

*'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.' 'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you **can** make words mean so many different things.' 'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master — that's all.'*

*(‘Through the Looking Glass’, Lewis Carroll; original emphasis)*

## **Introduction**

Humpty Dumpty was discussing semantics with Alice at the time, but Lewis Carroll’s observations regarding the attribution of meaning apply as much to the contemporary use of the construct governance as they did to Alice’s position on the word glory in Wonderland.<sup>1</sup> For in recent years, as scholars have grappled with ‘the transformation of political order’<sup>2</sup>, governance has emerged from relative obscurity to become perhaps the dominant heuristic through which the structuring and exercise of political power is made sense of in political science and its subfields.<sup>3</sup>

The droll characterization of governance as a ‘magic concept’ evokes something of the present status of the term.<sup>4</sup> Consistent with the attributes of such concepts, including that they are ‘very broad ... and lay claim to universal or near universal application’<sup>5</sup>, governance has become highly fashionable, and hardly anyone is opposed to it: who, after all, could ‘possibly prefer chaos or discord to governance?’<sup>6</sup> As has been written with reference to Kuhn’s phrase paradigm shift, governance seems to be ‘embarrassingly everywhere’.<sup>7</sup>

This paper reviews the political science research on governance in Aotearoa New Zealand. To that end it provides an overview of the vast international literature on

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<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Massey University’s Dr Aisling Gallagher and Dr Russell Prince, who arranged the eSocSci Governance Seminar Series at which an early version of this paper was presented.

<sup>2</sup> William Walters, ‘Some Critical Notes on “Governance”’, *Studies in Political Economy*, 73 (2004), p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Governance is an old term. The Concise Oxford Dictionary classifies it as Middle English from Old French.

<sup>4</sup> Chris Pollitt and Peter Hupe, ‘Talking about Government: the Role of Magic Concepts’, *Public Management Review*, Vol. 13, No. 5 (2011), pp. 641-658. The other magic concepts the authors list are performance management, networks, complexity and innovation.

<sup>5</sup> Pollitt and Hupe, ‘Talking about Government: the Role of Magic Concepts’, p. 643.

<sup>6</sup> Walters, ‘Some Critical Notes on “Governance”’, p. 37.

<sup>7</sup> Ian Hacker, ‘Introduction’, in Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012 [1962]), p. xix.

governance, and on that basis proposes a framework that is subsequently deployed to categorise the relevant New Zealand scholarship. A discussion of the characteristics of that literature follows, and the article concludes with a critical appraisal of the possibilities and potential pitfalls for research on governance in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Several caveats attach to the endeavour. Following Humpty, I am mindful of the stamp that different disciplines put on governance, and make no attempt to do other than capture something of the application of the term in political science in this country. Secondly, given the scale and scope of the international literature, the review of that *oeuvre* here is necessarily succinct. Further, I do not address at any length the reasons why governance has become so popular. Finally, and adapting an approach taken in the international context by Pollitt and Hupe, I use publication in *Political Science* as a proxy for the New Zealand scholarship. Clearly, governance-related research is published in other journals; a number of books published in Aotearoa New Zealand or by New Zealand authors do likewise; there are departmental and agency reports apposite to this focus; and our libraries contain graduate students' theses addressing various dimensions of governance. As the formal voice of the discipline in Aotearoa New Zealand, however, and as a repository of peer-reviewed work, it is appropriate for these purposes to concentrate the search for governance in *Political Science*.<sup>8</sup>

## **Making sense of governance**

### **Why governance now?**

Pierre and Peters provide one of the better accounts of governance's hegemonic journey.<sup>9</sup> In common with similar accounts it is based upon assertions about or observations regarding empirical developments.<sup>10</sup> Thus, to the extent that governance

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<sup>8</sup> A subsequent paper will broaden the search for political science research on governance in Aotearoa New Zealand, and will include publications in international journals. An initial scan combining 'governance' and 'Zealand' in author-supplied abstracts (Academic Search Elite/EBSCO; 2.10.12) generated 117 articles.

<sup>9</sup> Jon Pierre and B. Guy. Peters, *Governance, Politics and the State* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> Anne Mette Kjaer, *Governance* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004); Rod Rhodes, *Understanding Governance* (Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1997); Rod Rhodes, 'Governance

is an empirical phenomenon (and about that there is some contest; see below), it stems from processes of economic and political globalisation, public sector reform and devolution, financial crises of the state, and the demise of civic deference to traditional forms of authority. There is a normative dimension to the story, too: a questioning of the appropriate role of the state and a corresponding willingness to entertain alternative and decentred ways of arranging economies and societies.

In political science and its constituent fields – and in public policy and public management in particular – governance also provides a means of making sense of the public sector landscape that has emerged from nearly three decades worth of departmental restructuring, outsourcing and privatisation. The experience of new public management reform is context-specific, but in broad terms it has produced disaggregated institutional arrangements which encourage (if not necessitate) the creation of networks (of purchasers; of providers; of interests; of actors) which extend well beyond the political and administrative executive as traditionally conceived. Rowing (or central control), it is widely held, has made way for steering, itself a complex business given the advent of inter-organisational networks – within the government sector and across increasingly porous and indistinct state/non-state boundaries – within which policy is shaped and delivered.

And so, the narrative (which, to presage the latter sections of this article, is open to serious challenge) goes, government and governance are decoupled and the capacity of the centre to exert control is diminished. In the context of an increasingly ‘hollow state’<sup>11</sup>, the former is not the only – and may not, in fact, even be the dominant – actor in policy and politics. One particularly significant strand in this account, at least in the relevant community of nations, concerns the extent to which the traditional Westminster narrative of strong cabinet government is no longer fit for explanatory purpose. ‘Westminster’, in this view, serves as a smokescreen for distributed arrangements in which networks, markets and communities, rather than hierarchies, become dominant organising principles.<sup>12</sup>

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and Public Administration’, in Jon Pierre (ed.), *Debating Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> Rod Rhodes, ‘Understanding Governance: Ten Years On’, *Organization Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 8 (2007), pp. 1243-1264.

<sup>12</sup> Mark Bevir and Rod Rhodes, ‘Prime Ministers, Presidentialism, and Westminster Smokescreens’, *Political Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (2006a), pp. 671-690. For a New Zealand variant see Richard Shaw and Chris Eichbaum, *Public Policy in New Zealand: Institutions, processes and outcomes* (Auckland: Pearson Education Ltd., 2011), pp. 293-296.

## What and where is governance?

It verges on the trite to state that there are many definitions of governance. To the extent that they have anything in common, it is the attempt to explain if, how and why political authority is flowing from fixed institutional contexts (governments) to fluid and shifting assemblages of institutions and processes (governance). Between them Hirst, Kooiman and Rhodes alone identify 17 uses of the term (albeit with degrees of overlap).<sup>13</sup> In their own review of secondary sources, Pollitt and Hupe list 12 ways in which the term appears in the literature.<sup>14</sup> Equally, there are contrasting positions on the term's utility. Some may attribute magical properties to 'governance' (although Pollitt and Hupe are mindful of the ambiguity inherent in that attribution), but Kjaer calls it a 'weasel word.'<sup>15</sup>

It may well be that governance is 'notoriously slippery ...[and] is frequently used among both social scientists and practitioners without a definition which all can agree on'.<sup>16</sup> That does not, however, preclude a systematic approach to making sense of the concept. This can be achieved not via a search for a unifying definition (which would be an exercise in futility), but by focusing on governance-in-action: i.e., by examining the ways in, and epistemological purposes for which scholars deploy the term. In short, establishing what governance means requires locating specific definitions in contexts determined by the organisation of the literature. For present purposes, the method is to foreground the epistemological 'confusion in the literature between governance as phenomenon and governance as theory or analytical framework.'<sup>17</sup>

### *What is it? Governance as analytical framework*

Deployed in the second of these senses, governance is tasked with making sense of

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<sup>13</sup> Paul Hirst, 'Democracy and governance', in Pierre, *Debating Governance*, pp. 13-36; Jan Kooiman, 'Social-Political Governance: Overview, Reflections and Design', *Public Management*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1999), pp. 67-92; Rod Rhodes, 'Governance and Public Administration', in Pierre, *Debating Governance*, pp. 54-91. These authors are cited in Pollitt and Hupe, 'Talking about Government: the Role of Magic Concepts', p. 645.

<sup>14</sup> Pollitt and Hupe, 'Talking about Government: the Role of Magic Concepts', p. 645. They are: corporate governance, public governance, local governance, new governance, multiple governance, co-governance, institutional co-governance, collaborative governance, governance networks, hybrid governance, operational governance and meta-governance. And then there are the sub-sets, or variants of these uses.

<sup>15</sup> Anne Mette Kjaer, 'Rhodes' Contribution to Governance Theory: Praise, Criticism and the Future Governance Debate', *Public Administration*, Vol. 89, No. 1 (2011), p. 104.

<sup>16</sup> Pierre and Peters, 'Governance, Politics and the State', p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> Pierre and Peters, 'Governance, Politics and the State', p. 24.

institutional arrangements that are alleged to be in a state of flux. It frequently appears to be a noun in search of an adjective (see footnote 14), apropos of which a feature of the literature is the extent to which it is transacted in the language of networks. Rhodes articulates the orthodox position, placing self-organising and relatively autonomous networks at the centre of his definition of network governance.<sup>18</sup>

This conflation of networks and governance has been enthusiastically reproduced by some, but criticised by others on the grounds that it precludes consideration of other modes of governance.<sup>19</sup> (In addition to which, it seems odd to speak of autonomy in governance contexts in which actors are connected via webs of relationships, and networks of resource exchanges and inter-dependencies.) Thus, Kjaer, Kooiman and others take a wider view that governance concerns the management of public resources.<sup>20</sup> From this stance governance explains ‘the development of governing styles in which the boundaries between and within the public and private sectors have become blurred’<sup>21</sup>; it also describes the ‘frameworks within which citizens and officials act and politics occurs, and which shape the identities and institutions of civil society’.<sup>22</sup> A more explicitly state-centred definition presents governance as ‘the transformation of the state to fit [societies] of the late twentieth and early twenty first century’.<sup>23</sup>

Most conceptions offer means of making sense of the spectrum of governance modes, encompassing markets, hierarchies, networks and communities. Central to such definitions is the search for clarity on general patterns in the organisation of the contemporary state, and in particular of its shifting points of interface with non-state policy and political actors and arenas. One approach is to use governance narratives as conceptual means of illuminating states’ different administrative traditions and the institutional mechanisms that shape governing at the sub-national, national and supra-national levels.<sup>24</sup> Explaining governance as a series of modes also facilitates

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<sup>18</sup> Rhodes, ‘Understanding Governance: Ten Years On’, p. 1246. See *Public Administration*, Vol. 89, No. 1 for a comprehensive review of Rhodes’ contribution to the governance scholarship.

<sup>19</sup> See Kjaer, ‘Rhodes’ Contribution to Governance Theory: Praise, Criticism and the Future Governance Debate’, p. 104.

<sup>20</sup> Kjaer, *Governance*; Jan Kooiman, *Governing as Governance* (London: Sage, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> Gerry Stoker, ‘Governance as theory: five propositions’, *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 50 (1998), p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> James March and Johan Olsen, *Democratic Governance* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> Pierre and Peters, *Governance, Politics and the State*, p. 68.

<sup>24</sup> Mark Bevir, Rod Rhodes and Patrick Weller, ‘Traditions of Governance: Interpreting the Changing Role of the Public Sector’, *Public Administration* Vol. 81, No. 1 (2003), pp. 1–17; Carl Dahlstrom, B.

comparative analyses within and across time and space.

One or two observations might be made regarding the conceptual work on governance in the discipline. For one thing, a good deal of it is normative (even if that normativity is not usually acknowledged). That is most obviously the case with ‘good governance’, which holds up as exemplars certain structures, practices and processes. It is difficult to imagine any sensible person being against ‘good governance’, broadly speaking, but the specifics of its prescription may well be open to contest, and the ethics of its deployment as an instrument of foreign aid or development certainly are.

In addition, what are called definitions are often really descriptions of either empirical states of being or political practices. For instance, ‘corporate governance’ describes the ways in which firms are regulated, controlled and run; and quite apart from its normative undertones, ‘good governance’ is less a definition of governance than a checklist of desirable (for some anyway) attributes.

#### *Where is it? Governance as phenomenon*

If trying to define governance as an analytic construct is a little like ‘nailing a pudding on the wall’<sup>25</sup>, so, too, there is tremendous diversity in its study as an empirical phenomenon. Departing from the thesis that establishing the extent, contours and consequences of governance is an empirical matter, scholars have sought evidence of the fragmented, distributed arrangements proposed by governance theorists.

The empirical gaze tends to rest on one or a combination of three spatial sites: (1) developments at the supra-national level and their consequences for states (‘governance up’); (2) the ramifications of devolution and other developments in sub-national (regional, local and community) tiers of government (‘governance down’); and (3) the impact on the contours of the state, and on shifting state and non-state interfaces, of processes such as outsourcing, marketisation, privatisation and new public management reforms more broadly (‘governance sideways’).<sup>26</sup>

Apropos the hollow state thesis, which is assumed to hold in each of these three empirical theatres, some are sceptical that the state really has lost the capacity – both to steer and, when necessary, to row – that it is alleged to have shed, or that networks

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Guy Peters and Jon Pierre (eds.), *Steering from the Centre: Political Control in Western Democracies* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> Tony Bovaird and Elke Loffer, ‘Evaluating the Quality of Public Governance: Indicators, Models and Methodologies’, *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, Vol. 69, No. 3 (2003), p. 316.

<sup>26</sup> Pierre and Peters, *Governance, Politics and the State*, prefer ‘moving up’, ‘moving down’ and ‘moving out’.

are either as recent a phenomenon or as autonomous as they are sometimes made out to be.<sup>27</sup> Contra the received governance wisdom that the political centre has lost its shape, it has been noted that ‘core executive actors ... continue to reshape the state in order to (a) underscore what remains of their distinctive capacities, (b) foster new forms of selective and flexible policy intervention, and (c) ultimately, to reinforce sources and forms of legitimacy’.<sup>28</sup> And as to the latter, scholars have pointed out that networks have long been a feature of organised political activity<sup>29</sup>, and questioned the pluralist assumptions of those who argue that political power is equally distributed within networks.<sup>30</sup> For proponents of the asymmetric power relations model, the exercise of power within the core executive is a function of institutional location, and as such remains substantially asymmetrically distributed.<sup>31</sup> In other words, some contest the orthodox weak-centre (or hollow state) thesis and propose a strong-centre alternative.<sup>32</sup> (There are those, too, who contend that the governance narrative of attenuated state power exaggerates the power exercised by the post-war state.<sup>33</sup>)

An additional strand of empirical enquiry investigates the political and policy practices that populate governance contexts.<sup>34</sup> In this sense governance is transformed from a noun to an adjective, describing the conduct of and interactions between actors. The turn to governance has revitalised debates regarding the nature and structuring of public participation in political and policy decision-making and implementation. ‘Co-governance’, for instance, provides a contemporary optic on a debate with a long and distinguished pedigree in political studies. Thus, to the extent that a sizeable chunk of governance research focuses on identifying and making sense

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<sup>27</sup> Kjaer, *Governance*; David Marsh, David Richards and Martin Smith, ‘Unequal Plurality: Towards an Asymmetric Power Model of British Politics’, *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (2003), pp. 306–332; Pierre and Peters, *Governance, Politics and the State*; Walters, ‘Some Critical Notes on “Governance”’.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Saward, ‘In search of the Hollow Crown’, in Patrick Weller, Herman Bakvis and Rod Rhodes (eds.), *The Hollow Crown: Countervailing Trends in Core Executives* (London: Macmillan, 1997), p. 33.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Mulgan, ‘One Cheer for Hierarchy: Accountability in Disjointed Governance’, *Political Science*, Vol. 55, No. 2 (2003), pp. 6-18.

<sup>30</sup> Marsh, Richard and Smith, ‘Unequal Plurality: Towards an Asymmetric Power Model of British Politics’.

<sup>31</sup> Richard Heffernan, ‘Prime Ministerial Dominance? Core Executive in the UK’, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (2003), pp. 347-372; David Marsh, ‘The New Orthodoxy: The Differentiated Polity Model’, *Public Administration*, Vol. 89, No. 1 (2011), pp. 32-48.

<sup>32</sup> Martin Laffin, ‘A New Politics of Governance or an Old Politics of Central-Local Relations? Labour’s Reform of Social Housing Tenancies in England’, *Public Administration* (forthcoming, 2012).

<sup>33</sup> See Walters, ‘Some Critical Notes on “Governance”’, p. 38.

<sup>34</sup> Kjaer, ‘Rhodes’ Contribution to Governance Theory: Praise, Criticism and the Future Governance Debate’.

of citizen inclusion in its myriad manifestations, ‘governance’ has also shaped research agendas.

A common denominator in much of this work is that governance has lengthened the policy ‘supply chain’ by ushering private sector and civil society actors onto the stage, transforming ‘the governing state [into] the enabling state’.<sup>35</sup> Given that modal hybridity – rather than recourse to a single mode of governance – tends to be the norm, there are studies of the outcomes of the collision of different governance arrangements. There is evidence, for instance, of a tension between hierarchy and networks. Eversole discusses a specific instance of this, in which hierarchy and network governance modes are brought together in the context of community initiatives in Australia, only for the state to appropriate the initiatives and energies of communities to its own ends.<sup>36</sup> Such dilemmas are essentially culture clashes, transpiring when different modes of governance collide, necessitating the formulation of new rules of the game.

#### *Putting some shape around the scholarship*

An engagement with the scholarship in *Political Science* on governance requires some appropriate means by which the relevant contributions can be categorised. Table 1 constitutes one such schema. To varying degrees, the different uses and conceptions of the term noted above embody explanatory categories through which governance – whether as a sense-making mechanism or as an empirical phenomenon – is understood. In the present context three such categories are identified: rhetorical, structural and procedural.

The first of these is characterised by recourse to adjectives in order to convey a more precise conception of particular governance arrangements (‘good’ governance; network governance; local governance; etc.). Structural incarnations seek to capture institutional dimensions of governance that are, to a degree, exogenous to political actors. Scholars typically specify the level(s), or spatial dimensions within which the state’s authority has allegedly been displaced (‘governance up’, ‘down’ or ‘side-ways’, as noted above). Within those contexts the modes through which governance is transacted is a second major focus. These include hierarchies, markets, networks and

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<sup>35</sup> Pierre and Peters, *Governance, Politics and the State*, p. 13.

<sup>36</sup> Robyn Eversole, ‘Engaging Communities: A Critical Perspective on Public Participation in Australia’, *Politica*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (2008), pp. 299–315; cited in Kjaer, ‘Rhodes’ Contribution to Governance Theory: Praise, Criticism and the Future Governance Debate’, p. 110.

communities, each of which is characterised by more or less mutable boundaries within and across which policy-making occurs. The specific micro-institutional forms constituting the contexts in which governance practices are played out also attract scholars' attention.

On the governance 'field of play' circumscribed by these structural dimensions, the procedural (or dynamic) characteristics of political actors' interactions are also stressed. The focus might be on the rules of the game – formal and informal – which give shape to these exchanges, or on the political practices that are engaged in and associated with different governance arrangements. Finally, governance outcomes are beginning to attract scholarly attention. Outcomes are not, in this context, understood as the results of policy implementation, but rather as the consequences of the collision, intersection or interplay between, for instance, different modes of governance.

**Table 1:** Making sense of governance

<b>Explanatory categories</b>		<b>Exemplars</b>
<b>rhetorical</b>	conception	network governance; 'good' governance; etc.
<b>structural</b>	level modes form	governance up, down and or side-ways hierarchy; markets; networks; communities public agency; firm; boards; trusts (private/charitable); etc.
<b>procedural</b>	rules practices outcomes	formal (e.g. regulation) and informal (e.g. conventions) information provision; consultation; co-management; etc. co-option; displacement; etc.

All heuristics have limitations. Table 1, for instance, might be read as inferring that modes of governance exist in isolation from wider structural contexts (when, of course, policy actors interact in different modes which stretch both vertically and horizontally), or that levels of governance are somehow discrete (when supra-national developments have consequences for what happens at national and sub-national levels). There is no suggestion, then, that Table 1 captures all possible dimensions of governance. Its purpose, rather, is to facilitate a systematic evaluation of the literature.

## **Close to home: the governance scholarship in *Political Science***

If governance concerns the transformation of the state in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, what do we know about that process here in Aotearoa New Zealand? If it has to do with a changing world of governing, what does that look like in our part of the world? In short, as a community of scholars, what have we done to make sense of governance here at home?

### **Method**

Following Pollitt and Hupe, who sought an indication of the prevalence of their ‘magic concepts’ by searching the titles of five leading public administration journals over a five year period (2004-2008)<sup>37</sup>, I looked in *Political Science* for evidence of New Zealand political science research on governance.<sup>38</sup> A bibliometric search for the words ‘governance’ and ‘Zealand’ in the titles of all items published in the journal between 1948 and 2012 generated a single article<sup>39</sup>; the same search using article abstracts turned up nine results. That number climbed to 143 when the search was expanded to ‘all fields’. Following the removal of 69 book reviews, 15 articles that contain no substantive New Zealand-related content, a further 15 in which the term governance only appears in cited references, and two editorials which allude to governance only in passing, 42 sources – 39 peer-reviewed articles, two review essays and one substantive research note – remained under consideration.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Curiously, *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration and Institutions* was not one of them.

<sup>38</sup> The search was undertaken on 5.10.12 using the journal’s website.

<sup>39</sup> Christine Cheyne, ‘Changing Local Political Leadership: The New Zealand Mayor in Contemporary Local Governance’, *Political Science*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (2004), pp. 51-64. Searching for ‘governance’ only in titles generated nine results: five book reviews (none of which concerned books focusing primarily on New Zealand), and four articles (each of which was captured in the final sample).

<sup>40</sup> The contents of some 33 of which primarily concern Aotearoa New Zealand. Those 42 sources represented approximately 11% of all articles published in the journal between September 1948 and June 2012.

## The work on governance thus far

### *General characteristics*

The first mention of governance in this sample is in 1989<sup>41</sup>, but the study of governance really begins in earnest in the 1990s: while the term appeared in only two articles across the 1980s, it featured in 10 publications between 1990-1999, in 23 between 2000-2009, and since 2009 it has surfaced in seven articles.

In total, governance is used on 255 occasions in the abstracts and bodies of the articles surveyed.<sup>42</sup> One publication alone, however, accounts for nearly a third of that quantum ( $n=77$ )<sup>43</sup>; thus, the median ( $n=2$ ) and mode ( $n=1$ ) provide a more accurate sense of its presence across the sample. As to the substantive foci of the articles in which the construct is deployed, all bar 12 uses of governance (in six articles) are accounted for in one or more of five over-arching categories: MMP, core executive, local government, Māori and climate change.<sup>44</sup>

The published record in *Political Science* has a particular character: in each of the 42 sources reviewed here governance has a decidedly applied character. None interrogates the term as an analytical construct at any length. Mulgan comes closest, but his interest in governance is secondary to a primary concern with accountability under conditions of distributed government.<sup>45</sup> Empirical concerns dominate proceedings: relations between local authorities and their communities – and between central and local government institutions – feature prominently; so, too, do Māori/state relationships, and the various ramifications of the advent of proportional representation for the structure and functioning of the political executive.

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<sup>41</sup> Leslie Lipson, 'Power, Principles and Democracy', *Political Science*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (1989), pp. 1-17. The very first use of governance in *Political Science* is in 1953 (Glendon Schubert, 'The Politics of Legislative Procedure', *Political Science*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1959), pp. 16-29), but Schubert's article concerns legislative procedures in the United States Congress.

<sup>42</sup> The objective is to gauge the ways in which scholars put governance to work. Therefore, while the count includes use of the term in explanatory footnotes, it excludes its appearance in the titles of articles, lists of keywords and in references cited by authors.

<sup>43</sup> Edward Weber, 'Facing and Managing Climate Change: Assumptions, Science, and Governance Responses', *Political Science*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (2008), pp. 133-149.

<sup>44</sup> The category 'MMP' provides the backdrop for considerations of electoral outcomes, including government formation and political parties' adaptation to electoral system change (including leadership and candidate selection considerations). 'Core executive' captures coalition government operations and political/administrative executive relations. 'Local government' also provides the context for normative and descriptive analyses of participatory democracy. 'Māori' captures references to the Treaty of Waitangi, which often frames the analysis of Māori/state relations. 'Climate change' is a discrete category but also constitutes the context for articles concerning environmental politics.

<sup>45</sup> Mulgan, 'One Cheer for Hierarchy: Accountability in Disjointed Governance'. That Mulgan uses the term only once in the body of the article reflects his concern with its uncritical overuse.

Little surprise, then, that explicit definitions of governance in any of its various guises are thin on the ground. A sense of what is meant can occasionally be inferred from the context in which the construct is used. Cheyne for example, refers to ‘governance processes that facilitate a partnership between politicians, bureaucrats and citizens’.<sup>46</sup> But formal definitions are rare. One such characterises local governance as ‘where political activities extend beyond the institution of ‘local government’ to encompass non-governmental institutions and networks of institutional actors’.<sup>47</sup> More recently, Keman defines good governance as ‘a party government that is ‘responsive’ and ‘accountable’’.<sup>48</sup> There are very few others. Overwhelmingly, governance is simply put to work.

### *Rhetorical governance*

A careful trawl through the New Zealand literature reveals a good many different conceptions of governance. Pollitt and Hupe list the following adjectives in common circulation: good, corporate, public, local, new, multiple; co-, institutional, collaborative, hybrid, meta- and operational. Other dominant conceptions in the international literature include network governance and multi-level governance. Of those, good, public, local, co-governance and collaborative appear in the work sampled used here. Most of these (including public governance, co-governance and collaborative governance) appear only once. ‘Good governance’ features nine times (and in eight articles). It is used variously in relation to the World Bank and overseas aid regimes<sup>49</sup>; in connection with particular practices<sup>50</sup>; and as a synonym for government and its duties to citizens.<sup>51</sup>

There are one or two surprises. ‘Network governance’ (and variations thereof) does not appear at all; neither does ‘market governance’ (or ‘governance by markets’). The

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<sup>46</sup> Christine Cheyne, ‘After Consultation: The Challenge Facing Democratic Governance’, *Political Science*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (1999), p. 219.

<sup>47</sup> Cheyne, ‘Changing Local Political Leadership: The New Zealand Mayor in Contemporary Governance’, p. 51.

<sup>48</sup> Hans Keman, ‘Patterns of multi-party government: Viability and compatibility of coalitions’, *Political Science*, Vol 63, No. 1 (2011), p. 11.

<sup>49</sup> Jon Barnett, ‘The Effect of Aid On Capacity To Adapt To Climate Change: Insights From Nuie’, *Political Science*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (2008), pp. 31-45; Ton Buhrs, ‘New Zealand’s Capacity for Green Planning: a Political-Institutional Assessment’, *Political Science*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (2002), pp. 27-46.

<sup>50</sup> Cheyne, ‘Changing Local Political Leadership: The New Zealand Mayor in Contemporary Governance’.

<sup>51</sup> Michael Gibbs, ‘The Selwyn By-election’, *Political Science*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (1995), pp. 59-68; John Jeffries, ‘Commentary: The Press Council and Freedom of Speech’, *Political Science*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (2005), pp. 117-120; Keman, ‘Patterns of multi-party government: Viability and compatibility of coalitions’.

phrase ‘mode [or modes] of governance’ is used only once (by Lipson in the very first article in this sample), but in relation to plurality electoral systems and not in the sense it is used in the contemporary scholarship.<sup>52</sup>

On the other hand there are adjectives at large in Aotearoa New Zealand that Pollitt and Hupe do not encounter. They are: community, complex, democratic, dispersed, distinctive, economic, novel, radical and – not surprisingly – Māori and multi-party governance. (Māori governance appears less frequently ( $n=2$ ) than might be expected. Humpage uses it to describe something akin to self-rule, while Bargh’s references to boards, wards and trusts suggests a sense broadly consistent with ‘good’ governance.<sup>53</sup>) To labour the point, however, the default position is to not elaborate on the meanings of these uses.

Furthermore, governance itself is used as an adjective. Weber exemplifies this propensity, using governance as an adjective on 61 occasions and in 22 different ways.<sup>54</sup> Weber’s enthusiasm is not widely shared. (For instance, while he uses ‘governance responses’ no fewer than 23 times to describe responses by government and non-government actors to the challenges posed by climate change, that phrase is not employed by anyone else.) ‘Governance arrangements’ is by some distance the most popular form. It pops up 19 times in five articles, but the precise nature of the arrangements so described is typically taken as given rather than specified (the most common inference is that these are synonymous with the institutions of democratic and/or representative government). Boston is the exception, in a discussion in which governance arrangements are clearly those pertaining to multi-party and/or minority governments.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Lipson, ‘Power, Principles and Democracy’.

<sup>53</sup> Louise Humpage, ‘A State-Determined ‘Solution’ For The Self-Determination: The New Zealand Public Health and Disability Bill’, *Political Science*, Vol 55, No. 1 (2003), pp. 5-19; Maria Bargh, ‘Tiers of Confusion and Blurring Boundaries: , the Local Government Act 2002 and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)’, *Political Science*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (2004), pp. 65-74.

<sup>54</sup> Weber, ‘Facing and Managing Climate Change: Assumptions, Science, and Governance Responses’. For Weber, the possibilities are nearly endless. One can have governance as action, arenas, arrangement(s), authority, autonomy, capacity, changes, choices, debate(s), efforts, formats, institutions, interventions, policies, possibilities, preferences, regimes, response(s), scenario(s), solution(s), structures and styles.

<sup>55</sup> Jonathon Boston, ‘Government formation in New Zealand under MMP: Theory and practice’, *Political Science*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (2011), pp. 79-105.

### *Structural dimensions of governance*

In the main, the focus of publications in *Political Science* is consistent with 'governance down'. Only six publications are concerned with the nature and extent to which supra-national developments have ramifications for, say, New Zealand's foreign policy or for relations between the state and Māori.<sup>56</sup> Even fewer concern agencies operating at arms-length from the core executive ('governance side-ways'); the exception is Mulgan's assessment of whether hierarchies or networks offer the best prospects for holding governments to account.<sup>57</sup>

Rather, the governance lens is firmly focused on relations between central and local government, and between the state (both central and local) and Māori ('governance down'). The prospects for public involvement at the community level are explored from a feminist perspective<sup>58</sup>; relations between Māori and the state are probed<sup>59</sup>; a 'new relationship of co-governance between central and local government' is proposed<sup>60</sup>; and leadership styles at local government level are analysed.<sup>61</sup>

Little explicit attention is paid to the different modes of governance. Again, Mulgan stands apart: his concern with organisational structure necessitates an engagement with networks (which he also calls partnerships) and markets.<sup>62</sup> Those who focus on sub-national arrangements, or on state/ Māori relations, tend to eschew hierarchy in favour of networks and communities. Bargh, however, adopts the strong-centre thesis, and makes the point that the authority vested in hierarchy can be used to

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<sup>56</sup> Rod Alley, 'Analysts, Practitioners and Not Getting it Wrong: Some Implications for New Zealand's Foreign Relations', *Political Science*, Vol. 55, No. 2 (2003), pp. 62-74; Bargh, 'Tiers of Confusion and Blurring Boundaries: , the Local Government Act 2002 and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)'; Sheryl Lightfoot, 'Emerging international indigenous rights norms and 'over-compliance' in New Zealand and Canada', *Political Science*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (2010), pp. 84-104.

<sup>57</sup> Mulgan, 'One Cheer for Hierarchy: Accountability in Disjointed Governance'.

<sup>58</sup> Bronwyn Hayward, 'Participatory Democracy: Questions Raised by Feminist Involvement with Practice and Theory', *Political Science*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (1993), pp. 27-39.

<sup>59</sup> Bargh, 'Tiers of Confusion and Blurring Boundaries: , the Local Government Act 2002 and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)'; Janine Hayward, 'Local Government and : Talking Treaty?', *Political Science*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (1999), pp. 182-194; Janine Hayward, 'Mandatory wards in local government: Active Crown protection of Treaty rights', *Political Science*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (2011), pp. 186-204; Humpage, 'A State-Determined 'Solution' For Self-Determination: The New Zealand Public Health and Disability Bill'; Lightfoot, 'Emerging international indigenous rights norms and 'over-compliance' in New Zealand and Canada'; Christa Scholtz, 'Land claim negotiations and indigenous claimant legibility in Canada and New Zealand', *Political Science*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (2010), pp. 37-61.

<sup>60</sup> Mike Reid, 'The Central-Local Government Relationship: The Need for a Framework?', *Political Science*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (1999), p. 165.

<sup>61</sup> Cheyne, 'Changing Local Political Leadership: The New Zealand Mayor in Contemporary Governance'.

<sup>62</sup> Mulgan, 'One Cheer for Hierarchy: Accountability in Disjointed Governance'.

expand the scope of markets (through, for instance, central government's insistence that 'tribal governance entities restructure to become commercial organisations or private trusts').<sup>63</sup> Bargh is also one of the few to pause on the specific institutional forms in which governance activities are played out; she and her colleagues who address Māori governance or governance in the context of local authorities make specific mention of tribal governance entities, incorporations, trusts (both charitable and private), citizens' juries and ways in which committees and meetings can be structured in response to the imperatives of representation and/or enhanced public participation.

#### *Governance processes, practices and outcomes*

Cheyne's brief reference to the role of Standing Orders in specifying the formal rules of engagement within specific institutional contexts comes closest to an acknowledgment of how interactions amongst actors are regulated.<sup>64</sup> There is little consideration of the contribution the various 'new' institutionalisms might make to better understanding the bearing which formal and informal rules have on structuring actors' agency (although there are passing references to path dependency in the context of government formation and the durability of political parties respectively).<sup>65</sup>

In the ten articles in which they appear, references to governance practices fall into one of two categories. Most frequently, these concern the techniques or mechanisms via which relations between Māori and the state are structured and mediated. The ways in which local authorities have fulfilled their statutory obligations to consult with Māori are explored, as is the emerging practice of the co-management of natural resources by iwi and local authorities.<sup>66</sup>

Particular practices are also discussed in relation to boosting public participation in policy formation at the local level. Specific attention is paid to what occurs (or could

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<sup>63</sup> Bargh, 'Tiers of Confusion and Blurring Boundaries: , the Local Government Act 2002 and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)', p. 71.

<sup>64</sup> Cheyne, 'Changing Local Political Leadership: The New Zealand Mayor in Contemporary Governance'.

<sup>65</sup> Boston, 'Government formation in New Zealand under MMP: Theory and practice'; Gregory Stephens and John Leslie, 'Parties, organizational capacities and external change: New Zealand's National and Labour parties, candidate selection and the advent of MMP', *Political Science*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (2011), pp. 205-218.

<sup>66</sup> Hayward, 'Local Government and : Talking Treaty?'; Hayward, 'Mandatory wards in local government: Active Crown protection of Treaty rights'.

occur) in workplaces and meetings, and to different leadership styles.<sup>67</sup> Sometimes, too, generic (and generally under-specified) references are made to indigenous governance practices or to good governance practices.<sup>68</sup>

In the main, consideration of outcomes tends to the normative and aspirational. Governance is usually a secondary consideration (or an independent variable) to a focus on the prospects for more effective public participation through local government reform, or for enhanced social capital via ‘better’ governance. Bargh, however, in a rare analysis incorporating ‘governance up’, ‘down’ and ‘side-ways’, assesses what can happen when modes of governance collide. She observes a long-standing proclivity on the part of the state to shoehorn Māori practices into non-Māori governance arrangements and to commodify Māori governance by ‘insisting that tribal governance entities restructure to become commercial organisations or private trusts rather than remain in the form of charitable trusts’.<sup>69</sup> At one level this represents a New Zealand variant of Eversole’s finding that hierarchy can co-opt other modes of governance. But it also illustrates how the deployment of one governance mode (hierarchy) can consciously extend the scope of another (markets). (Not so much a case of the state steering, then, as rowing with considerable purpose.) In so doing, Bargh reminds us that all modes of governance are not created equal, and that the authority of the state is not as attenuated as some of the more enthusiastic proponents of governance might have it.

## **Reflections on the governance scholarship in *Political Science***

### **The state we’re in**

If ‘the value of the governance perspective rests in its capacity to provide a framework for understanding changing processes of governing’<sup>70</sup>, what has its

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<sup>67</sup> Hayward, ‘Participatory Democracy: Questions Raised by Feminist Involvement with Practice and Theory’; Cheyne, ‘Changing Local Political Leadership: The New Zealand Mayor in Contemporary Governance’.

<sup>68</sup> Cheyne, ‘Changing Local Political Leadership: The New Zealand Mayor in Contemporary Governance’; Scholtz, ‘Land claim negotiations and indigenous claimant legibility in Canada and New Zealand’.

<sup>69</sup> Bargh, ‘Tiers of Confusion and Blurring Boundaries: , the Local Government Act 2002 and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)’, p. 71.

<sup>70</sup> Stoker, ‘Governance as theory: five propositions’, p. 18.

deployment told us about those processes in our own back yard? What is our work telling us about the ‘state of the state’ in Aotearoa New Zealand?

A rowing–steering binary is often invoked in debates about governance. Typically this is used to assert the loss (or conscious cession) of the state’s direct control over policy-making and implementation, the corollary of which is an enhanced role for non-state actors in such process. There are few detailed empirical tests of this assertion, but what has been done suggests that we should not assume that governance has eclipsed government. The weak-centre/hollow state thesis is not borne out Bargh, for instance, who concludes that ‘[t]he vested interest for central government lies in their (sic) desire to ensure that Māori negotiate Treaty settlements exclusively through central government, which ensures that central government can retain strict control over the kinds of parameters for negotiation’.<sup>71</sup> Neither is it consistent with the conclusions reached by those for whom central government continues to loom over local government (in the form of, for example, recent reforms to local government legislation), or the evidence that while the state has devolved responsibility for service delivery, it maintains control over fiscal parameters. The demise of the state in Aotearoa New Zealand may be over-stated, and the empirical evidence that authentically autonomous networks now play a determining role in policy decision-making is certainly underwhelming. Networks, markets and communities have become important levers and locations of much policy activity, but government has not gone away.

### **Same, same but different?**

We have rhetorical and descriptive contributions to make to the international work on governance. Māori governance and multi-party governance are particular conceptions that do not enjoy wide currency beyond our shores. But the balance of the work on governance in this country is skewed: there is a solid *oeuvre* concerning sub-national government, and contributions using governance in the context of Māori/state relations are growing, but contributors to *Political Science* have so far paid little attention to the other structural levels at which governance applies. Neither are there

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<sup>71</sup> Bargh, ‘Tiers of Confusion and Blurring Boundaries: , the Local Government Act 2002 and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)’, p. 68.

many case-studies of the empirical particulars of different modes of governance, or of the specific institutional forms and practices through which governance is enacted.

Beyond the descriptive specifics of one or two conceptions of governance, then, the nature and extent of our contribution remains unclear. A possible exception concerns the case that governance in the context of the Māori/state relationship – which, insofar as it has consequences for the apportioning of political and economic power, and for the structuring of relationships between actors, is palpably a governance issue – is a qualitatively discrete category. To make that case, however, would require establishing that this is something more than a historically and geographically contingent example of one or other of the structural or procedural dimensions of governance specified in Table 1.

The case for the affirmative is that conventional analyses (or assertions) of the displacement of the state's authority tend to focus on the enhanced role of different types of *institution* (the Bretton Woods Twins, public agencies, local authorities, private sector and non-government organisations, etc.) at supra-, national or sub-national levels. But Māori are, in the first instance and prior to institutional expression, a *people*. Certainly, Māori/state relations find institutional expression in the form of, for instance, the Māori Council or the Māori Leaders Forum; further, Scholtz includes an historical account of the ways in which Māori have assumed institutional form in Māori land corporations, Māori councils and Māori land trusts.<sup>72</sup> From time to time new institutional possibilities (e.g. a bicultural and bicameral legislature) and practices (such as co-management) are also generated. But the people are prior to the institutions.

If this is to be considered a new level of governance, what might it be called? 'Māori governance' is an obvious candidate, but that term seems to be used to describe circumstances in which Māori are forced into governance contexts that are pre-determined by others, and required to engage in practices that might not be of their choosing. Perhaps, then, we might contribute governance 'within' to the established troika of 'governance up', 'down' or 'side-ways'. (It seems more comfortable to refer to 'mutual' or 'parallel' governance. The problem with the use of yet another adjective, however, is that it transforms a potential *level* of governance into another *conception* of governance.)

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<sup>72</sup> Scholtz, 'Land claim negotiations and indigenous claimant legibility in Canada and New Zealand'.

Conversely, there are two reasons why governance in the context of Māori/state relations might best be considered a particular instance of ‘governance down’ rather than a discrete category. First, the unit of analysis in conceptions of the different levels of governance is the nation state: it is the point of departure for empirically establishing the extent to which (if at all) political power has been distributed elsewhere. That calculus also applies to debates in New Zealand regarding the directionality of the reapportioning of state authority and resources to Māori.

Secondly, and more compellingly, to some extent the three generally accepted levels of governance have an empirical basis. The particulars remain subject to contest, but the terms ‘governance up’, ‘down’ and ‘side-ways’ are rhetorical attempts to capture changes in the distribution of political power that are embodied in evolving institutional arrangements. Conversely, ‘governance within’ – particularly as it might be manifest in parallel institutions – remains largely aspirational. On this it is difficult to go past Bargh’s assessment of the extent to which *realpolitik* continues to apply in Māori/state relations.

### **Future governance research in Aotearoa New Zealand**

Questions of categorisation aside, the institutional resolution of relationships between the state and Māori suggests itself as a site for future conceptual and empirical research on governance in Aotearoa New Zealand. A specific focus might be the search for an appropriate fit between governance practices (themselves infrequently defined in the published record) and the particular institutional forms – both extant and potential – within which those practices are nested.

The scholarship thus far points to a tension being played out on both axes – practices and forms – between state-defined or imposed arrangements and those determined by Māori. Extant cases, and the slate of future possibilities, might be plotted on a continuum moving from existing arrangements (which, Bargh argues, are largely imposed by the state) towards arrangements defined by Māori. It is wholly beyond the scope of this article to attempt such an exercise, but the issue does suggest itself as an important theoretical and empirical challenge for future researchers.

There are other prospects for empirical work. We have yet to fully test the weak-centre/strong-centre thesis, or to probe the extent to which government does, in fact, govern through governance. Regarding the latter, it remains to be established that

policy networks either enjoy the degree of autonomy they are often imputed, or that their workings are characterised by ‘collective self-management and modulated social adjustment’.<sup>73</sup> (Might it not be that networks tend to fragmentation and conflict between their constituent elements rather than co-operation and coherence?) And contra the orthodox assumption, whether the displacement of state power really is a zero-sum game (when it might conceivably be cumulative or positive-sum) also remains an open empirical issue.

More specifically, the extent to which ‘collaborative governance’ – which has emerged elsewhere as a major focus of theoretical and empirical endeavour<sup>74</sup> – describes practices in this part of the world merits attention. The recent Land and Water Forum is one instance of a collaborative approach to problem solving which would lend itself to theorisation through the lens of collaborative governance. Collaboration denotes a particular orientation to the art and craft of governance, and scholars looking for examples of the material application of those practices in specific policy sectors could usefully direct their enquiries towards the multiple environmental governance challenges confronting sub-national government in the context of increasing resource scarcity and conflict.

Finally, it would also be valuable to know something of the migratory path governance has taken to get here. It appears simply to have appeared, fully formed, and an account of its point(s) of entry into the political science (and public) lexicon and the bases of its appeal to scholars would be a useful addition to the literature. Such work might also assist moving from ‘franchise theorising’, in which a term generated in other material conditions is uncritically ‘down-loaded’ and put to work, towards ‘locale theorising’, in which imported constructs are re-appropriated and rendered fit for local purpose.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Walters, ‘Some Critical Notes on “Governance”’, p. 35.

<sup>74</sup> See Jacob Torfing, B. Guy Peters, Jon Pierre and Eva Sorensen, *Interactive Governance: Advancing the Paradigm* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>75</sup> Craig Prichard, Janet Sayers and Ralph Bathhurst, ‘Franchise, Margin and Locale: Constructing a Critical Management Studies Locale in Aotearoa New Zealand’, *New Zealand Sociology*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2007), pp. 22-43.

## Leaving Wonderland

But care needs to be taken. Governance is often used loosely, generally without explication and frequently as a synonym for other words. (A number of authors in this sample might have used ‘government’ or ‘governing’ instead of ‘governance’ and suffered no obvious loss of meaning; indeed, one or two might have achieved greater clarity.)

This is not to gainsay the contribution governance has to make. It is clearly being used in an attempt to capture something – some aspect or dynamic quality of governing in contemporary contexts in which the state is one (predominant) player amongst many – that is qualitatively different to earlier epochs. Rarely, however, do scholars pause to pinpoint the task they are asking governance to perform (or whether it is fit for that work): there are debates over definitions and meaning, at least in the international literature, but the term has not been comprehensively interrogated here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

That is in part a function of its inherent ambiguity. As Pollitt and Hupe note, magic concepts do not easily admit opposites; government itself is a central component of rather than the opposite of governance. Challenges also arise from the fact that the term is used in association with different orders of phenomena that may simultaneously be in play. Modes of governance intersect not only with each other but also with the different levels at which governance applies. As Bargh adroitly illustrates, Māori/state relations simultaneously find expression in state hierarchies, markets, networks and communities, and are played out in supra-national, national and sub-national contexts. We are asking a lot of one word to capture all that.

That is as may be, but the risks in the uncritical reproduction of the term governance merit more attention than they have received in *Political Science*. As a magic concept governance has a propensity to rise above the normative fray and escape inquiry. It can quickly become oddly apolitical, displacing an understanding of politics as a site of contestation and conflict with one in which politics becomes the search for inclusion (in the existing social order) and partnerships. In so doing, it draws attention away from, or can underestimate the extent to which the state still has the power to compel people to do certain things and not others. And there is at times an almost casual assumption that as power leeches away from the centre it flows with undiminished potency out to non-state actors (often represented as a unified

category). This latent pluralism rests on observations, or assumptions, of changed institutional arrangements. But the one (a reordering of the distribution of power) is not an inevitable consequence of the other (structural change): this is a matter for empirical analysis rather than assertion.

The opening sentence in Thomas Kuhn's seminal work on the structure of scientific revolutions refers to history's potential to transform 'the image of science by which we are now possessed'.<sup>76</sup> Governance does not so much challenge our heuristic images (of, for instance, globalisation or outsourcing) as subtly alter their normativity. This is what terms imbued with magic properties do if we let them: they work their magic; they transform and transfigure; and they make things appear otherwise.

In a sense, of course, that is exactly what we want them to do. Their purpose is to help us to re-imagine things and to 'glimpse ... new topographies of political authority'.<sup>77</sup> But magic concepts also create illusions, and uncritical references to governance can encourage a positive disposition towards phenomena that, in different rhetorical garb, attract trenchant criticism. Governance has been called 'the acceptable face of spending cuts'<sup>78</sup>, and there is a substantial political science critique (including in some of the articles cited here) of the processes, events and outcomes that have given rise to governance as an empirical phenomenon. Put differently: governance is a consequence of processes which, when called globalisation, new public management, privatisation or outsourcing are looked on in an altogether less favourable light. There is nothing natural about these developments. Far from being an inevitable outcome of some 'natural' and unavoidable process of complexification, they reflect normative choices made by and agency exercised on the part of elites. Bundling all that up and passing it off as governance is questionable social science.

Things can, of course, co-exist: it is possible to advance a critique of, say, marketisation and at the same time acknowledge the potential latent in the service delivery networks thus produced. Neither is it any part of my intention to suggest that governance is all smoke and mirrors. However, as a community of scholars we should problematise the deployment of governance, and ask questions of both the institutional arrangements sitting behind governance as an empirical phenomenon,

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<sup>76</sup> Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 1.

<sup>77</sup> Walters, 'Some Critical Notes on "Governance"', p. 32.

<sup>78</sup> Stoker, 'Governance as theory: five propositions', p. 18.

and the extent to which its use as an analytical construct masks those material conditions.

## Conclusion

The snapshot of the governance research explored here (a fair amount of which is not really research on governance at all, but work which uses the term to make sense of other phenomena) suggests that governance is still something of a minority academic sport, at least in *Political Science*. Nonetheless, there seems little reason to think that here in Aotearoa New Zealand we will stand apart from the rest of the world and avoid recourse to the term. Moreover, the particulars of its use to date are broadly consistent with Pollitt and Hupe's conception of a magic concept.

To the extent that governance is displacing other terms (government; institutions; organisations) that have given admirable service over time, a question is raised: if out-dated constructs are no less scientific for having been discarded<sup>79</sup>, why is an earlier generation of terms being discarded? What is the compelling case governance has to make and, as importantly, is that case being made explicitly by those using it?

The test is whether governance enables new questions to be asked, new research to be undertaken and new understandings to be generated. On balance, and notwithstanding the caveats noted in the previous section, there are indications that it does. Even if it is in need of refinement, the language of governance does have something to offer given the contemporary conditions within which political power in Aotearoa New Zealand is distributed. As a sense-making device, governance helps in the business of navigating through and within an evolving political order in which the chorus of voices is becoming more varied and dispersed.

It seems proper to conclude this article by reflecting on the possible consequences of the turn to governance for the discipline of political science in Aotearoa New Zealand. Kuhn notes that in the advent of a new paradigm 'scientists begin to behave differently, and the nature of their research problems changes.'<sup>80</sup> While I would stop well short of describing governance as a paradigm in the Kuhnian sense, it may well be changing perceptions of 'normal science' in the discipline. If, in empirical terms, political power in Aotearoa New Zealand *is* increasingly polycentric, there are – or

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<sup>79</sup> Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 3.

<sup>80</sup> Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 25.

there soon will be – attendant implications for academics and their work. It is no surprise that the bulk of the *Political Science* sources cited here accord centrality to developments within local government and/or to matters in which Māori play a prominent role. In a constitutional context in which the unitary state has long underpinned the prominence of research on central government, governance may well be positioning those whose interests might once have been deemed peripheral squarely in the centre of the disciplinary stage.