Crisis, Resources and the State: Executive Politics in the Age of the Depleted State

Martin Lodge

London School of Economics and Political Science

Questions regarding the problem-solving capacity of the state have been long-standing. The financial crisis as well as future demographic and environmental challenges have raised the spectre of the depleted state, a state that lacks legitimacy and resources to steer social, economic and political developments. This article considers how a perspective that centres on executive politics can illuminate key debates surrounding the depleted state. It does so in three steps. First, it considers whether the earlier literature on the 'crisis of the state' of the 1970s contributes to contemporary debates. Second, it questions whether the age of 'governance' has come to the rescue, and not just of the challenges outlined by the earlier literature. Third, it discusses the contribution of executive politics to the study of the contemporary state's problem-solving capacity and draws wider implications of the age of the depleted state for executive politics.

Keywords: state; capacity; financial crisis; governance; executive politics

We are living in the age of the depleted state in the Western world. The age of the depleted state is one in which public resources are severely restricted, where private economic activity is subdued and where political systems are criticised for their lack of problem-solving capacities and (paradoxically) for any discretionary exercise of power. Established party systems face instability given electoral volatility and the growing popularity of anti-politics parties. The depleted state seems barely capable of accommodating, let alone addressing, the contemporary demands caused by the financial and economic crisis, demographic developments and climate change. Such a context of depleted resources presents a challenge to the problem-solving capacity of the state and places the operation of and research in executive politics at the heart of contemporary debates.

A diagnosis of a depleted state may not be surprising from the viewpoint of (mid-)2012. However, it may come as a surprise to those who recall the immediate responses to the aftermath of the financial market meltdown in 2007/8. It was then widely argued that the 'state was back' after a period of neo-liberalism (Klenk and Nullmeyer, 2010). Evidence for this 'return' comprised banking sector bail-outs and large-scale nationalisations as well as economic 'rescue packages'. Since then, much has been said about the causes of market and regulatory failures, the subsequent attempts at regulatory and political reform and the evolving calls for politicians to respond to economic and social turmoil (Froud *et al.*, 2012; Gamble, 2009). Attention has focused on the politics of austerity, namely the way in which states have sought to tackle state debt through public sector and wider welfare state retrenchment and public expenditure containment. This politics of austerity has gone hand in hand with growing and sustained criticism of political problem-solving capacity, whether at the national, EU or international level. However, the age of the depleted state is arguably characterised by the state's

lack of legitimacy and resources to steer social, economic and political developments; in other words, we have entered an age of politics in which national and multi-level problem-solving capacity cannot be taken for granted. Far from wielding their 'big bazooka', states seem, at best, to be wearing a 'speedo' (as a researcher put it in the *Financial Times*, 5 August 2011).

Questions regarding problem-solving capacity are, of course, a long-standing feature in the study of political science. Problem solving is not just about the way in which political systems (of whatever character) succeed in addressing diagnosed problems (or not); it also relates to the way in which these attempts are perceived as legitimate. This article considers long-standing discussions about the resources of the state that are said to facilitate problem-solving capacity. It does so by focusing on executive politics, a field that offers a promising avenue to analyse the problem-solving capacity of contemporary multi-level political systems (which includes, of course, states, but also collections of states and arrangements in which private networks co-produce public services). Executive politics complements the broader literature interested in 'the state' and 'the market' by emphasising the formal and informal institutions that shape the behaviour and resources of actors within the executive, and it also allows for a shift in focus to the prerequisites of particular modes of intervention (Lodge and Wegrich, 2012a).

To illustrate how a focus on executive politics can contribute to the study of 'the state', the article first considers how the contemporary setting links to those discussions that shaped crisis and capacity discussions in the 1970s. Second, it questions whether the age of 'governance' has come to the rescue, and not just to the kind of challenges raised by the earlier literature. Third, the article turns to the potential contribution of executive politics to the study of problem-solving capacity. In conclusion, it returns to the implications of the age of the depleted state for executive politics.

Crisis of the State in the 1970s

Prior to 2008, observers of democratic capitalism could confidently point to the capacity of political systems to reform themselves and to overcome potential crises in their economies. Particular emphasis was placed on the way in which governments of different hues had transformed their economies during a 'neo-liberal age' (Streeck, 2011), whether in the name of the 'regulatory state' (Lodge, 2008; Majone, 1994; Moran, 2003), the 'New Public Management state' (Hood, 1991) or the 'competition state' (Cerny, 1997). States had successfully bought 'peace' by relying on cheap money and private household debt (Streeck, 2011), by trusting European integration to liberalise markets and constrain collective labour (Streeck and Schmitter, 1991), by empowering international financial markets and by privatising public services (for a different account, see Klein, 1993). The collapse of state communist systems further added to the sense that the Western model of democratic capitalism had shown remarkable resilience and considerable capacity to reform itself. Attention therefore shifted to explaining how different 'varieties of capitalism' were responding to the challenges of globalised markets and market liberalisation (Hall, 2007). The rise of independent central banks was associated with the age of the 'great moderation' of low inflation rates and a decline in industrial conflict. In short, those who had proclaimed that the 1970s formed a period

of legitimisation crises of 'late capitalist' democratic systems, or of 'government overload' and malfunctioning democratic institutions (Finer, 1975; King, 1975), were seen to have missed important transformative capacities in which state power could be reconstituted or 'recycled' (see Hay, 1999).

By 2012, the world has come to look very different. As predicted by those accounts which pointed to the inevitable contradictions between capitalism and democracy, the need to address a major economic crisis has led to political crises. Political systems encountered crises of confidence as expressed in the continued, if not growing, attractiveness of 'anti-politics' parties and the rise of supposedly 'technocratic' governments, such as in Greece and Italy. Elsewhere, parties in government faced electoral elimination as volatile electorates punished those who happened to be in political office (see Mair, 2008). After the benign years of the 'great moderation', has the 'old-new normal' world of contradictions in governing returned?

The inherent tensions and contradictions between democracy and capitalism that emerge from the need to address popular and economic demands require key capacities and resources. Without wishing to offer an exhaustive account of state theories of an earlier generation (see Jessop, 1990; O'Connor, 1981), a highly selective reading of earlier writings on the 'crisis of the state' of the 1970s and 1980s points to three key resources that define the capability of the state, namely legitimisation, organisation and finance.

Turning to legitimisation first, one of the key resources has been the ability of the state to find a path between contrasting electoral and capitalist demands (see Habermas, 1973). In order to do so the state needs to legitimise its interventions by pointing to seemingly inevitable and 'technocratic' solutions. However, such a strategy, while reducing contestation, can only be of limited long-term viability. For one, it requires acceptance when such acceptance might be decreasingly forthcoming, especially if the supposed outputs or outcomes are not observable (i.e. austerity does not lead to economic growth, just as demand management did not seem to stimulate growth, but stagflation). Furthermore, having to apply the same argumentative strategy again and again for ever more interventions in different domains is likely to attract growing criticism, thus increasing legitimisation problems. In short, a strategy that merely relies on output or outcome-oriented legitimisation is likely to fail given increasing opposition over the lack of input-based legitimacy.

Second, organisation points to resources required to administer conflicts between and within domains. It also includes the state's capacity to change behaviours among actors in diverse domains (Offe, 1972a). As states are forced to engage in ever more domains, the state loses its capability to stand apart from or 'above' interests that dominate particular domains. Once support mechanisms exist, it is difficult to withdraw support levels. The need for growing intervention in ever more domains raises the risk of capture by those organised fields. The pressure is said to be only in one direction, namely to require further support (whether in terms of legal protection, subsidy support or the like).

Besides the risk of capture, increasing exposure and involvement to ever more activities also leads to internal organisational problems. This particularly applies to the coordinative capacity of the state, in at least two ways. First, coordination becomes increasingly problematic as different parts of the state come into growing conflict with each other over

resources. Second, it becomes even more difficult as the available information stretches, if not overwhelms, information-gathering and information-sifting capacities.

Furthermore, the need to discriminate between those fields worthy or unworthy of attention creates new sets of winners and losers. These conflicts undermine the state's claim to a supposedly 'technocratic neutrality' as it is seen to be favouring one set of interests over others. Such problems may be addressed by relying on corporatist 'buy-in' from various parties (Offe, 1983). These strategies might exhaust themselves as these corporatist arrangements are undermined either by their bias towards business, or by growing internal opposition towards these pacts.

In addition, the growing demands on managing crises require a particular policy style. Responses to crises will seek to maintain existing power structures. This requires a technocratic appearance (legitimised through political channels) in order to mask the power-structure-maintaining 'avoidance imperative' style of policy interventions (Offe, 1972b, p. 104). Related to this, the idea of 'juridification' points to the growing demands for and the implications of legalisation of ever more social domains (Teubner, 1998). This process of juridification has, at best, ambivalent effects: it might destroy the viability of these social domains, it might witness 'rejection' in that it has no effect whatsoever, or it might cause 'irritation' in that unpredictable effects will dominate. In sum, the demand to stabilise and intervene in ever more and wider domains stretches the internal organisational capacities of the state and it increasingly makes the uncertain, if not self-defeating, nature of state interventions ever more apparent.

Third, the need to address the growing financial demands to compensate for economic turbulence (i.e. welfare state payments) leads to further problems in that states are faced with having to extract revenues ever more heavily from a constantly shrinking tax base (O'Connor, 1973). In doing so, it reduces economic activity (either through repressive tax or by facilitating exit), thereby resulting in an inevitable spiral of shrinking resources to deal with growing demands.

The importance of these three resources was stressed in the context of the 1970s and early 1980s. They reflected scepticism towards the interventionist agendas that sought to address Cold War economic, environmental and social problems. By 2012, the key problem turned out to be state debt. According to Wolfgang Streeck (2010; 2012), state debt has created a new kind of dependency that is leading to inevitable political crisis, just as predicted by earlier accounts. The ability of states to detach themselves from financial markets appeared increasingly limited, given their dependence on access to finance. Thus, redistributive conflicts turned out to be inevitable, especially as mobile factors of production threaten 'exit' and therefore are unlikely to be treated in particularly punitive ways (Streeck, 2011). More generally, observers of US politics have noted an increasing oligarchisation of opinion responsiveness and an institutional strangulation of legislative politics by (financial) interests. This has gone hand in hand with growing inequality and suggests an inevitable legitimisation crisis (Carpenter, 2010a; Hacker and Pierson, 2010; Winters and Page, 2009).

In Europe, too, the politics of national state bail-outs and the subsequent electoral humiliation of governing parties pointed to growing problems of legitimisation (at the moment of writing, EU countries where incumbents had been voted out of office,

replaced by 'technocratic' governments, or had witnessed government breakdown due to the politics of austerity, included France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain) (see Parrado, 2012). Indeed, exercises in democracy (i.e. elections and referenda) were widely seen as a threat to the viability of international and supposedly technocratic austerity packages.

In other words, the contemporary state – and therefore the context in which politicians contest elections and place demands on bureaucracy to provide capable and loyal political advice and policy delivery – continued to be shaped by the two conflicting logics of capitalism and democracy, in a context defined by debt and economic crisis, ageing societies and climate change. What is different is that the recipes to absorb these tensions, namely competitive party democracy and the welfare state, seem to suffer from legitimacy and material resource limitations. Politics, and thus the state, is constrained by the limits of the ballot box, by increasingly volatile electorates and by wider changes in party competition (Bezes, 2012; Mair, 2008). Earlier 'overload' accounts would emphasise the apparent inability of domestic politics to reverse its welfare state policies today at the expense of future generations as this would constitute electoral *hara kiri*. Politics is further constrained by the logic of capitalism. The 'old' logic of capitalism requires the state to compensate for the inevitable boom and bust of market economies. The additional 'new' logic points to the dependency of national political systems on international financial markets in order to benefit from a low interest rate climate for their state debt (and private household debt).

The Worlds of Governance

Governance, in many ways, was supposed to have come to the rescue of the 1970s state in crisis (Goetz, 2008; Lodge and Wegrich, 2011). Governance represents the idea of a dispersion of power: within states (through processes of specialisation and fragmentation, such as to executive agencies or supposedly independent regulatory agencies), between public, para-public and private actors (network or 'decentred' accounts) and increasingly international, transnational and Europeanised spheres of influence (Yesilkagit, 2012). The shift to dispersed governance allowed states to reduce their exposure to the limitations of 'command and control'. It did so by relying on delegated bodies, by relying on privatised or outsourced services for service delivery, by deploying mediated network and enforced self-regulatory modes to achieve policy intent, and by shuffling rule-making jurisdiction to transnational levels. In sum, governance in this dispersed form utilises the motive and capacity of third parties to contribute to the achievement of public goals, thereby modifying the role of the state to that of a controller and mediator.

The age of governance could therefore be interpreted as the successful transformation of the state 'narrative' in a neo-liberal age. It did so by successfully exploiting the three resources outlined above. In terms of finance, the age of governance utilised privatisation, outsourcing and other non-transparent ruses ('private–public partnerships') to reduce immediate demands on public finances, partly by shifting the cost of public services from the collective to the individual user. In terms of organisation, the dispersion of administrative and political decision-making arenas was also said to offer superior arrangements, as independent regulators signalled 'credible commitment', independent inflation-busting

central banks seemed to guarantee low interest rate environments, and executive agencies supposedly facilitated managerial specialisation and responsiveness to citizen-customers. The centre added to its coordinative capacities by focusing on core tasks, such as regulating.

In addition, governance also represented a highly successful mode of legitimisation. One key legitimisation strategy was to appeal to economic rationality and efficiency arguments, thereby building on the discourse of economic institutionalism and its empha-sis on credible commitment and overall scepticism about political life. Thus, the emphasis attributed to the technical rationality of the 'regulatory state' and other reform themes represented little other than a renewed attempt to reject 'democratic' impulses that might be considered as an undesirable disturbance to evolving power relationships. Indeed, the institutional 'complexification' of public services and political decision making arguably represented a highly successful blame avoidance strategy (Hood, 2011). Citizens have no transparent way of allocating blame in a world of complex co-production networks in which the promise of services tomorrow requires payment by those paying taxes the day after tomorrow. Second, governance also appealed to those who emphasised the impor-tance of mediation and negotiation. Accordingly, even where states are said to be in possession of 'hierarchical' power, they require the consent of their populations to govern; and such consent can best be achieved primarily through persuasion and mediation, and possibly through incentivisation, but not through the use of repressive coercion (especially in the long term and affecting large parts of the population). These more network-oriented arguments further point to potential legitimisation by bringing in or relying on societal actors to 'solve' problems in decentralised settings.

However, not all observers share the view that governance has 'come to the rescue' (Matthews, 2012). For those emphasising the importance of 'hollowing out', it is ques-tionable whether fragmented, internationalised and outsourced states retained the 'muscle' and 'intelligence' to steer social and economic life. The age of governance may be said to have illustrated the non-privileged status of the state as it is just one part of wider networks of actors (and for fans of autopoietic analysis, the sole strategy that holds any promise of achieving goals is to rely on 'reflexivity'). Therefore, the dispersion of the 'hollow state' has created its own set of problems. For example, are systems of governance capable of organising coordination in the light of multi-level dispersion? Are they capable of raising large-scale revenues given the lack of financial resources (due to the political infeasibility of relying on tax revenue-raising strategies that go beyond the one-off mobile phone licence auction or the long-term windfall gains arising from natural resource exploitation, such as oil)? Or are systems of dispersed governance capable of addressing legitimisation problems, as supposedly independent regulators take inherently political decisions? Indeed, for those authors interested in 'depoliticisation' (Flinders and Buller, 2006), the reliance on non-discretionary state arrangements (which Roberts [2010] calls 'the logic of discipline'), the dominance of a technocratic discourse that excludes con-testation, and societal withdrawal from the political arena have between them sown the seeds for a far-reaching legitimacy crisis that resonates with many of the themes noted in the earlier 'crisis of the state' literature. Table 1 summarises the way in which the three key resources of the state have been considered.

Table 1: Competing Views on Key Resources of the State

	Legitimisation	*Organisation*	*Finance*
Crisis of the state	State incapable of justifying its narrowing of contestation and options by resorting to 'inevitable' and 'technocratic' solutions	State incapable of managing information and interventions due to overload	State incapable of raising resources to address social problems caused by economic crises
Governance to the rescue	State successfully legitimises its position by resorting to 'credible commitment' and 'negotiation'	Capacity increased through dispersion of decision making	Capacity increased through use of private sources/outsourcing
Governance as hollowed out state	State loses its privileged position and is incapable of holding actors accountable	Lack of steering and coordination capacity	Inability to raise large-scale finance to address problems

In sum, the world of governance does indeed represent a somewhat different picture from the world of the 1970s and 1980s where the primary concern was with the (supposedly) inevitable crisis of the liberal democratic state in the light of (failing) economic policy recipes. However, whether the age of governance offers problem-solving capacity for the challenges of the twenty-first century is a different matter.

The Executive Politics Contribution

A contribution of an executive politics-informed approach is to focus on the contextual conditions under which the actors within the institutions of governing operate. This section sets out how the three resources identified earlier affect contemporary executive politics. It does so by looking at three pivotal challenges that affect contemporary governing, namely the challenges of addressing transboundary problems and decision making in the face of demands for 'renationalised' politics, of addressing long-term sustainability issues in the face of short-term electoral politics, and of balancing a desire for overall coordination and a reliance on self-governance in the face of societal fragmentation.

The Tension between Transboundary and 'Renationalised' Politics

Whether challenges relate to financial and other economic markets, to environmental pollution and climate change more broadly, human migration patterns or the creation of cross-national crisis preparation and management structures, the definition of problems has mostly become one of a transboundary nature, and the governance mechanisms to address these problems are usually also of a transnational character (see Abbott and Snidal [2009] for variety in mechanisms).

The European Union has often been paraded as such a device, solving not just 'problems' of integrating markets, but also offering politicians the 'useful' device of shifting the blame for electorally controversial choices on to the EU. Such a strategy can only work as long as there is a 'permissive consensus' in favour of the European Union and electoral contests do not turn on the issue of integration itself. However, this is exactly what has happened, as evidenced in lost EU referenda since the 1990s and in national party electoral contests from the late 2000s onwards (McLaren, 2004). As governmental leaders jet-setted from one 'summit of all summits' to another in order to deal with the latest round of economic crises, doubts were raised about the ability of such international and supranational fora to offer policy solutions that would also be seen by national electorates as being legitimate. In short, governments were faced with the challenge of coupling functional demands for effective and legitimate transnational problem solving for transboundary problems in the face of electorally successful demands for a 'renationali-sation' of politics (Lodge and Wegrich, 2012b, p. 287).

In terms of the three state resources, the transboundary arena for problem solving faced growing legitimisation problems, especially as the discretion of states to develop economic and welfare state policy in any discretionary way is being curtailed. Similarly, the growing plethora of different international settings to deal with various trans-boundary problems raises issues about the organisational capacity of states to be effective members of such arrangements, and of the organisational capacities of such arrangements themselves. Finally, in terms of finance, the tension between allocating funding for

transboundary issues (and thus facing domestic criticism about 'paying out to undeserving foreigners'), overcoming the collective action problem of raising international funds for transboundary concerns that might have asymmetric benefits to select jurisdictions and people on the one hand, and the calls to 'concentrate' funding on those national 'deserving' cases on the other, raises issues not just in terms of available resources, but also in terms of prioritisation.

The Tension between Sustainability and Electoral Politics

As noted, one of the key 'contradictions' faced by the democratic state has always been assumed to lie in the conflict between economic or capitalist and electoral dynamics. The idea of sustainability defines long-term and non-resource-intensive policy choices and outcomes not only in economic fields, but also in environmental and social development.

   Across these areas, demands have been made to provide for 'credibility' through institutional devices that make political reversal for short-term motives prohibitively costly (at least, in transaction cost terms). Such constructions can at best be seen as legitimate in output terms, but become problematic where outputs and outcomes are difficult to measure, where supposedly 'technical' decisions redistribute wealth and where circumstances demand a degree of flexibility. Apart from such legitimisation issues, having to deal with such sustainability-related issues challenges both the organisational coordinative function of the state and the state's ability to support particular long-term sustainable development financially. Thus, the 'limits of administration' (Hood, 1976) shape the way in which political and bureaucratic actors need to address the tension between sustainability and short-term electoral incentives.

The Tension between Self-Governance and Coordination

As suggested, one of the key themes in contemporary governance has been a stress on 'dispersion'. The view that state activity involves 'collaboration' and 'enforced self-regulation' rather than direct 'hierarchical' state activity suggests that the state and the executive have lost their predominant position. The interest in drawing societal actors into executive action could be interpreted as one further extension of the state's capability to employ societal actors for its own purposes. However, an emphasis on collaboration and 'self-governance' assumes certain prerequisites (Mayntz, 1987), namely the existence of supportive legal and financial support structures, and stable private organisations that have the backing of their members. These two prerequisites are particularly problematic in the contemporary age; social differentiation means that traditional societal representative organisations have lost their claim to be representing any wider constituencies (such as trade unions or churches), while the provision of financial and legal privileges to particular groups has equally faced challenges, if only because of the lack of financial resources. The organisational capacity to control or coordinate such a world of fragmented self-governance is equally challenged. One particular challenge is the diversification of communication channels which has removed the ability of states to transport easily communicable 'at large' messages, while the emerging fragmented private communication networks are not just difficult to access, but may be explicitly built on the premise of rejecting the legitimacy of the state.

Table 2: Challenges to Resources in Contemporary Setting of Executive Politics

Tension	Legitimisation	Organisation	Finance
Transboundary vs. 'renationalised' politics and problem solving	'Technocratic' argument about transnational 'coercive' policy options raises electoral opposition and party demands for renationalisation	Maintaining capacity to gather and channel information across highly dispersed governance machinery	Availability and control of financing for transboundary issues/ constraints on discretion in national resource allocation
Sustainability vs. electoral politics	Long-term policy solutions justified by 'expertise' conflict with the short-run demands of electorates	Accountability and control of autonomous bodies outside electoral politics	Prioritisation of funding allocation between long-term and short-term goals
Self-governance vs. coordination	Reliance on decentralised networks conflicts with demands for accountability and demands for degree of control over highly heterogeneous preferences	Aligning dispersed fields to overarching policy goals and regulating boundary creation and accessibility issues given likely hostility to central interference (plus risk of capture and selectivity)	Creation of new winners and losers through selection of funding recipients plus issues of 'dependency creation' and capture

Table 2 summarises this argument. More broadly, the context of depleted resources raises key issues about different ways in which formal and informal institutions within and across executive governments operate. An executive politics-oriented research agenda informed by these issues includes the perennial debates about how to control and hold accountable dispersed systems of governance (and by what means). Such an agenda focuses on the way in which particular ideas about 'good governance' are accepted and how they perform, especially also in the context of debates about understandings and expectations regarding reward, competency and loyalty of political and civil service actors (Hood and Lodge, 2006; Lodge and Hood, 2012; Meyer–Sahling *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, it explores the ways in which steering and coordination can overcome inevitable self-interest among actors (Scharpf, 1972; Wilson, 1990), especially when institutional behaviours are shaped by blame-avoidance (Hood, 2011) or reputation-conscious strategies (Carpenter, 2010b; Gilad, 2012; Maor, 2010).

Executive Politics and the Depleted State

The notion of the depleted state defines an era in which three essential resources – legitimacy, organisation and finance – are no longer capable of steering behaviours and therefore achieving outputs or outcomes. It raises central concerns for the study of executive politics as it points to the conditions affecting political and bureaucratic life. In such an age, politics turns out to be highly volatile. Political institutions are confronted by detachment and disalignment. Those in office are vulnerable to wild electoral swings.

This kind of politics also has implications for the kind of bureaucracy that is likely to become prominent as in such an age the advice of 'independent' agencies and central banks will be of little political use. Instead, politicians will be keen to surround themselves with close allies whose loyalty is purely towards the politician in office (for effects of 'politicisation' on agency performance, see Lewis, 2012). Blame cannot be shuffled away, long-term contracts are highly politicised and subject to amendment, and resources to please constituencies or otherwise 'stabilise' the economy and society are limited. In addition, given this lack of resources, this age of the depleted state is likely to see a predominance of private interests, especially in areas of traditional state activity, namely security and welfare. Such extension in private (privatised) activities raises issues about accountability and oversight (Lodge and Wegrich, 2012b, pp. 294–5). Furthermore, as these private interests, which include corporations and alternative social organisations, compete for and select (and exclude) members, this age of the depleted state can arguably turn into a highly volatile world of unaccountable and volatile balances of power, in which any individual's private sphere is no longer clearly demarcated from the public sphere as protections against intrusions into individuals' privacy can no longer be policed. In this world of the depleted state, executive power no longer exists; it does not have the legitimacy, organisation or finance to control and hold to account.

When linked to the earlier crisis of the state literature, the notion of the depleted state offers considerable scope for informing debates regarding executive politics. It moves beyond a focus on how 'states' are (un)able to deal with financial markets and turns attention towards the structural resources and constraints that shape the way in which executives are confronted by and address challenges posed by legitimisation as well as

organisational and financial resources. The field of executive politics does so by empha-sising the importance of perennial challenges that affect governing capacity, for example the way in which politics and bureaucracy interact, or the prerequisites and operation of particular policy interventions. It further contributes to discussions regarding capacity through its sensitivity towards side-effects and unintended consequences in any form of social organisation.

In conclusion, the implications of an age of the depleted state require extrapolating existing trends and considering their impact on existing ways in which political parties organise and compete, governments form and collapse, politicians interact with bureauc-racies, and political and bureaucratic interventions affect wider societal developments. The study of executive politics investigates how actors within institutional settings address these challenges, which arguments rise and fall to justify interventions and how the mutual demands and expectations placed on politicians, bureaucrats and the wider politi-cal system develop. Thinking about the depleted state draws attention to the challenges of problem solving in the context of perennial debates in the field of political science and public administration, and thereby offers a more informed contribution to debates regarding the future of governing.

(*Accepted*: 22 September 2012)

About the Author

Martin Lodge is Professor of Political Science and Public Policy at the Department of Government and the Centre for Analysis of Risk and Regulation at the London School of Economics and Political Science. His main research interests include executive politics, regulation, and comparative public administration and public policy. Martin Lodge, Department of Government, London School of Economics, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE, UK; email: *M.Lodge@lse.ac.uk*

Note

References

Abbott, K. W. and Snidal, D. (2009) 'The Governance Triangle', in W. Mattli and N. Woods (eds), *Politics of Global Regulation*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 44–88.

Bezes, P. (2012) 'The Macro-politics of Managerialism', in M. Lodge and K. Wegrich (eds), *Executive Politics in Times of Crisis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 63–80.

Carpenter, D. (2010a) 'Institutional Strangulation: Bureaucratic Politics and Financial Reform in the Obama Administra-tion', *Perspective on Politics*, 8 (3), 825–46.

Carpenter, D. (2010b) *Reputation and Power*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Cerny, P. (1997) 'Paradoxes of the Competition State', *Government & Opposition*, 32 (2), 251–74.

Finer, S. (1975) *Adversary Politics and Electoral Reform*. London: Anthony Wigram.

Flinders, M. and Buller, J. (2006) 'Depoliticisation', *British Politics*, 1 (3), 1–26.

Froud, J., Nilsson, A., Moran, M. and Williams, K. (2012) 'Stories and Interests in Finance', *Governance*, 25 (1), 35–59.

Gamble, A. (2009) *The Spectre at the Feast*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Gilad, S. (2012) 'Attention and Repution', in M. Lodge and K. Wegrich (eds), *Executive Politics in Times of Crisis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 157–75.

Goetz, K. H. (2008) 'Governance as Path to Government', *West European Politics*, 31 (1/2), 258–79.

Habermas, J. (1973) *Legitimationsprobleme im Spätkapitalismus*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Hacker, J. and Pierson, P. (2010) *Winner-Take-All Politics*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Hall, P. A. (2007) 'The Evolution of Varieties of Capitalism', in B. Hancké, M. Rhodes and M. Thatcher (eds), *Beyond Varieties of Capitalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 39–85.

Hay, C. (1999) 'Crisis and the Structural Transformation of the State', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 1 (3), 317–44.

Hood, C. (1976) *The Limits of Administration*. London: Wiley.

Hood, C. (1991) 'A Public Management for All Seasons', *Public Administration*, 69 (1), 3–19.

Hood, C. (2011) *The Blame Game*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Hood, C. and Lodge, M. (2006) *Politics of Public Service Bargains*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jessop, B. (1990) *State Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

King, A. (1975) 'Overload: Problems of Governing in the 1970s', *Political Studies*, 23 (2/3), 284–96.

Klein, R. (1993) 'O'Goffe's Tale – or What Can We Learn from the Success of the Capitalist Welfare States?', in C. Jones (ed.), *New Perspectives on the Welfare State in Europe*. London: Routledge, pp. 6–15.

Klenk, T. and Nullmeyer, F. (2010) 'Politische Krisentheorien und die Renaissance von Konjunkturprogrammen', *DMS: Der Moderne Staat*, 3 (2), 273–94.

Lewis, D. E. (2012) 'Politicization and Executive Politics', in M. Lodge and K. Wegrich (eds), *Executive Politics in Times of Crisis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 41–62.

Lodge, M. (2008) 'Regulation, the Regulatory State and European Politics', *West European Politics*, 31 (1/2), 280–301.

Lodge, M. and Hood, C. (2012) 'Into an Age of Multiple Austerities?', *Governance*, 25 (1), 79–101.

Lodge, M. and Wegrich, K. (2011) 'Governance as Contested Logics of Control', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 18 (1), 90–105.

Lodge, M. and Wegrich, K. (2012a) 'Public Administration and Executive Politics', *Public Policy & Administration*, 28 (2), 1–18.

Lodge, M. and Wegrich, K. (2012b) 'Conclusion: Executive Politics in Times of Crisis', in M. Lodge and K. Wegrich (eds), *Executive Politics in Times of Crisis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 284–96.

McLaren, L. (2004) 'Opposition to European Integration and Fear of Loss of National Identity', *European Journal of European Research*, 43 (6), 895–912.

Mair, P. (2008) 'The Challenge to Party Government', *West European Politics*, 31 (1/2), 211–34.

Majone, G. (1994) 'The Rise of the Regulatory State in Europe', *West European Politics*, 17 (3), 77–101.

Maor, M. (2010) 'Organizational Reputation and Jurisdictional Claims', *Governance*, 23 (1), 133–59.

Matthews, F. (2012) 'Governance, Governing, and the Capacity of Executive in Times of Crisis', in M. Lodge and K. Wegrich (eds), *Executive Politics in Times of Crisis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 217–38.

Mayntz, R. (1987) 'Politische Steuerung und Gesellschaftliche Steuerungsprobleme', *Jahrbuch für Staats- und Verwaltungswissenschaft*, 1, 89–110.

Meyer-Sahling, J. H., Lowe, W. and van Stolk, C. (2012) 'Towards NPM-ization of the Post-communist State?', in M. Lodge and K. Wegrich (eds), *Executive Politics in Times of Crisis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 99–117.

Moran, M. (2003) *The British Regulatory State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

O'Connor, J. (1973) *The Fiscal Crisis of the State*. London: Macmillan.

O'Connor, J. (1981) 'The Meaning of Crisis', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 4 (3), 301–29.

Offe, C. (1972a) *Strukturprobleme des Kapitalistischen Staates*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Offe, C. (1972b) 'Political Authority and Class Structures: An Analysis of Late Capitalist Societies', *International Journal of Sociology*, 2 (1), 73–108.

Offe, C. (1983) 'Competitive Party Democracy and the Keynesian Welfare State', *Policy Sciences*, 15 (3), 225–46.

Parrado, S. (2012) 'The Executive at Work during Times of Crisis', in M. Lodge and K. Wegrich (eds), *Executive Politics in Times of Crisis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 197–216.

Roberts, A. (2010) *The Logic of Discipline*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Scharpf, F. W. (1972) 'Komplexität als Schranke der Politischen Planung', *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, 4, 168–92.

Streeck, W. (2010) 'Noch so ein Sieg und Wir sind Verloren', *Leviathan*, 38, 159–73.

Streeck, W. (2011) 'The Crisis in Context: Democratic Capitalism and Its Contradictions', MPIfG Discussion Paper 11/15. Cologne: MPIfG.

Streeck, W. (2012) 'Markets and Peoples', *New Left Review*, 73, 63–71.

Streeck, W. and Schmitter, P. (1991) 'From National Corporatism to Transnational Pluralism', *Politics & Society*, 19 (2), 133–64.

Teubner, G. (1998) 'Legal Irritants', *Modern Law Review*, 61 (1), 11–32.

Wilson, J. Q. (1990) *Bureaucracy*. New York: Basic Books.

Winters, J. A. and Page, B. (2009) 'Oligarchy in the United States', *Perspectives on Politics*, 7 (4), 731–51.

Yesilkagit, A. K. (2012) 'The Internationalization of National Bureaucracy', in M. Lodge and K. Wegrich (eds), *Executive Politics in Times of Crisis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 19–40.