation. A turn towards an analysis of ‘capacity’ underscores not only that all regulatory activity requires discretionary judgement. It also puts the spotlight on questions about the prerequisites for regulatory interventions, and the limitations of regulation.

This edition of *risk&regulation* touches on a number of issues that surround academic debates on capacity. One dimension of any capacity-related debate concerns the rise of new technologies and their impact on the knowledge and expertise required to regulate such technologies. Alex Griffiths and Meghan Leaver discuss the use of social media as a means of assessing quality among health providers. Irina Brass and colleagues, as well as Michael Haba, note how new information technologies trigger demands for tricky regulatory trade-offs, especially as failures might have severe implications for multiple transnational infrastructures.

Another dimension relates to the capacity required for the deployment of such new technologies in regulation. The article by Jacob Reilley and Tobias Scheytt, members of the international QUAD (quantification, administrative capacity and democracy) project team, highlights the evolution of quantification in the German health sector and associated consequences and possibilities for administrative capacities. Similarly, the rise and use of ‘behavioural insights’ raises questions about how these techniques are incorporated into the everyday life of bureaucracy, as reflected in the joint work by the OECD and **carr** involving Faisal Naru, Filippo Cavassini and Martin Lodge.

A third dimension relates to questions concerning the exercise of regulatory authority. Suzanne McCarthy highlights how a regime based on self-regulation faces existential challenges when established understandings regarding political advertising are coming under pressure. The need to develop regulatory capacity is also a central theme in the joint work between **carr** and RAND Europe on the development of infrastructure regulation in Brazil. The findings of this work, funded by the UK Foreign Office’s Prosperity Fund, are outlined by Chris van Stolk, Daniel Schweppenstedde, Julia Batistella-Machado and Martin Lodge. The exercise of authority cannot be merely understood as formal acts. Rebecca Elliott highlights how emotional responses to calculations of risk with regards to natural hazards should feature more extensively in debates about risk.

Finally, there is the question of the limits of capacity. As outlined by Max Weber, the exercise of authority pre-supposes the acceptance by affected populations. Debates about the legitimacy and future shape of the European Union fundamentally affect the ways in which transboundary risks are governed. Lydie Cabane and Martin Lodge, by drawing on their Horizon2020-funded TransCrisis work, note how critical member state engagement is for effective EU governance and how some contemporary dynamics do not bode well for effective and legitimate transboundary crisis management. Bridget Hutter explores limits of capacity when it comes to debates regarding failure.

Questions about how to enhance capacity will always remain a highly contested terrain, raising queries as to who should be provided with resources to exercise authority over other parties (and who should pay for them). It also raises the question whether (regulatory) ‘capacity’ should be desired at all – after all, for some the spectre of capacity-rich regulators is associated with red tape and over-zealotry. For others, the lack of capacity is an indicator of regulatory capture.

Debates about developing and maintaining capacity are also central to the management of research units, such as **carr**. Contributions in this issue highlight that it is not just important to have in-house capacity to develop and contribute to leading-edge research in risk and regulation. In addition, it is essential to build on and enjoy linkages with other ‘external’ parties. We are grateful to all our contributors for supporting **carr** in such generous ways. Without this support, it would be impossible to continue **carr**’s role as a leading international venue for debates in risk and regulation. We hope you enjoy this issue of *risk&regulation*. **Martin Lodge & Andrea Mennicken**