

Dr Michael Stephen Cole

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PROFILE

I am a governance and public administration specialist at the University of Liverpool Management School, where I have taught and researched since 2007. My work asks how power is structured, exercised and — above all — held to account: from quangos and the modernisation of British local government to UK devolution and committee scrutiny, and latterly to public leadership in China and the net-zero agenda. I have published over ninety research outputs, supervise doctoral research across these fields, and collaborate with colleagues in the UK and China.

CURRENT APPOINTMENT

2018–present	Senior Lecturer in Organisation and Management University of Liverpool Management School, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.
2007–2018	Lecturer, University of Liverpool Management School.

EDUCATION

2008	PhD , University of Plymouth (LGC Elections Centre). Thesis: <i>Accountability and Democracy in the New Local Governance</i> (supervisor: Prof. Michael Thrasher).
1991	MPhil , University of Southampton. Thesis: <i>Quasi-Government: The Issue of Accountability</i> (supervisor: Prof. Dilys Hill).
1990	MSc in Information Science, City University.
1985	BSc (Hons) in Politics (Upper Second), University of Southampton.
2009	Certificate of Professional Studies (Distinction), University of Liverpool.

PREVIOUS ACADEMIC & RESEARCH APPOINTMENTS

2001–2003	Research Associate, Department of Sociology, University of Plymouth.
1999–2001	Research Fellow, Department of Politics, University of Exeter.
1998–1999	Research Associate, Department of Politics, University of Northumbria.
1994–1997	Research Fellow, Business School, University of Glamorgan.
2003–2007	Independent consultancy on councillor allowances, alongside doctoral study.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- **Governance, Public Administration & Local Government.** The accountability of quangos and quasi-government, and the modernisation of British local government — executive and scrutiny reforms, member allowances, councillor roles and local elections.
- **Devolution, Scrutiny & Constitutional Reform.** How devolution reshaped the way legislatures

hold the executive to account — committee scrutiny in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, studied comparatively and across constitutional settings.

■ **Public Leadership & Governance in China.** Provincial perspectives on the promotion and performance of political leaders, the Chinese stock market, and the state’s use of social media — much of it with Dr Jiajing Sun.

■ **Net Zero, Innovation & Decarbonization.** Global, comparative work on the links between innovation, governmental capability and CO₂ emissions, and on decarbonization as the ‘ultimate super-wicked problem’.

■ **Students’ Unions, Workplace & Higher Education.** The changing functions of university students’ unions in UK and comparative perspective, and the ‘shared workplace’ agenda.

Recurring threads also include the NHS, the UK Parliament, national and regional elections, and the UK Civil Service.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

‘Cole’ is shown in bold. The complete record of 93 outputs appears in the appendix below.

Jiang, W., Sun, J., **Cole**, M., & Zhang, Y. (2026). Virtual water in global supply chains: Trade structure, industrial composition, and policy levers. *Ecological Economics*, 248, 109068. doi:10.1016/j.ecolecon.2026.109068

Cole, M., Sun, J., Jiang, W., & Zang, L. (2025). Governmental Capabilities and Responsiveness: Global Investigations into CO₂ Emissions and Decarbonization. The ultimate super wicked problem! *International Journal of Public Administration*, 48(8), 532–550. doi:10.1080/01900692.2024.2386271

Smith, A., **Cole**, M., & Küsters, A. (2024). How do speaker characteristics influence use of rhetorical history? Insights from text mining analysis of discourse about Brexit. *Management and Organizational History*, 19(4), 249–281. doi:10.1080/17449359.2024.2436377

Jiang, W., **Cole**, M., Sun, J., & Wang, S. (2022). Innovation, carbon emissions and the pollution haven hypothesis: Climate capitalism and global re-interpretations. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 307, 114465. doi:10.1016/j.jenvman.2022.114465

Shao, C., Guan, X., Sun, J., **Cole**, M., & Liu, G. (2022). Social media interactions between government and the public: A Chinese case study of government WeChat official accounts on information related to COVID-19. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 955376. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2022.955376

Sun, J., **Cole**, M., Huang, Z., & Wang, S. (2019). Chinese leadership: Provincial perspectives on promotion and performance. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 37(4), 750–772. doi:10.1177/2399654418791580

Guan, L., **Cole**, M., & Worthington, F. (2016). University students’ unions: changing functions, a UK and comparative perspective. *Studies in Higher Education*, 41(12), 2095–2109. doi:10.1080/03075079.2015.1010076

Cole, M. (2014). Devolution and the enhancement of scrutiny: A case study of the committees of the National Assembly for Wales. *Public Policy and Administration*, 29(1), 3–20. doi:10.1177/0952076713494218

TEACHING

2025–26 **Current modules** (Module Co-ordinator): Government and Business (ULMS205, undergraduate); Government and Business (ULMS530, postgraduate); The Formal and Informal Institutions of Public Administration and Governance (POLI557, postgraduate).

2007– **Selected modules taught:** Multi-Level Governance and Administration (MPA); Public Policy (MPA); Comparative Local Government; EU and Business; Globalization, Global Governance and the Global Economy; the ULMS Placement Year. Regular supervisor of postgraduate dissertations since 2008.

DOCTORAL SUPERVISION

Current **First supervisor:** Yuchen Xiao — political and economic integration in the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area; Prabowo Imansantosa — supreme audit institutions and anti-corruption in Indonesia; Diana Madibekova — big business and peace (since 2023).

Completed Lu Guan (2012, first supervisor) — university students’ unions, leading to an article in *Studies in Higher Education*; Yidan Liu (2021, second supervisor) — fiscal decentralization in China.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE & LEADERSHIP

Memberships	Political Studies Association of the UK (member since 2000); Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (2018).
University	Chair, ULMS Undergraduate Exam Board (2018–19); Postgraduate Assessment Officer (2012–14); Deputy Programme Director, MPA (2009–12); ULMS Ethics Committee (2008–23).
Examining	External Examiner, BSc Management, University of Leicester (2021–24); External Examiner (PhD, local government), Teesside University (2017, 2019); course validation, De Montfort University (2017); internal PhD examiner, University of Liverpool (2009, 2019).
Esteem	Judge, Walter Bagehot Prize, Political Studies Association (2022); invited speaker, PSA Conference (2018). Conference papers at the Public Administration Committee, EURAM, the PSA (UK & Ireland), APSA and IRSPM.
Peer review	Referee for <i>Urban Studies</i> , <i>Political Studies</i> , <i>Policy & Politics</i> , <i>Public Policy and Administration</i> , <i>Local Government Studies</i> , <i>Public Administration</i> and <i>Studies in Higher Education</i> , among others.
Awards	Certificates of Teaching Excellence, ULMS (2016, 2018); Departmental Research Award (2017); listed in <i>Who's Who in the World</i> (2005–2010).

RESEARCH GRANTS, IMPACT & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

2012	UK Changing Union Project — the capacity of the National Assembly for Wales (£1,500).
2008	University of Liverpool Research Development Fund — comparative committee scrutiny at the National Assembly for Wales, the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly (£4,000).
2003-07	Caradon, Kerrier & Wansbeck District Councils — councillor allowances, seven projects (£32,000).
1999	MacDougall Trust — councillor attitudes to elections by thirds (£150).
Impact	Contributor to Prof. Laura McAllister's 4* REF 2014 impact case study on Welsh governance (co-author on two of the cited papers).
Engagement	Written evidence to Parliament's Energy Security and Net Zero Committee on net zero and trade, with J. Sun, K. Tian & W. Jiang (ref. NZT0001); consultancy reports on member allowances and for the UK Changing Union Project.

COLLABORATIONS

Dr Jiajing Sun, University of Chinese Academy of Sciences — Chinese governance and leadership, the Chinese stock market, and CO₂ emissions and decarbonization. jiajing-sun.com

Prof. Laura McAllister, formerly University of Liverpool — Welsh devolution, elections and the National Assembly for Wales.

Recent co-authors include Wei Jiang, Liwen Zang, Kailan Tian, Andrew Smith, Anselm Küsters, Chunyu Shao, Xin Guan, Gang Liu, Zhuo Li, Zhuo Huang and Shouyang Wang.

PUBLICATIONS – COMPLETE RECORD

Generated from the structured data behind mscole.com/publications (93 outputs, grouped by type, most recent first). 'Cole' is shown in bold; DOIs link to the version of record.

JOURNAL ARTICLES

Jiang, W., Sun, J., **Cole**, M., & Zhang, Y. (2026). Virtual water in global supply chains: Trade structure, industrial composition, and policy levers. *Ecological Economics*, 248, 109068. doi:10.1016/j.ecolecon.2026.109068

Sun, J., **Cole**, M., & Härdle, W. K. (2026). Using Machine Learning for Prediction and Policy Analysis in Economics. *The Review of Mathematical Economics*, 1(2), 67–108. doi:10.4310/rme.260730231155

Cole, M., Sun, J., Jiang, W., & Zang, L. (2025). Governmental Capabilities and Responsiveness: Global Investigations into CO₂ Emissions and Decarbonization. The ultimate super wicked problem! *International Journal of Public Administration*, 48(8), 532–550. doi:10.1080/01900692.2024.2386271

Smith, A., **Cole**, M., & Küsters, A. (2024). How do speaker characteristics influence use of rhetorical history? Insights from text mining analysis of discourse about Brexit. *Management and Organizational History*, 19(4), 249–281. doi:10.1080/17449359.2024.2436377

Jiang, W., **Cole**, M., Sun, J., & Wang, S. (2022). Innovation, carbon emissions and the pollution haven hypothesis: Climate capitalism and global re-interpretations. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 307, 114465. doi:10.1016/j.jenvman.2022.114465

- Shao, C., Guan, X., Sun, J., **Cole**, M., & Liu, G. (2022). Social media interactions between government and the public: A Chinese case study of government WeChat official accounts on information related to COVID-19. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 955376. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2022.955376
- Sun, J., **Cole**, M., Huang, Z., & Wang, S. (2019). Chinese leadership: Provincial perspectives on promotion and performance. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 37(4), 750–772. doi:10.1177/2399654418791580
- Guan, L., **Cole**, M., & Worthington, F. (2016). University students' unions: changing functions, a UK and comparative perspective. *Studies in Higher Education*, 41(12), 2095–2109. doi:10.1080/03075079.2015.1010076
- Cole**, M. (2016). Committee scrutiny in Scotland: a comparative and bi-constitutional perspective. *Policy and Politics*, 44(3), 465–483. doi:10.1332/030557314X13948073245907
- Brown, G., & **Cole**, M. (2016). The "shared workplace" agenda in Northern Ireland: lessons from local government. *Local Government Studies*, 42(4), 557–578. doi:10.1080/03003930.2016.1167043
- Cole**, M. (2015). Committee Scrutiny Within a Consociational Context: a Northern Ireland Case Study. *Public Administration*, 93(1), 121–138. doi:10.1111/padm.12111
- Cole**, M., & McAllister, L. (2015). Evaluating and Theorising Committee Scrutiny: A UK Comparative Perspective. *Local Government Studies*, 41(2), 220–239. doi:10.1080/03003930.2014.904226
- Cole**, M. (2014). Devolution and the enhancement of scrutiny: A case study of the committees of the National Assembly for Wales. *Public Policy and Administration*, 29(1), 3–20. doi:10.1177/0952076713494218
- Guan, L., Zhou, Y., & **Cole**, M. (2014). Students' Unions in the UK: Development, Recurrent Trends and Characteristics. *Modern University Education*.
- McAllister, L., & **Cole**, M. (2014). The 2011 Welsh General Election: An Analysis of the Latest Staging Post in the Maturing of Welsh Politics. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 67(1), 172–190. doi:10.1093/pa/gss036
- Cole**, M., & Thrasher, M. (2012). Councillor Perceptions of the Boundary Review Process: Recommendations for Future Practice. *Local Government Studies*, 38(6), 711–730. doi:10.1080/03003930.2012.688037
- Cole**, M. (2010). Devolution in the UK. *Political Studies Review*, 8(3), 425–426.
- McALLISTER, L., & **COLE**, M. (2007). Pioneering New Politics or Rearranging the Deckchairs? The 2007 National Assembly for Wales Election and Results. *The Political Quarterly*, 78(4), 536–546. doi:10.1111/j.1467-923x.2007.00888.x
- Cole**, M. (2006). Asymmetrical public accountability: The National Assembly for Wales, questions and quangos. *Political Quarterly*, 77(1), 98–106. doi:10.1111/j.1467-923x.2006.00735.x
- Cole**, M. (2006). Evaluating the impact of community appraisals: some lessons from south-west England. *Policy and Politics*, 34(1), 51–68. doi:10.1332/030557306775212151
- Cole**, M. (2005). Duverger's Law: An Application to Local Elections in Britain. *Representation*, 41(4), 51–68. doi:10.1080/00344890508523321
- Cole**, M. (2005). Quangos: The Debate of the 1970s. *Contemporary British History*, 19(3), 321–352.
- Cole**, M., & Cotterill, L. (2005). UK Health Action Zones: Political accountability and political marketing-perspectives from the South West. *Urban Studies*, 42(3), 397–416. doi:10.1080/00420980500034850
- Cole**, M. (2004). Consultation in local government: A case study of practice at Devon County Council. *Local Government Studies*, 30(2), 196–213. doi:10.1080/0300393042000267236
- Cole**, M. (2003). Local government reform in Britain 1997–2001: National forces and international trends. *Government and Opposition*, 38(2), 181–202. doi:10.1111/1477-7053.t01-1-00011
- Fenwick, J., **Cole**, M., & Hutchinson, A. (2003). Local government: The debate about 'election by thirds. *Representation*, 39(4), 255–263. doi:10.1080/00344890308523232
- Cole**, M. (2003). The Health Action Zone initiative: Lessons from Plymouth. *Local Government Studies*, 29(3), 99–117. doi:10.1080/03003930308559381
- Cole**, M., & Fenwick, J. (2003). UK local government: The impact of modernization on departmentalism. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 69(2), 259–270. doi:10.1177/0020852303069002009
- Cole**, M. (2002). The Relationship between County Councillors and other Tiers of Elected Local Government: The Case of Devon. *Local Governance*, 28(2), 103–113.
- Cole**, M. (2002). The role(s) of county councillors: An evaluation. *Local Government Studies*, 28(4), 22–46. doi:10.1080/714004161
- Cole**, M. (2001). Elections to the Welsh Assembly: Proportionality, continuity and change. *Regional and Federal Studies*, 11(2), 147–163. doi:10.1080/714004695

- Cole, M. (2001). Executive and scrutiny reforms: The agenda and its impact at Devon County Council. *Local Government Studies*, 27(4), 19–34. doi:10.1080/714004116
- Cole, M. (2001). Local government modernisation: The executive and scrutiny model. *Political Quarterly*, 72(2), 239–245. doi:10.1111/1467-923X.00362
- Cole, M. (2001). The Crowning of Red Ken: The Battle for London in 2000. *Talking Politics*, 13(2), 97–102.
- Cole, M. (2000). Quangos: UK Ministerial Responsibility in Theory and Practice. *Public Policy and Administration*, 15(3), 32–45. doi:10.1177/095207670001500304
- Cole, M. (2000). The Changing Governance of London. *Talking Politics*, 13(1), 22–26.
- Cole, M. (1999). Accountability and quasi-government: The role of parliamentary questions. *Journal of Legislative Studies*, 5(1), 77–101. doi:10.1080/13572339908420584
- Cole, M. (1999). Adversary politics and proportional representation. *Political Quarterly*, 70(2), 166–174. doi:10.1111/1467-923X.00218
- Flinders, V., & Cole, M. (1999). Opening or Closing Pandora's Box?: New Labour and the Quango State. *Talking Politics*, 12(1), 234–239.
- Cole, M. (1998). Quasi-government in Britain: The origins, persistence and implications of the term 'quango'. *Public Policy and Administration*, 13(1), 65–78. doi:10.1177/095207679801300105
- Boyne, G., & Cole, M. (1998). Revolution, Evolution and Local Government Structure: An Empirical Analysis of London. *Urban Studies*, 35(4), 168–751. doi:10.1080/0042098984736
- Cole, M., & Talbot, C. (1997). The geographical distribution of civil servants: The politics of change. *Teaching Public Administration*, 17(2), 41–53. doi:10.1177/014473949701700204
- Cole, M., & Boyne, G. (1996). Evaluating the structure of local government: The importance of tiers. *Public Policy and Administration*, 11(1), 63–73. doi:10.1177/095207679601100106
- Boyne, G., & Cole, M. (1996). Fragmentation, concentration, and local government structure: Top-tier authorities in England and Wales, 1831–1996. *Environment and Planning C-government and Policy*, 14(4), 501–514. doi:10.1068/c140501
- COLE, M., & BOYNE, G. (1995). So You Think You Know What Local-government Is. *Local Government Studies*, 21(2), 191–205. doi:10.1080/03003939508433771

BOOK REVIEWS & SHORTER PIECES

- Cole, M. (2010). *New Labour's Countryside: Rural Policy in Britain since 1997*. 8(2), 267–268.
- Cole, M. (2009). *Democracy and Interest Groups: Enhancing Participation?* 7(3), 408–409.
- Cole, M. (2009). *Heads of the Local State*. 7(1), 124.
- Cole, M. (2009). *Observing Government Elites: Up Close and Personal*. 7(3), 398–399.
- Cole, M. (2008). *Anglo-Scottish Relations from 1900 to Devolution and Beyond*. 1(6), 90–91.
- Cole, M. (2008). *Labour in the City*. 6(3), 384–385.
- Cole, M. (2008). *New Labour and the Civil Service*. 6(3), 386.
- Cole, M. (2008). *Political Communications: The General Election Campaign of 2005*. 2(6), 231–232.
- Cole, M. (2008). *Reinventing Britain: Constitutional Change under new Labour*. 2(6), 225–226.
- Cole, M. (2008). *Transparency: The Key to Better Governance?* 2(6), 214–215.
- Cole, M. (2007). *Leading the Localities: Executive Mayors in English Local Government*. 2(5), 269–270.
- Cole, M. (2007). *Public Service Improvement: Policies, Progress and Prospects*. 1(5), 109–110.
- Cole, M. (2007). *Tales of Two Cities: Women and Municipal Restructuring in London and Toronto*. 2(5), 307.
- Cole, M. (2007). *Third Force Politics: Liberal Democrats at the Grassroots*. 5(3), 420–421.
- Cole, M. (2006). *Contesting Rurality: Politics in the British Countryside*. 3(4), 343–344.
- Cole, M. (2001). *The Labour Party in Wales 1900–2000*. 1(49), 155.
- Cole, M. (1998). *The Civil Service in an Era of Change*. 4(46), 814.

BOOK CHAPTERS

- Cole, M. (2018). Local electoral systems. In *Routledge Handbook of International Local Government*, pp. 13–24. doi:10.4324/9781315306278-2
- Li, Z., Sun, J., & Cole, M. (2015). Mechanisms and Performance of Chinese Bear Markets and Policy Suggestions. In *The Chinese Stock Market Volume II, Springer Nature*, pp. 125–189. doi:10.1057/9781137464699_3
- Cole, M., McAllister, L., & Sirbu, D. (2013). *The Capacity of the National Assembly*. pp. 6–17.
- Cole, M. (2008). Local Government Reforms in Britain. In D. E. Dollery, J. Garcea, & E. C. Le Sage Jr (Eds.), *Local Government Reform: A Comparative Analysis of Advanced Anglo-American Countries*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp. 75–103.
- Cole, M. (2008). The Brown Factor in Elections and Public Opinion: the Return of the Electoral Cycle. In M. Rush, & P. Giddings (Eds.), *When Gordon Took the Helm: The Palgrave Review of British Politics 2007-08*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 34–50.
- Cole, M., & Jones, T. (2007). *Elections and Public Opinion: A Modest Conservative Resurgence*. In *Palgrave Review of British Politics 2006*, pp. 28–38.
- Cole, M., Jones, T., Rallings, C., & Thrasher, M. (2006). *Elections and Public Opinion: Blair's Third and Final Electoral Triumph*. In *Palgrave Review of British Politics 2005*, pp. 30–45.
- Cole, M. (2004). The health action zone initiative: Lessons from plymouth. In *Partnerships Between Health and Local Government*, pp. 101–118. doi:10.4324/9780203508541

CONFERENCE PAPERS & INVITED PRESENTATIONS

- Cole, M. S. (2018). Innovation and Change in Local Electoral Systems: Approaches and Implications. Political Studies Association, Cardiff (2018, March 26).
- Cole, M. (2010). Developments in Accountability and Management: Lessons from the Devolved Institutions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In IPSPM. Berne: IRSPM, pp. 1–17.
- Cole, M. (2009). Local Government in Britain: The Emergence of the External Scrutiniser. In EURAM. Liverpool: EURAM, pp. 39.
- Cole, M., & McAllister, L. (2009). New Forms of Public Accountability after Devolution: The use of different mechanisms for different ends? In Conference in UK Political Ideologies. Liverpool: University of Liverpool, pp. 1–12.
- Cole, M. (2008). Scrutiny, Democracy and Public Administration in the English Local State. In Conference in Political ideologies. Liverpool: University of Liverpool, pp. 31.
- Cole, M. (2000). The Modernisation of UK Local Government: An Evaluation of the Executive, Scrutiny and Partnership Reforms at Devon County Council. In Political Studies Association of Ireland Annual Conference. Cork: Political Studies Association of Ireland, pp. 27.

WORKING PAPERS & PREPRINTS

- (2023). Governmental Capabilities and Responsiveness: Global Investigations into Carbon Dioxide Emissions and Decarbonization. The Ultimate Super Wicked Problem! doi:10.2139/ssrn.4524138
- (2023). Regulatory Quality, Capitalism and Decarbonization: A Global Study. doi:10.2139/ssrn.4623847

REPORTS & CONSULTANCY

- Cole, M. (2007). Review of Allowances. Totnes: Michael Cole.
- Cole, M. (2006). Councillors and Staff with a Disability: Allowances and Support. Totnes: Michael Cole.
- Cole, M. (2006). Review of Allowances. Totnes: Michael Cole.
- Cole, M. (2005). Review of Members' Allowances. Totnes: Michael Cole.
- Cole, M. (2004). Review of Members' Allowances. Totnes: Michael Cole.
- Cole, M. (2003). Learning Communities Report - HAZ: A Project Evaluation. Plymouth: Department of Sociology, University of Plymouth.
- Cole, M. (2002). Learning Communities Report - HAZ: A Project Evaluation. Plymouth: Department of Sociology, University of Plymouth.
- Cole, M. (2001). Cole Report II: Consultations - Practice at Devon County Council. Totnes: Michael Cole.
- Cole, M. (2001). Cole Report III: Report on the Community Appraisal Process in Devon. Totnes: Michael Cole.
- Cole, M., & Fenwick, J. (2001). New Labour and the Corporate Agenda in Local Government. Newcastle: University of Northumbria.

Cole, M. (2000). Review of Members' Allowances. Exeter: Exeter Enterprises.

Cole, M. (2000). The Cole Report: Report on the Role of Members and the Modernising Agenda. Totnes: Michael Cole.

Cole, M. (1999). Options for Devolution in the North East. Newcastle: University of Northumbria.

THESES

Cole, M. (2008). Accountability and Democracy in the New Local Governance: An Evaluation. PhD Thesis, University of Plymouth.

Cole, M. (1991). Quasi-Government: The Issue of Accountability. Master's Thesis, University of Southampton.