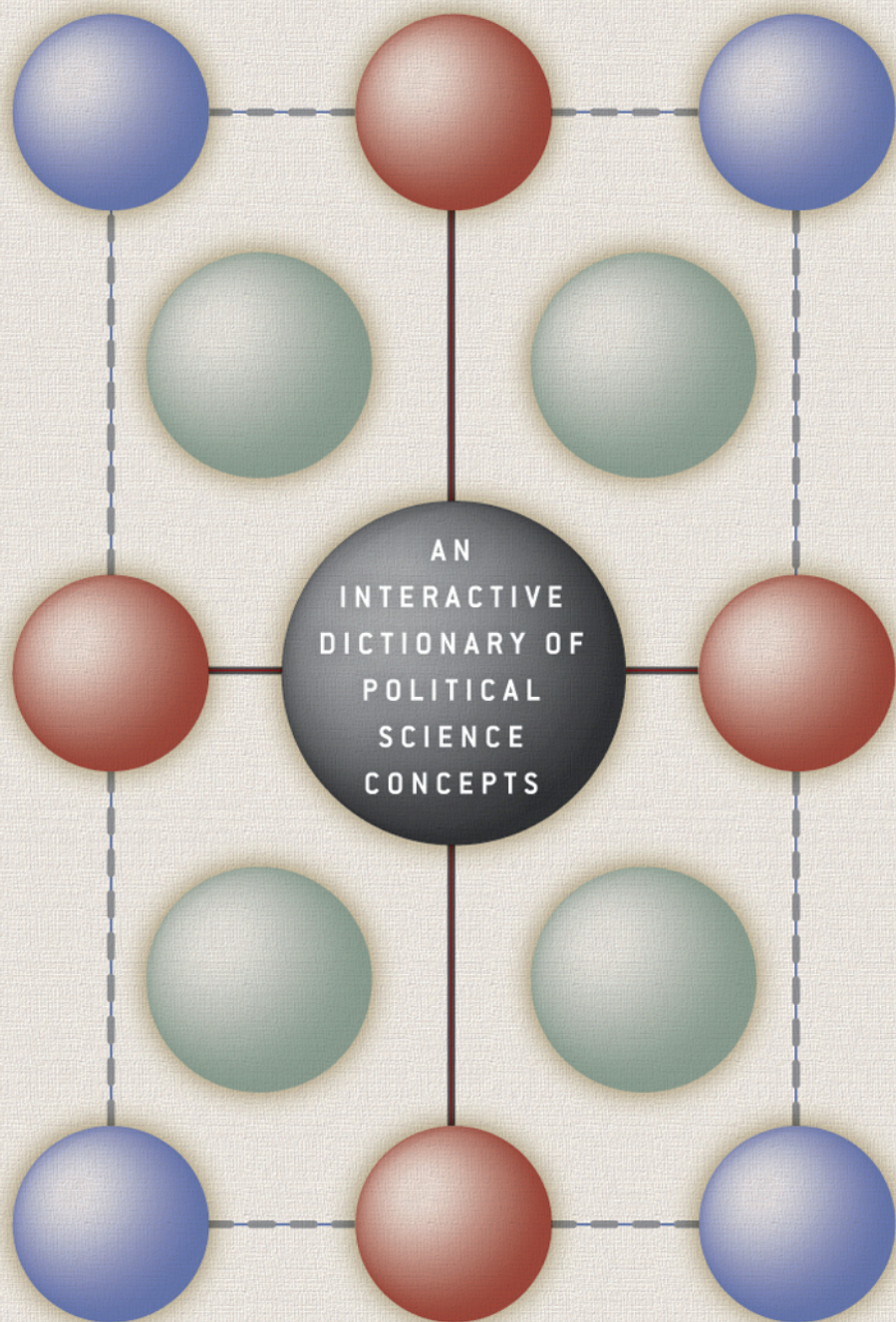


HYPERPOLITICS



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*Excerpt from the book, **Contents and Preface***

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Preface

Welcome to the world's first hyperdictionary.

It is a dictionary and far more. It is a method for unpacking a dense concept by separating out its components while providing a logical relation among them. In other words, it is a method of concept analysis. As with any analysis the purpose is to break the object into its parts, to examine the parts, and then reassemble them with a clearer understanding of the object's meaning and significance.

Let's compare our purpose to that of the admirable *Critical Dictionary of Sociology* (Boudon and Bourricaud 1989), whose aims and virtues were put forward quite effectively by the Editor's Foreword. First of all, the Foreword claims that the *Dictionary* "is unlike most other sociology or social science dictionaries." Second, it is 'critical' in its embrace not of the Marxist usage but of "the critical rationalism of the philosophes and their Encyclopédie ... because it forms a mode of thought which is irreverent in the best sense of that term." Third, and finally, it celebrates the Second Edition for its progress, its abridgements to make room for entries of greater interest, and its bibliographic references of greater utility.

We agree with all the claims and praise the elegance of the essays as well as their utility. However, our claims regarding *Hyperpolitics* go beyond those, in three main respects:

First, *Hyperpolitics* is a dictionary unlike any other. It is a dictionary in the irreducible sense that concepts are selected and defined one at a time. But each entry is defined in terms of other concepts related to the meaning of that entry, and all of the defining concepts are linked within a logical system: the matrix. The matrix, with its self-evident logic and user-friendly interface, serves as a metalanguage helping the reader to navigate through a complex conceptual universe.

Second, although our dictionary is also a 'collection of essays,' the essays are not written to stand alone. Each entry exists in a dynamic relation to its matrix and, through that, to many other entries whose matrices contain overlapping concepts. Each definition is an essay, but more: each is a prose rendering of its matrix, incorporating all twelve of the defining concepts in the matrix, moving from one quadrant (property-space) to the next, of the four quadrants in each matrix. This is virtually an operational definition of theoretical discourse.

Third, while our dictionary also seeks to engender a 'mode of thought,' our aim goes beyond 'irreverence' to interactivity. Definitions in conventional dictionaries tend to foreclose reality, limiting the semantic universe of a given concept. In contrast, our definitions invite for further expansion. Our matrix-based

metalanguage provides definitions covering a wide empirical and theoretical territory, and allows for more complex configurations through links to other concepts. Yet, it also enables readers to make their own contributions, by using the matrix syntax to construct variations—or alternatives—to our definitions. This is *Hyperpolitics* at its best—a living dictionary.

Thanks to these three innovative functions, the hyperdictionary guides and fosters free and yet logically controlled navigation through an expanding universe of competing meanings and observations, while also bringing concept analysis as close as possible to the system level of thinking. That is, the hyperdictionary's structure allows for constant comparison and interaction among the various conceptual units.

The systemic dimension of the hyperdictionary is built upon two main methodological foundations:

- *All definitions follow the same analytical pattern: a matrix of twelve logically interrelated keywords. The dictionary provides a definition for each concept by always placing it at the center of a matrix of twelve related keywords in dialectic with each other. As a result of the matrix methodology, definitions provide a fourfold typology of each concept, allowing for a wide spectrum of comparative empirical observations and facilitating the development of tightly linked theoretical arguments. This is the hyperdictionary.*
- *Each keyword is drawn from a list of one hundred keywords. The list was compiled through the computerized scanning and counting of all entries from ten authoritative dictionaries of political science, from four languages and five countries (Italy, France, Germany, U.K., and U.S.). As a result, the list approaches a representation of the mainstream vocabulary of the discipline.¹*

The combination of these two methods produces commensurability and interactivity among all units—and subunits—of the hyperdictionary, basic attributes of systemic navigation and understanding. The logic of the hyperdictionary is movement outward to all possible cross-references from the original keyword, and backward logically toward where it began.

For example, *party* is an entry with its own matrix and definition that can be fought over on its own grounds. But *party* also shows up as an element in the matrices and definitions of several other of the entries in our dictionary, such as *administration*, *agenda*, *election* and *pluralism* (Figure 1). By showing all the matrices where a given

¹ As we shall argue in more detail in the *Introduction*, we are well aware that the choice of our vocabulary presents several limits and cultural biases. Our list does however remain open to individual additions through the *Web Companion* (see the *User's Guide*, which begins on page 29).

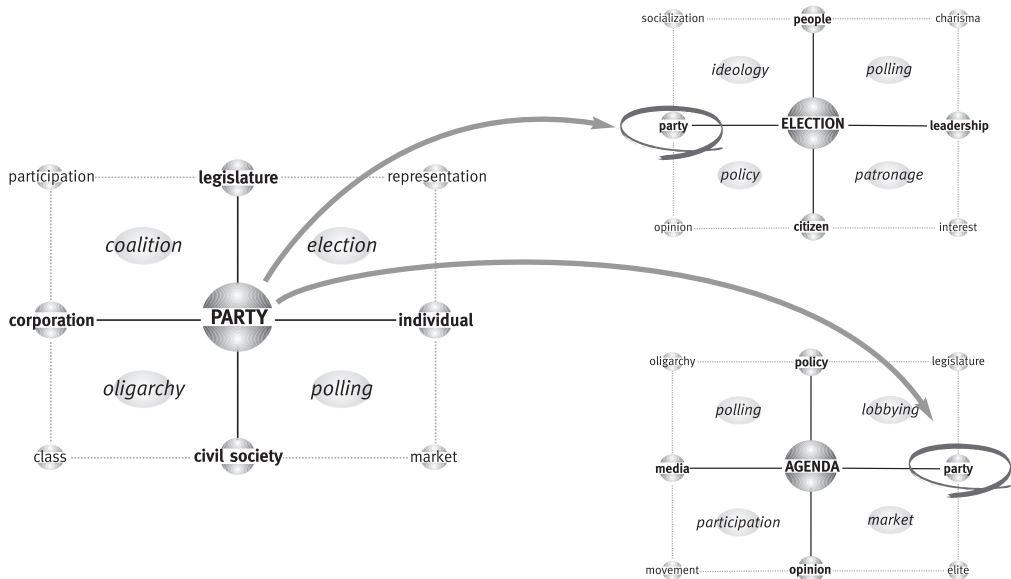


Figure 1 - Mapping concepts

keyword is used, *Hyperpolitics* offers a comprehensive overview of a keyword's conceptual domain, making the reader aware of the complex interactions in the discipline's vocabulary, and preparing the user for thoughts and speculations at the level of theory.

This, at the same time, opens up our dictionary to the participation—and improvement—by all interested users.² And it brings us to what we consider a key feature of our project: to restore the place of concepts in political analysis while, at the same time, making them as easily accessible and debatable as possible to the wider public.

2 This project had been long underway when Wikipedia changed the common understanding of dictionary compilation—and use. We were all the happier to see the extraordinary success of a cultural undertaking sharing the same spirit of our and other concurring efforts: to use Internet as an opportunity for open access to qualified sources of higher learning. This is an aim we have pursued through the *Web companion* to *Hyperpolitics*, as we shall show in more detail in the *User's Guide*. Wikipedia, however, also contributes—by contrast—to make it all the more clear what is specific with *Hyperpolitics*. The main virtue of Wikipedia lies in its capacity to attract experts from various cultural backgrounds to perform a strictly defined and highly specialized task: to contribute to the definition of a single particle of universal knowledge. On sheer methodological grounds, there is no difference between Wikipedia and any traditional encyclopedia. The novelty resides in the fact that access both to the drafting and the reading of a definition is an open one. However, Wikipedia's definitions remain within the boundaries of the encyclopedic mainstream: to provide as specific a definition as possible for as wide a number of discrete items composing the universe of scientific knowledge. In contrast, the aim of our hyperdictionary is to boost the understanding and development of links among different concepts, through a logically coherent pattern calling for criticism and improvement.

We are well aware that this task calls for tough scientific guidance, as well as a good deal of self-discipline. We are trying to strike a balance between the rigorous unraveling of complex conceptual analysis and an open-ended process of critical evaluation and participation by the scholarly community. This has been the vision of our project since its very inception. There have been several attempts by social scientists to broaden concept usage and to systematize concept analysis by providing guidelines, requisites and methodologies for more consistency—i.e., to help concepts ‘travel’ across cultures and languages. In spite of their many merits, these efforts have attracted little if any following beyond the restricted circle of methodology experts. We were compelled to ask the question: How could we bridge the gap between rules and results, by bringing concepts into a political discourse that can pass scientific requirements without reducing us to an esoteric language?

The answer had to meet two basic requirements. One is parsimony. If our method was to be applied to a great number of concepts, and by a variety of authors, it needed to be simple and intuitive. Our choice of the matrix, one of the great work-horses of social science with the two-by-two table and the axial quadrant form, grounds the hyperdictionary upon a few elementary syntactic rules. These rules belong to the common stock of any social science practitioner, and can be readily assimilated by the novice. While easy to use and interpret, our matrix-based concepts also allow for stepwise assimilation—and criticism, the best route to understanding and sharing. The second ingredient is flexibility. The matrix’s clear-cut logic serves as an anchor to the rigor of scientific inquiry. But it also works as a compass to venture into the maze of political language, with its infinite wealth of empirical observations and theoretical approaches. By applying the same modular pattern to a large variety of conceptual definitions, the matrix strikes a balance between Aristotle and Wittgenstein, combining two epistemological views which tend, most of the time, to be presented as competitive if not contradictory.

We spent several years, at the formative stage of our project, to refine our methodology and make it as parsimonious and flexible as possible. Then came the tough question: would it really work?

The first step was to take upon ourselves the burden of putting our method to test, by carving out of our matrix as many definitions as possible. We would thus taste the pudding or, better, test the oven by cooking several puddings, while also being able to perform a systematic consistency check of the hyperdictionary’s overall relational structure. At the onset, we must confess, the enthusiasm of discovery led us to underestimate the trials we were to face in such an unprecedented endeavor. Of all the authoritative scholars breaking new ground in concept analysis, none had

ventured into the maze of drafting a whole brand-new dictionary. Yet, *Hic Rhodus, hic salta*.³

At various moments of our journey we could easily have lost our faith, if it were not for the comfort of our mutual assistance. With all the beauty of endless theorizing, the best part came out of experiencing the many treasures of cross-Atlantic friendship. And the landing is now in sight.

However, to avoid being judges in our own cause, we have put the hyperdictionary to the test by teaching. And we have been very much encouraged by the extraordinary reception of hundreds of students who have participated in our classes, and many graduate students who have, in various capacities, contributed to the making of our hyperdictionary. For the past six years, *Hyperpolitics* has been used in the Introduction to Political Science course at the University of Naples, and by undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Florence and Cornell University, in classes varying in size from ten to two hundred. In all cases, students have greatly appreciated the possibility of approaching complex arguments in an incremental way, using the matrix's clear, logical, and self-explanatory interface. Group discussion and participation have thus been strongly enhanced and, in the cases of smaller classes, have led to the drafting and presentation of original versions and/or variants of a given concept by individual students. This has been our most rewarding experience: to be engaged in conceptual brainstorming.

Classroom teaching also proved as the best laboratory to experiment with different levels of in-depth treatment of each concept. The basic use of the hyperdictionary is to simply refer to the matrix. With its graphical representation with twelve interrelated concepts, the matrix serves as a shorthand description of each definition's content. By drawing it on a blackboard—or, through the book's *Web Companion*, on an electronic screen—one gets an overview of the matrix's core argument. This is usually accompanied by a brief oral presentation, the first step in introducing the logical relationships among the axes and the four quadrants, as well as a rough idea of the empirical evidence and/or main theorizing the matrix intends to refer to. After putting to test the soundness of the matrix's relational structure, one can move to the more demanding task of rendering its contents into prose. It is, however, important to note that, on pedagogical grounds, the development of an original matrix is a challenging and rewarding task even at the preliminary stage of just sketching a tentative argument. Most students have little if any practice with

3 This Latin phrase ("We're in Rhodes, jump here!"), from Aesop's Fables, is a kind of challenge to a braggart.

mapping conceptual relationships, and the matrix's elementary methodology works as a strong incentive to discover new territories. The matrix thus serves a more general commitment to a "social science methodology focusing especially on the logic of 'discovery'—research which involves a dynamic interplay between theory and data, with the primary goal of generating new insights."⁴

In moving to prose rendering, the first step is the drafting of an outline of the matrix's various components. Coming up with a coherent and concise written argument requires a careful check of the relationships among the four quadrants, evaluating possible alternatives, and making more explicit choices. However brief, this is, in most respects, a full-fledged definition of a concept. This is also the hyperdictionary's format allowing for easier and yet rigorous, controlled exchange among various versions and authors. We have used this short-entry format extensively in our classroom experience, and it also is the cornerstone on the Web Companion platform. Inevitably, the full wealth and depth of the hyperdictionary can only be enjoyed through the reading—and writing—of full-length definitions, experimenting with complex conceptual configurations and their array of scholarly references and elaborate scientific discourse. Short, outline-only definitions do however provide the opportunity to actively participate in *Hyperpolitics'* concept-making endeavor, without the far more exacting commitment a full-length matrix's treatment requires. All the more so if one takes advantage of the benefits and powerful extensions toward the world of electronic sources offered by the hyperdictionary's Web platform.

This leads to another important factor in our development. As the title of the book implies, our dictionary shares several of the basic features of hypertext as philosophy and as practice.⁵ From the seminal visions of Barthes and Derrida to the more recent explosion of the World Wide Web, hypertext has become the language of modern—and postmodern—communication.⁶ It is worth repeating that hypertext is a language for organizing knowledge on a modular rather than a sequential basis. While in a conventional discourse concepts are associated through

4 See Charles C. Ragin, *Fuzzy-Set Social Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), xiv.

5 Along the various steps of our project, several colleagues suggested that we should change the title of this book. Some thought that the prefix *hyper* had lost its original appeal as a cue for language innovation, and had become ...hyperused. Others would have liked that the title bear a more direct relationship to the scientific core of our enterprise: redefining the structure of concepts to improve individual and collective efforts toward concept-making. While sharing some of these concerns, we still believe that the original title can best convey, in a single and brand-new word, the vision of this book for a fresh approach to political science language.

6 The best introduction to hypertext remains George P. Landow, *Hypertext 2.0: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, 1997). See also Ilana Snyder, *Hypertext: The Electronic Labyrinth* (New York: New York University Press, 1996, 1997), especially Chapter 2, "Explaining Hypertext," 15–38.

linear steps, hypertext creates multilevel and multidirectional links between a word and its meanings, within an undetermined number of contexts. The spread of—and the access to—the World Wide Web on the Internet has greatly enhanced and facilitated the possibility of surfing from one term—or site—to another through a hypertext-like interface. Yet, hypertext's success may well turn into its own demise.

Through the millions of Web-sites in the cybersphere, there appears to be no limit to the relationships between a given word and the number of related contexts. As a result, search engines have become the main gatekeepers to the Net's ever-expanding universe. By turning hypertext from a metalanguage into an infopoint, everyone can find anything on the Web, as long as they already know what they are looking for. This adds very little to our knowledge and understanding, as it provides us only with information on exactly that piece of reality we were already aware of and only needed to identify. The Net's extraordinary practical use becomes its own enemy, shrinking our need for imagination. An infinite number of experiences and contexts available at a fingertip leads to a passive mind that has yielded to the power of the search engine.

Fortunately, passive searching through the Web is only one path in the hypertext revolution. A more engaging and rewarding one is use of hypertextual links as a boost to one's own critical inquiry into the universe of human knowledge. This was hypertext's original goal, to go beyond text and its meaning, by deconstructing its traditional boundaries and redefining concepts through a much wider epistemological network. Thanks to the continuous interaction with different interpretations and authors, text could eventually become the product of a 'connected intelligence.'⁷

We may still be a long way from the rise of a Web-based brainframe, and the hypertext revolution in human language and understanding goes far beyond the scope of this book. Yet, although we deal only with a limited dimension of the expanding hypersphere, we provide a course of action and a set of guiding criteria to meet the needs of scientific inquiry. There is an inexhaustible resource of social science on the Internet,⁸ but those who surf it without a compass are likely to drown. Our matrices offer such a compass, however inadequate, for intellectual navigation through the sea of serendipity into the power of knowledge.

Welcome aboard!

7 See Derrick de Kerckhove, *Brainframes: Technology, Mind and Business* (Utrecht: Bosch & Keuning, 1991) and *Connected Intelligence* (Somerville, 1997).

8 See Mauro Calise and Rosanna De Rosa, "E-Research: An Introduction to On-line Political Science Sources for Beginners (and Skeptics)," *International Political Science Review* 29 (2008): 595–618.

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"All of this is wonderful, exciting, imaginative, and generous. Hyperpolitics is a great service to many disciplines, not just political science.

As an intellectual history of political science, this book is unequalled.

This is a pioneering reinvention of the dictionary."

Richard M. Vellely, Swarthmore College

"Calise and Lowi make a stunning contribution by addressing the pervasive failure to teach innovative work with concepts. They broaden our horizon by creating a new map of conceptual structure, and they challenge scholars and students to work with this map and creatively extend it."

David Collier, University of California, Berkeley

"When it takes two 'first class' authors fifteen years to produce a book, the book must be taken seriously. Hyperpolitics is a highly innovative and formidable instrument for handling and understanding concepts. I miss having had to miss it in my time."

Giovanni Sartori, Albert Schweitzer Professor Emeritus, Columbia University

"In Hyperpolitics, two esteemed political scientists combine a broad knowledge of the field and commitment to transparent, cumulative conceptual development with an elegant interface. The result is a work that is both simple to use for the novice and rich and sophisticated for the established scholar.

Innovative and smart, Hyperpolitics will make a splendid contribution to conceptual development in comparative politics and to the training of students, as well."

Edward Schatz, University of Toronto



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