

CHRISTOPHER HOOD

Christopher Cropper Hood

5 March 1947 – 3 January 2025

elected Fellow of the British Academy 1996

by

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Summary. Christopher Hood was one of the leading scholars worldwide in public policy and administration. His analysis of what he named ‘New Public Management’ helped stimulate public management as an area of study after the late 1980s. The term quickly became the standard label for a set of administrative trends that spread well beyond academia into government, think tanks, international organisations and general public debate. His pioneering work embraced both broad theoretical insights, as with his development of a classificatory scheme embracing all the policy instruments any government can employ, and examination in fine empirical detail of the types of targets that governments set for health services. Some of it was developed in a UK context but much of it had an explicit cross-national comparative approach. His influence and importance were recognised through, among other things, a range of international and domestic awards and honours.

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Christopher Hood, who died in January 2025 at the age of 77, was one of the leading scholars worldwide in public policy and administration. His analysis of what he named 'New Public Management' helped stimulate public management as an area of study after the late 1980s. The term quickly became the standard label for a set of administrative trends that spread well beyond academia into government, think tanks, international organisations and general public debate. His pioneering work across the field embraced both broad theoretical insights, as with his development of a classificatory scheme embracing all the policy instruments any government can employ (Hood 1983), and examination in fine empirical detail of the types of targets that governments set for health services (Bevan & Hood 2006). Some of it was developed in a UK context but much of it had an explicit cross-national comparative approach. His influence and importance were recognised through, among other things, a range of international and domestic awards and honours.

He made early, decisive and original contributions to many topics in public administration. These include 'quangos', administrative doctrines, implementation, the topography of government departments, cutback management, the exercise of control in administration, the tools governments use to shape policy, regulation, measurement of organisational performance, the impact of different cultural characteristics, budgeting and fiscal stringency, the impact of doctrine on administrative and political practice, blame avoidance, the relationships between officials and politicians, and transparency.

Hood had a distinctive style of working and writing. He liked to advance his ideas through developing and elaborating typologies. One of his former students, Helen Margetts FBA, described how 'he would often draw a matrix on the whiteboard. The matrix would expand, the number of cells would grow, and he would be filling them in enthusiastically – and then he would suddenly stop and say “do you think it has got too complicated?” And I needed a tactful way to say “er yes, half an hour ago”'. His use of unusual phrases such as 'Trobriand cricket', 'Krakatoa', and 'multi-organisational sub-optimization', meant that they tended to stick in the mind of the reader. He liked to use somewhat unconventional examples too, to develop broader ideas. Jeffrey Pressman (1978: 734) noted in his review of Christopher's first book that 'beginning with a Dickens novel, he moves easily and unostentatiously to early Egyptian taxation strategies, to recent works on public policy'. His discussion of *The Art of the State* (Hood 1998) contains many references to ancient Chinese administrative practice, and he selected the UK Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 to understand broader reasons for the failure of regulation (Hood, Baldwin & Rothstein 2000; Hood & Lodge 2002). In his published work, the typologising tended to be predominantly a solo effort, his empirical work collaborative. In research collaborations he tended to take the lead and was an exceptionally active editor of collectively produced books.

Christopher liked to keep his personal life private, so the non-academic part of his *cursus vitae* will of necessity be confined to a few known basic facts – his Scottish heritage will be touched on later. Christopher Hood was born in Birmingham in 1947. His father worked his way up from the position of milkman to senior manager in Unigate Dairies. He was a pupil at Bromsgrove School between 1960 and 1965, and went on to York University to study for a BA in Social Sciences specialising in Politics and graduated with First Class Honours in 1968. He went on to complete a BLitt at Glasgow University in 1970. This was a two-year research degree; the PhD had not yet developed in the UK as a *sine qua non* for an academic career. He wrote his thesis on *Administration and taxation: the betting duties of 1926 and 1966* (Hood 1970). Later on, in 1987, he was awarded a DLitt from York for publications on public administration.

York and Glasgow had profound impacts on Hood's intellectual agenda and career, in large part through the influence of Andrew Dunsire (1924–2015) in York and William J.M. (Bill) Mackenzie FBA (1909–1996)¹ in Glasgow. Dunsire's main focus – the exercise of control over administration – and his original approach to studying it, with his emphasis on 'cybernetic' approaches distinct from prevailing sociological or later principal-agent theories, can be seen as a major influence on the subjects Hood chose to study as well as on how he approached them. Hood worked for Mackenzie between 1970 and 1972 as a research fellow on a Carnegie Foundation project 'Accountability and Independence in the Contract State', a project that produced the edited collection *Public Policy and Private Interests* (Hague, Mackenzie & Barker 1975). Mackenzie also offered Hood his first tenured job at Glasgow in 1972. To the apparent consternation of some of his colleagues, Mackenzie did not feel the need to advertise the job and interview Hood before appointing him. Hood admired Mackenzie's wide experience in government, his ruggedly tenacious 'generalist' stance in the face of a developing specialism in the social sciences, his eclectic use of a wide range of methodologies and insights from across the social sciences and beyond, his habit of leaving readers to reason out the consequences of what he was saying, and his commanding personality and presence.

Christopher stayed at Glasgow until 1986 but took several periods of leave. From 1977 to 1979 he worked with Dunsire at York on a Social Science Research Council-funded project on the 'Machinery of Government'. This gave birth to *Bureaometrics: The quantitative comparison of British central government agencies* (Hood & Dunsire 1981). He visited the *Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Forschung* in the University of Bielefeld in 1982 as part of a mammoth interdisciplinary project run by Franz-Xaver Kaufmann on 'Guidance, control, and evaluation in the public sector' (discussed in Kaufmann, Majone & Ostrom 1986). He was a senior teaching fellow in the Faculty of

¹R. Rose, 'William James Millar Mackenzie, 1909–1996', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 101 (1999), 465–85.

Law at the National University of Singapore in 1984–5 where, due to a glut of lawyers in Singapore at the time, the University was expected to provide instruction in public administration to law students (see Siedentopf 1973). In 1986 he moved to the University of Sydney to take up a Chair in Government and Administration, staying there until 1989 when he was appointed to the Chair in Public Administration at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

The move to the LSE nearly did not happen as the offer of the job coincided with the enactment of the Conservatives' Education Reform Act 1988 which was widely interpreted as ending the notion of tenure for UK university lecturers. Tam Dalyell, the Labour MP who knew Christopher from his Glasgow days, was especially vocal in raising the issue. As the Labour MP Jack Straw put it in the debate on the Bill: 'according [to a] report in *The Independent* ... Professor Christopher Hood, a leading professor of government and public administration at the University of Sydney ... had been appointed to the chair of public administration and public policy from next March, but his appointment was made six days after the day on which, retrospectively under this legislation, tenure was to be abolished. He has decided to abandon that appointment because the Government are denying tenure to university lecturers'. He was nevertheless persuaded that the chair was not insecure and he stayed at LSE for eleven years, albeit with visiting positions in Bielefeld (1989), Manchester (1994), Berlin (1995), Copenhagen (1995), Oxford (1995) and Hong Kong (1999–2000).

He moved to the Gladstone Chair of Government at Oxford in 2001. Between 2004 and 2010 he took on the major task of running the Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) Public Services Research Programme. This was a multi-million pound programme comprising around 50 separate research projects focusing on analysing the performance of public bodies in organising, delivering and reforming public services. It was a project that would have been dear to the heart of W.E. Gladstone, in whose honour the chair was named when it was created.

He retired from the Gladstone Chair in 2014 but joined the Blavatnik School of Government at Oxford as a visiting professor in 2015. His research work, of course, did not stop then – he wrote three books and many articles after 2014. His last major project, on the Treasury and Public Spending Control occupied much, but not all, of his research efforts between 2017 and 2023.

He died while in Scotland. His family had strong Scottish connections the best documented of which was the association with Speyside, where his great-great grandfather, Alec Irving, was foreman, manager and later owner of the sail-making operation serving all seven shipyards in the area including the Geddie shipyards in Kingston-on-Spey in the late 19th century (see Wallen 2019: 46, also mentioned in Chanonry Sailing Club 2015: Part 5). Christopher bought the old family house in Kingston when it came up for sale again after his return from Australia, and he and his wife Gillian divided their

post-retirement years between their home in Moray and their flat in Kilburn, north London, enjoying the company of their daughters Isobel and Christina and their sons-in-law and grandchildren. He spoke Gaelic, had an active interest in Scottish country dancing ever since he took it up while a postgraduate in York, and attended the Gaelic services at Crown Court Church of Scotland, Covent Garden, London. Christopher was active in the networks researching and promoting local and family history in Kingston and Garmouth, and his funeral took place at nearby Moray crematorium.

The work

The influence of Dunsire and Mackenzie can be seen across the wide range of issues on which he worked throughout his long career, from his first publications in 1973 to his last in 2024. Hood wrote of his debt to Dunsire and Mackenzie indirectly in his obituaries of them (Hood 1997; 2016a; 2016b) and directly in the preface to his first book, *Limits of Administration* (Hood 1976: vi). Here he also sets out the intellectual concerns that recur in different forms and in different ways throughout a large amount of his writing. He is concerned to set right the neglect of the administrative element in policy analysis. The ‘nuts and bolts of administration’ have a strong bearing on how policy is developed and implemented. He seeks to ‘offer a framework for analysing the administrative element and to show that such analysis deserves a more central place in policy analysis than it has received up to now. The importance of administration in the policy process is amply testified in folk-lore and satire; but there is no general framework, or even a coherent vocabulary, for discussing this in a coherent way’ (Hood 1976: vi–vii). Hood’s work has pioneered the analysis of the administrative element in policy and provided several frameworks for understanding it, and these have themselves served to attract more attention and research to the field. He has also added immensely to the concepts and vocabulary used to discuss the policy role of administration and developed innovative ways of empirically analysing it.

At the heart of his intellectual concerns is the relationship between structure and performance, both broadly conceived. Early on he argued that if the study of ‘the nuts and bolts’ of administration is to have any wider significance it needs to offer an account of the ‘structure-performance hypothesis’: that the ‘internal administrative “structure” of agencies’ shapes the way they behave and influence policy (Hood & Dunsire 1981: 21). He interprets structure to include not only the ‘skeleton’ of an organisation such as size, hierarchy and spans of control but also features associated with its personnel and political position, including the specialisation and attitudes to authority among its members, as well as its wider political salience, prestige and influence. Performance is similarly broadly conceived to include ‘constantly shifting’ indices. These cover conventional

variables such as forms of organisation, turnover, and staff morale. Yet he also considers performance as meeting ‘unacknowledgeable’ government objectives, which one can take to mean political objectives (Hood & Dunsire 1981: 244). This led on to an increasing concern with risk and perceptions of risk, though it was already apparent in his postgraduate dissertation (Hood 1970). His thinking on strategies for managing risk are perhaps most directly observable in his work on regulation and blame avoidance, but are ever-present in some form in his work.

Within this broad set of intellectual interests, it is possible to discuss four broad types of Hoodian analysis. The first includes the grand typologies. *The Limits of Administration*, *The Tools of Government* and *The Art of the State* (Hood 1976; 1983; 2000) present broad typologies which address very similar issues in different ways. They all focus on how it is possible to exert control over the wide range of activities for which government is responsible. Each sets out ways in which this might be done.

The second type of analysis is the empirical examination of widely-believed assumptions, whether held by academics or government itself, about the impact of different approaches to shaping performance. This is quite a diverse group. Some of these analyses supplied innovative quantitative approaches to the administrative dimension of policy, such as *Bureaumerics* (Hood 1981) and *A Government that Worked Better and Cost Less* (Hood & Dixon 2015). Others tended to focus on examining the characteristics of government strategies designed (or at least believed) to shape government performance, such as ‘New Public Management’ and performance targets. How were such mechanisms supposed to work, how did they work in practice and to what effect? These questions were the focus of his last book *The Way the Money Goes* (Hood *et al.* 2024) which looked at the nature, significance and impact of the ‘fiscal constitution’ on Treasury decisions.

The third strand was what could be characterised as ‘rhetoric’: the world of ideas, doctrines, perceptions and argument about government, how people do or should do their jobs, how they justify their actions to themselves and others, and how they persuade others. This covers, again, a wide range, from *Administrative Argument* (Hood & Jackson 1991) to the *Blame Game* (Hood 2011a).

The fourth strand comprises systematic cross-national comparative studies, many of which took the form of edited books, on questions such as fiscal squeezes and transparency and includes his work on the ‘bargains’ struck between civil servants and politicians, in *The Politics of Public Service Bargains* (Hood & Lodge 2006), which serves to underline the point that doctrines and understandings shape real world behaviour.

The grand typologies

The Limits of Administration was a kind of typology in reverse (Hood 1976). It began with a set of propositions about what would be needed for 'perfect administration'. It appeared soon after Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky's (1973) study *Implementation*, looking at the operation of an employment creation programme in Oakland CA, had sensitised political scientists to the notion that implementation was a political process and not just routine execution. *Implementation* was certainly not Hood's main inspiration, the issues raised and discussed were closer to those developed by Andrew Dunsire (1973; 1978a 1978b). Moreover, *Limits of Administration* developed themes that Hood had been working on for some time (Hood 1970; 1974; Mackenzie & Hood 1975). It starts with an ideal type: a set of structures and conditions that create 'perfect' administrability and then goes on to use it as a diagnostic tool. The requisites for 'perfect administration' included clear sets of objectives for policies, unambiguous and comprehensive instructions to put them into effect, a wide span of control for an organisation responsible for a policy, perfect information flows within it, perfect compliance with instructions from above, and the absence of time and financial constraints. The typology was derived from the classification of the things that go wrong in the implementation of policy through their association with deviations from the conditions of 'perfect administration'. These included 'external limits', a range of failings largely political in origin (such as vague policy goals), but his focus in the book was on 'administrative limits' and 'quasi-administrative limits'. The book goes on to diagnose and name different kinds of limits, including 'multi-organisational suboptimization' (too many cooks spoiling the broth) and 'categorization limits' (failure to specify clearly what officials should be doing) among many others. As his later colleague at LSE, George Jones (1977: 230), wrote, the book gives 'a checklist of considerations for administrators to ponder: it will not enable them to predict the winner but will help them make more intelligent bets'.

His *Tools of Government* (Hood 1983) focuses more specifically on what those who design policies can do to ensure that they can understand and shape the administrative and wider world around them. The basic 'toolshed', described as the 'NATO scheme', consists of the tools related to *nodality* (to a significant extent the ability to give and receive information), *authority* (the ability to give binding instructions and demand information), *treasure* (the ability to buy and finance goods and services), and *organisation* (the ability to give direct instructions to employees and get information from them). These four groups of tools serve as both 'effectors', things governments can use to shape their environment, and 'detectors', media by which governments can learn what is going on out there. He goes through a range of examples of how each of these tools are used and discusses subtypes of each. The fact that the typology classifies and does not explain

is something Hood picks up by exploring whether collecting and displaying different tools is any more useful than ‘collecting stamps’ (Hood 1983: 4). His answer, somewhat surprisingly, is that the scheme most likely has limited practical application beyond helping make sense of complexity, and possibly getting policymakers to think a bit more about what they are doing. It is the clarity and simplicity of the framework plus the fact that it focused attention on the *instruments* of government, looking at how laws, regulation, financial incentives and so on work across different policy areas and types, that gave it its appeal and arguably accounts for its enduring use as a focus for research. This framework has been at the heart of recent French scholarship in public policy in the work of scholars such as Pierre Lascoumes and Patrick Le Galès (2004; see also Halpern, Lascoumes & Le Galès 2021).

His *Art of the State* (Hood 2000) reflects the influence of the anthropologist Mary Douglas FBA² on his thinking. The framework he elaborated on here was presented earlier (Hood 1996). The central question posed in this book is not dissimilar to those of the *Limits* and *Tools* books: how do you exert something approximating control over an organisation as varied and complex as government? His answers reflect not only the need to incorporate ‘cultural’ variables – broadly the beliefs that those working in organisations have about their organisation and their place within it – but also the recognition that the tasks and working environments in different parts of government vary. Being able to shape what government does is not simply a matter of getting the right tools in place, but a constant process of management. Hood uses Douglas’ ‘grid-group’ theory to come up with four types of culture: ‘hierarchist’ cultures that rely on command and control; ‘mutuality’ cultures that stress collaboration and peer pressure; ‘individualist’ cultures that stress competition between individuals; and ‘fatalist’ cultures that stress the randomness of exposure to control and the inability of individuals to predict or resist it. The argument never really specified how these cultures could be determined empirically, whether they were a cause or consequence of different forms of control, or what the impact of any dissonance between control form and culture might be. The hugely significant contribution of this work was to expand the horizons of scholars to a wide range of forms of control (broadly conceived). Hood used these cultural categories frequently in his work (see, for example, Hood *et al.* 2004) and they influenced his thinking about doctrines, rhetoric and the governance of risk and regulation, discussed below. In the form developed in his *Art of the State* they were taken up by scholars in a range of social science fields making this book one of his most cited works outside those directly related to NPM (see below).

²Richard Fardon, ‘Margaret Mary Douglas, 1921–2007’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 166 (2010), 135–58.

The empirical studies

The theoretical typologies were, as all the reviews of them pointed out, exceptionally well illustrated with empirical examples that could be considered anecdotal. Yet Hood's approach to empirical analysis of the impact of administrative arrangements and ideas on policy was systematic as well as conceptually and methodologically imaginative. The empirical studies were also generally team or collaborative works. His first substantial empirical research collaboration was as part of the 'Carnegie Project', which aimed to bring together academics and practitioners from the world of business and politics to discuss the 'contract state', essentially the range of arrangements made to govern using agencies with varying degrees of independence (Hague, Mackenzie & Barker 1975: vii). Hood's contribution to this volume was two co-authored largely conceptual chapters with Mackenzie (Hood 1975a; 1975b), and a solo-authored chapter examining the arrangements for arts and media regulation (Hood 1975c). The project also gave birth to the word 'quango'. Although the invention of the term seems to have been a collective effort, Hood's use of it in a *New Society* magazine article is, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* makes clear, its first ever known appearance in print; immediately thereafter the term became (and remains) an enormously popular descriptor of these *bêtes noires* (see Hood 1973; OED 2025).

The York studies

Hood was not only exceptionally good at picking those he worked with, but also was an active, attentive and much-liked leader, colleague and employer. His early empirical projects, carried out with Andrew Dunsire, drew on the assistance of researchers at York, Suky Thomson and Meg Huby, who brought to the table the quantitative and research skills needed to analyse, as well as search out and code, the kinds of administrative data they were intending to mine. They did not start out as specialists in public administration or political science, but Hood and Dunsire picked them because their research and methodological skills filled gaps in their own skill sets.

The first big York-based collaborative project produced *Bureaumerics* (Hood & Dunsire 1981) which used quantitative data to classify different types of ministries and agencies, producing a series of 'faces of bureaucracy', an early form of experimentation with the kind of data visualisation that has since become more widespread. Facial features were presented as varying according to the formal characteristics of the organisation. For example, a big chin meant high spending on salaries, shorter distance between eyes and mouth meant higher proportion of senior to junior officials. Their final words appear to reflect some degree of disappointment with this elaborate exercise: 'three very

short sentences will be sufficient for our conclusion. Since bureaumerics did not exist, it has been necessary to invent it. Its potential applications are very wide. It should not be allowed to languish' (Hood & Dunsire 1981: 249).

The second York work was a study of the way that cutbacks hit the structure of government: how the reduction in civil service numbers by one-fifth between 1976 and 1985 was handled. Hood had published in the field of cutback management before (e.g. Hood & Wright 1981). In the book resulting from the York project (Dunsire & Hood 1989) a range of theories is explored using extensive data on budgets and staffing over the period: whether the party in power affected it, whether patterns of cutback reflected 'new right' self-interested bureaucrats, the nature of the programmes themselves including the political characteristics that might make some more vulnerable than others. None of them fares particularly well as an explanation, and the conclusion takes the form of a 'trialogue' between different views about cutbacks – an imagined believer in making the state leaner and fitter, one who sees leaner as less effective, and one who says that cuts and such like are more symbolic than real in their effects on bureaucratic performance. None of them scores a decisive victory, but the research casts a strong light on the process of cutback management and offered a strong debunking of the (at the time) quite widely accepted notion that bureaucrats were 'budget maximisers' (Hood, Huby & Dunsire 1984).

New Public Management

Hood's decisive breakthrough came with his work on 'New Public Management', in particular his 1991 'A Public Management for All Seasons' (Hood 1991), with 20,000 Google citations at the time of his death. Hood not only invented a term that was to go on to become common currency among academics, policymakers, think tankers and international organisations, and serve as a focus for debates about administrative reform in the 1990s and after, but also took the study of public management out of its niche in management studies and into public administration, political science, sociology, social policy, criminology and education among other fields. While debates about 'new managerialism' in the public sector, and especially the claim to bring private sector virtues and practices into the operation of government, had been going on for some time (see Gunn 1987; Keating 1989), Hood's contribution was transformative. This was only in part because he came up with a catchy name and set of initials to describe it (NPM). More importantly he managed to capture within his discussion of the term the range and inter-relationships between the different ideas and phenomena that formed NPM, the reasons for its rise, the internal tensions in what it seeks to achieve and the ambiguities in the concept, and in this sense it appears strongly related to the work and ideas he was

developing with Michael Jackson (discussed below) on administrative doctrines. Hood's 1991 article is still regarded as a definitive statement of what the whole movement was about.

Given that one central premise of NPM is that administrative structures and arrangements could be modified to produce radical changes in the performance of public organisations, it is not surprising that Hood devoted a lot of attention to it. Moreover, as Director of the ESRC Public Services Programme he structured a broad set of empirical analyses of the features shaping public sector performance, and NPM-style innovations formed an important part of the programme (see Wilson 2011). One of Hood's central concerns as regards the effects of NPM on performance was with the impact of 'targets' on improving services, the most important work on this was conducted while he was also directing the ESRC programme. In collaboration with an LSE colleague, Gwyn Bevan, he wrote three pieces on the systems of targets and audit of NHS performance that were developed by the Blair government. In a leader in the *British Medical Journal (BMJ)* (Bevan & Hood 2004), they advocated (following Jeremy Bentham) the need for unpredictable and random audit systems to counter gaming. In 'What's Measured is What Matters: Targets and Gaming in Healthcare in England' (Bevan & Hood 2006a) they set out systematically the relationship between what is measured and the impact of 'gaming'. Hood introduced the concepts of 'targets and terror' and 'synecdoche' into the discussion, the latter describing the problems arising from an assumption that good performance on the targeted subset of activities applied to the whole. They summarised their overall argument in another *BMJ* article (Bevan & Hood 2006b).

It is fair to say that Hood was a little frustrated by others' obsession with the term NPM and the paucity of empirical analysis surrounding it, and the work with Bevan certainly addressed this. Yet the question of empirically assessing NPM was most directly confronted in his prizewinning *A Government that Worked Better and Cost Less?* In this study he and Ruth Dixon examined a range of measures to assess whether initiatives such as Next Steps, outsourcing and private finance initiatives actually produced any appreciable benefits (Hood & Dixon 2015). The answer was clear: despite an exhaustive and judicious look for it, there is little evidence to support the view that NPM lives up to the optimistic hopes that hastened the introduction of such measures. If anything, there was more evidence supporting a negative verdict on the experience of NPM in the UK.

Regulation

Hood spent a large portion of his career on the question of 'regulation', a natural development from his concern with understanding forms of 'control'. In a joint article with Colin Scott, he defined regulation inside government as 'the range of processes by which standards are set, monitored, and/or enforced in some way, by bureaucratic actors

who are somewhat separate from units or bodies that have direct operational or service-delivery responsibilities’: processes such as audit, evaluation and inspection (Hood & Scott 1996). The ‘regulatory’ mechanisms he discussed in his article with Scott were not only a strong part of NPM but also to be found in the early York studies and the grand typologies, not least those of his *Tools of Government* and *Art of the State*. A significant part of the structure-performance puzzle involved regulation and as such it was at the heart of issues he had already addressed.

He was co-author of several books on the subject (Hood, Baldwin & Rothstein 2001; Hall, Hood & Scott 1999), and *Regulation Inside Government* (Hood *et al.* 1999) was especially innovative in developing an understanding of the cultures and rituals of different types of regulatory bodies. Together with Colin Scott, he set up the highly successful MSc in Regulation at the LSE, which took in its first students in 1994 and which has continued to be a global leader in the field. He applied for and secured (together with LSE colleagues Robert Baldwin, Bridget Hutter and Mike Power FBA) Economic and Social Research Council support to set up the Centre for the Analysis of Risk and Regulation (CARR). This cross-disciplinary research group at the LSE has served as a platform to take forward research in the field of regulation and to engage with regulators and other practitioners inside and outside government ever since. Even though he had left LSE for Oxford before it came to life in 2001, he remained a CARR fellow and an active presence.

Austerity and budgeting

Early on in his career Hood co-edited *Big Government in Hard Times*, focusing mainly on the post-1977 era of stringency in British government (Hood & Wright 1981). And at different times in his career he revisited the question of austerity, financial management and budgeting. *Cutback Management in Public Bureaucracies* (Dunsire & Hood 1989) looked at how UK government departments managed cutbacks in the 1970s and early 1980s (one of the York studies discussed above). In *A Century of Fiscal Squeeze Politics: 100 Years of Austerity, Politics and Bureaucracy in Britain* (Hood & Himaz 2017), the authors systematically explore government responses to austerity in the UK over the century after 1916. They start with a typology of squeezes (incorporating the severity of the squeeze and whether it was essentially a revenue or expenditure squeeze), examining how cuts in spending were achieved, by one big shock or several stages (‘boiling frogs’), and looking methodically at the economic and political consequences of different strategies in managing austerity. The result is a rigorous account of the range of political and economic difficulties in managing austerity and the highly uncertain consequences of all forms of its management – the sort of thing that historians and economists might have been expected to produce but had not.

The Way the Money Goes: Public Expenditure Control in the UK 1993–2015 (Hood *et al.* 2023) was Christopher's last big project. It originated in a call for research from HM Treasury, which needed to capture and preserve its own institutional memory of how (and whether) it controlled UK public expenditure. Together with his Oxford colleague Iain McLean FBA and Paul Johnson, then Director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, he successfully tendered for the programme. They went on to recruit two stellar research officers. The team soon discovered that the Treasury's institutional memory collapsed for various reasons, including the loss of its in-house historian and the transition from paper records to electronic ones, which were less comprehensive and more difficult to navigate than the paper files. Fortunately, the project had already planned over 100 interviews with serving and former officials and ministers. The latter category included every living Chancellor of the Exchequer (CX) and almost every living Chief Secretary to the Treasury (CST). Probably, no other UK academic could have secured that level of access.

At the heart of the project was a conception of the *fiscal constitution* as the set of 'arrangements for planning and controlling public spending and the associated levels of tax and debt'. The team found that the fiscal constitution survived very much as W.E. Gladstone had left it in 1866 after his service as CX. The former holder of the Gladstone Chair here paid his clearest homage to its inspiration. One of Hood's favourite two by two tables contrasted *political v technocratic* on one axis and *formal v informal* on the other. The book is a detailed account of the process of budgeting in the UK, bringing technical detail to bear on broader questions of political and economic management. The team found significant long-term continuities in the planning system, along with some more ephemeral changes such as the introduction and abolition of capital charges. There was intense gaming of the rules (the Ministry of Defence and Department of Health being two notable offenders). Some changes that were expected to have momentous effects did not (e.g. Resource Accounting and Budgeting). Others are likelier to endure, for example the use of autonomous bodies such as the Office for National Statistics and Office of Budget Responsibility to curb the Treasury's perceived habit of marking its own homework. The book won Christopher his third, sadly posthumous, WJM Mackenzie Prize in 2025.

The public expenditure book illustrated the profound truth of Goodhart's Law (see Goodhart 1975; Hood & Piotrowska 2020). Its most concise formulation is 'When a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a valid measure'. Or, as the old Treasury joke has it (Hood *et al.* 2023: 251): 'there is no fiscal crisis that cannot be addressed by swingeing classification changes'.

Rhetoric, doctrine and blame

Hood's fascination with rhetoric stems from his concern with the structure-performance hypothesis. The preface to his first major foray into this territory in *Administrative Argument* (Hood & Jackson 1991: xii) makes clear the 'iconoclastic argument ... that there is an alternative way to think about administrative "science", apart from the mainstream approach on the link between administrative design and administrative performance' that has 'a valid place' among other mainstream approaches. The approach was based on the recognition that there is no conclusive set of arguments about how to structure or design organisations, just 'doctrines': beliefs about what works well, and it is therefore important 'systematically [to] analyze the range of available doctrines, justifications and philosophies, to chart their dialectic and understand what makes them rise and fall' (Hood & Jackson 1991: 203). They categorise 99 arguments, many contradictory (e.g. recruit experienced people for administrative positions or prefer raw recruits and train them yourself), drawn from texts and articles including ideas from a wide range of sources, from Aristotle through 18th-century cameralism and 20th-century textbooks and reports. While he does not really come to particularly strong conclusions about what makes some doctrines more persuasive in some places and at some times rather than others, he points to the importance of finding good metaphors, especially important in explaining 18th-century cameralism and 20th-century NPM.

Hood also applied this approach in his *Explaining Economic Policy Reversals* (Hood 1994) – a book that tries to understand changes in approach to business regulation, nationalisation and privatisation, Keynesianism and monetarism, government spending, tax policy and the shift to NPM. He gives a degree of prominence to the role of doctrines or ideas in explaining the changes, albeit along with the other three main variables of interest ('shift of interests', 'habitat change' and 'policy self-destruction'), although characteristically he concludes that no single argument holds most of the answers.

The importance of rhetoric can be seen in his concern with blame, the subject of his inaugural lecture at Oxford in 2001 'The Risk Game and the Blame Game' (published in Hood 2002). The central importance of this strand of thinking and research to the structure-performance relationship derives in part from the emphasis he places on 'agency strategies – the selection of institutional arrangements to minimise or avoid blame, for example in choosing between direct control and delegation' (Hood 2002: 17). In his later book on the subject *The Blame Game: Spin, Bureaucracy and Self-Preservation in Government* (Hood 2011a), he looked at agency strategies as one approach among several. Perceptions of blame and exposure to blame and the strategies derived from them in shaping organisational performance can be seen in the book's central objective of analysing 'how blame avoidance shapes politics and organisational life and what

strategies the various players in “blameworld” from top-level leaders to front-line workers, can use to limit or deflect it’. The book sets out three strategies (spinning, creating organisational structures that deflect or lessen the likelihood of attracting blame, and policy strategies which pursue ‘safe’ options and thus avoid blame), and explores how they might be used by different types of policymakers (top, front-line, middle level, and civil society participants) in managing relationships with others (upwards, downwards, sideways, and outwards). The book mostly categorises and describes the different strategies in action, alerts us to the ubiquity of blame avoidance techniques, and sensitises us to look for the possibility that policy and institutional designs might reflect such techniques.

There is an interesting irony in his work on rhetoric, as pointed out by Andrew Gray (2012: 287) in a review of *The Blame Game*. Hood was a ‘master of metaphor’; for him they ‘are not mere rhetorical flourishes. They shape our reasoning substantively’, and metaphors ‘run through his prolific and seminal writings, including *The Limits of Administration* (most memorably the “fruit-machine” model of control), *The Tools of Government* (“toolshed” and “toolkit”), *Administrative Argument* (“from the leading edge to the lumber room”), and his seminal 1991 article in this journal on a “management for all seasons”. Hood used them to persuade the academics of the validity of *his* arguments, just as the cameralists and NPM enthusiasts used them to persuade their audiences.

The comparative studies

All of Christopher’s work was comparative in the sense described by Richard Rose FBA (1991) as ‘extrovert’. The experience of politics, government and administration from across time and space featured in his writings in illustrations, examples, ideas and data. His work on transparency, above all with David Heald, remains of enduring influence in the field because it is written with discussion and examples that apply or resonate across the world. Moreover, their discussion of transparency as three distinct ‘doctrines’ in the sense discussed above, each potentially powerful in their ability to structure institutions, policies and performance, marked a breakthrough in thinking about the subject (Hood & Heald 2006). Yet Hood also produced some key systematic comparisons of a different type: understanding cross-national variation in politico-administrative systems and using them to explore their effects. His international collaborations produced books such as his *When the Party’s Over: The Politics of Fiscal Squeeze in Perspective*, looking at crises in the US in the 19th century, in the early 20th-century UK, and more recent crises in New Zealand, the Netherlands, Ireland, Germany, Canada and Argentina (Hood, Heald & Himaz 2014). His *Paradoxes in Public Sector Reform: An International Comparison*

(Hesse, Hood & Peters 2004) looked at the unintended consequences of administrative reform in the US, China, Japan and a range of Anglophone and European systems, and he produced two major systematic comparative analyses of the remuneration and other rewards received by politicians and public servants across the world (Hood & Peters 1994; Hood, Peters & Lee 2003).

Hood & Lodge's (2005) comparative *Politics of Public Service Bargains* was not conducted as an edited collection but a systematic comparison in a more conventional sense of using cross-national variation to explain differences in politico-administrative systems. At the heart of the discussion is the notion of a 'public service bargain' – broadly what politicians on the one hand and civil servants on the other, sacrifice and gain in order to work together. The book highlights a range of conceptions of the relationship (and this itself can be seen another of Hood's 'doctrines'). Again, a typology is at the heart of this analysis, dividing two basic types of bargains: 'trustee' (with bureaucrats having great discretion) and 'agency' bargains (with bureaucrats as politicians' servants), and a range of variants of different types. The book develops and exemplifies the range of different bargains in different political systems (with a concentration on Germany and the United Kingdom where they conducted research interviews for the book), and uses them to explain key features of the politico-administrative system: the reward systems they produce, the conceptions of bureaucratic competency they generate, what is gained and received for loyalty, and what happens when these bargains are violated or break down. The concept of the 'public sector bargain' and its use as a variable explaining differences in politico-administrative systems is now very common in cross-national comparative work.

An evaluation

Looking over his career, the academic study of public administration, public policy and public management has changed radically. A significant portion of that difference came from his work. Perhaps the clearest way of setting this out stems from Frank Ridley's complaint, back in 1972, that Britain did not have a 'Crozier' – referring to Michel Crozier, the French sociologist whose 1964 *Bureaucratic Phenomenon* Ridley believed brought theoretical sophistication and innovation to the field of organisational studies and public administration. It is fitting that the best answer to this charge at the time came from Andrew Dunsire (1973: 209) who pointed out that Ridley's argument was essentially based on ignorance and a lack of imagination. There were important British pioneers in the development of sophisticated, theoretically-informed approaches to administration, but they happened to be concerned with the private not public sector. This was essentially a problem of British political science, and Hood's great contribution

was to fill that huge gap in the British study of politics and administration. Moreover, he filled it in a way partly reminiscent of his great influences, Dunsire and Mackenzie, not least by expanding on the key intellectual questions they also posed, developing his voice in a distinctive style of writing, and pursuing bold and confident methodological innovation and looking across disciplinary boundaries. The gap arguably grew harder to fill in his career than it had been at the height of theirs, not least because the sheer volume of material produced by social scientists since the 1970s. There is also the enormous expansion over the period in the range of social sciences considered relevant to management and political science, which now includes economics, management and psychology, on top of the traditional fields of law and sociology. These features make it exceptionally hard to produce innovative empirical and theoretical work without assimilating or otherwise acknowledging seemingly unmanageable amounts of work published by others. It is a sign of how well he has been able to fill this gap that his work is cited widely across a range of social science disciplines.

He confronted and at times helped generate a range of intellectual questions arising from a concern with the impact of administrative structures and processes on performance in its broadest sense – its political, economic and administrative consequences. Above all he brought about a rigour in systematising and theorising key questions that scholars of the field he entered, public administration, had hardly thought of asking in Britain at the time. He developed typologies and frameworks of analysis to ask, develop and answer these questions, and these not only stimulated research but also led the way for others, including his many PhD students and the even wider circle of those inspired by his work. Hood himself remained upbeat about the achievements of public administration over the years, and his effective condemnation of R.A.W. Rhodes' (1996) downbeat assessment of the achievements and quality of British public administration echoes that of Dunsire twenty-six years earlier (Hood 1999; see also Hood 2011b).

His penchant for typologising was not to everyone's taste. In his review of *Tools of Government*, Jean-Claude Thoenig (1984: 154) declared himself 'sceptical about the heuristic value of typologies – and this book is basically a presentation of a typology', and questioned whether it is 'fruitful for analytical purposes'. And he was not the only one to point to the limits of the typology approach in Hood's work; indeed such limitations are aired by Hood himself. Even so, Thoenig acknowledges that the book initiates and develops a fundamental and neglected set of questions: 'he dared to show the way' and the book is 'a bibliographical must'. The force of his conceptual distinctions was believed by some to lead him to gloss over some awkward issues, as Bill Jenkins suggested in his review of his *Administrative Analysis*, which aimed to be an introductory text albeit one with a clear overarching framework (Hood 1986): '[t]he book is nothing if not rigorous but, as ever, it may be rigor at a price. In particular, there is an avoidance of the sociological and psychological literature on rule-making and

enforcement, of the political dimension of public administration and of wider arguments concerning mechanisms of social and economic change. It is perhaps less that Hood is unaware of these issues as that their introduction may disturb the carefully constructed edifice of his analysis' (Jenkins 1987: 216). And several commentators have pointed out that the expositional style he uses to set out and develop his typologies, usually eloquent, erudite and with memorable examples, can be stronger than the evidence to suggest how significant any of the cells in them might be. Brehm (2010) asks, rhetorically, in a review of the *Blame Game*: 'he supports his argument with qualitative evidence culled from stories of government or bureaucratic malfeasance. The anecdotes make for great story telling, but are they convincing data?'

Christopher's contribution to academia was organisational as well as through the written word. In addition to his contribution to the development of study of Regulation through helping to set up CARR at LSE as well as his role as Director of the ESRC Public Services Programme, he served as a Head of Department of Government at the LSE between 1995 and 1998. In fact, his title was 'Convenor' and this term denoted the fact that the Department consisted of a range of sometimes fractious groups arranged effectively as silos and highlighted the complexities of the job and the conception of the role as chair rather than director. His Convenorship came in the middle of what appeared to be an especially fractious period. Christopher was widely regarded as seeking to calm down the rivalries within the different groups and among those who considered themselves as leading figures within the Department. Consequently, while a real peace was hardly ever in prospect, a greater degree of civility in the Department was achieved in his term. By managing the Department effectively (his reform of the secretariat, recruiting a gifted administrator to head it in Nicole Boyce, and his own systematic and effective administrative skills helped here) and keeping things quiet, he managed to keep the LSE central management happy and less inclined to intervene in Departmental affairs. Under his leadership the Department gained the top five-star rating in the Research Assessment Exercise. He led the British Academy's Political Studies Section (S5),³ and chaired the Nuffield Council on Bioethics, Working Party on Medical Profiling and Online Medicine. He also served on a wide range of editorial boards, grant awarding bodies and research advisory bodies.

His long involvement with the Civil Service College and the interest among government officials in his work meant that he was able to develop a series of academic-practitioner exchanges held at LSE together with the then Cabinet Secretary (now) Lord Robin Butler in the late 1990s. His *rapport* with senior civil servants served him well when he became director of the ESRC's Public Services Programme. The programme

³Christopher Hood also served 2008–2013 on the British Academy's Communications and Activities Committee and its successor the Events and Prizes Committee.

had to satisfy both academe and government. Some mandarins had been very suspicious of previous academic trends in political science, which had featured in an earlier large ESRC programme on UK public administration. As one who spoke the languages of both communities, Christopher was ideally placed to restore relationships. All projects in the programme were expected to make poster presentations to audiences of senior civil servants. He was diplomatic and respectful when presenting his own findings to senior officials but never shied away from being critical. That his criticisms were taken seriously was exemplified by a specially convened ‘Oxford-Cambridge lunch’ at which a senior Cabinet Office civil servant tried to convey what a ‘big mess’ the critical stance in the work on dangerous dogs had caused for officials working on a ‘better regulation’ initiative.

He attracted many honours and awards in his career. He was elected to a Fellowship of the British Academy in 1996, appointed to the Sunningdale Institute in 2007, and elected to the US National Academy of Public Administration in 2010. In 2021 he won the John Gaus Award from the American Political Science Association for a ‘lifetime of exemplary scholarship in the joint tradition of political science and public administration’. His John Gaus Award Lecture, ‘Public Administration and the War Against COVID’, had to be delivered online from his London flat because of the COVID-19 travel restrictions at the time (see Hood 2022). His writings attracted a range of prizes including the Political Studies Association WJM Mackenzie Book Prize (three times: for *The Art of the State* in 1998, *A Government that Worked Better and Cost Less* in 2015, and *Where the Money Goes* in 2025). *A Government that Worked Better* was also awarded the 2015 Brownlow book prize by the United States National Academy of Public Administration. He was appointed CBE in 2011.

He was also a dedicated and effective teacher, initiating, developing, running and teaching courses on undergraduate, postgraduate as well as executive education programmes, and as guest lecturer at the Civil Service College and the National Audit Office. He took his teaching very seriously and prepared for each lecture quite meticulously, not just with lecture slides and later PowerPoints, but also with detailed notes covering any issues or questions likely to arise. He once told a colleague that the best indicator of a good seminar was communication among students rather than with the person in front of them, and he planned meticulously to make it happen, including setting out games where one could only really play by applying one’s knowledge of the literature and by providing newspaper cuttings to link concepts and theories to issues and debates from contemporary life and politics. The planning and writing of lectures and classes was done afresh each year. His influence lives in part through many of his PhD students – his *curriculum vitae* names eighteen but that is not a complete list – who occupy chairs in Harvard, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Hertie School in Berlin and many other leading universities. *Si monumentum requiris, circumspice.*

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