

Mitchell Dean

Professor of Public Governance
Copenhagen Business School

Profile

Mitchell Dean is a political and historical sociologist whose work has made a sustained contribution to the analysis of power, governance, and democracy. He is internationally recognised for advancing the concept of **governmentality** and for developing new approaches to the study of **authoritarianism, populism, and political formation**.

His research has had wide intellectual impact across the social sciences and humanities. His book *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* has been highly cited and has contributed to shaping an entire field of research; it is referenced in the afterword to the published lectures of Michel Foucault and in the *Oxford English Dictionary* entry on 'government'. His earlier work, including *The Constitution of Poverty*, was among the first major studies to develop a genealogical analysis of liberal governance.

Dean's work has been translated into multiple languages and has been reviewed and discussed internationally, including in major outlets such as the *Los Angeles Times*, *New Statesman*, and *Libération*. He has over 26,000 citations on Google Scholar.

He is currently Professor of Public Governance at Copenhagen Business School, where he has also served as Head of Department for seven years and was the founding Head of the Department of Business Humanities and Law.

He has designed and delivered education at all levels (from introduction to PhD) in sociology, political studies, social theory and political philosophy and supervised 15 PhD students.

Research

Dean's work focuses on how political authority is formed, exercised, and made legitimate in modern societies. His research spans several interconnected areas:

- **Governmentality and power** – extending Foucauldian approaches to the analysis of rule leading to the analytical framework of the *Signature of Power*
- **Political theology and sovereignty** – examining the relationship between liberalism, authority, and the state
- **Populism and authoritarianism** – analysing contemporary transformations of democratic politics
- **Public mood and political formation** – investigating how “the people” is constituted through media, affect, and collective affirmation

A central thread in his work is how modern forms of rule depend not only on governmental institutions but also on processes of visibility, recognition, and collective formation.

Current Project

Dean is currently completing a book on democracy and acclamation. The project argues that modern democracy depends not only on institutional procedures but also on processes through which “the people” is formed through public affirmation and shared mood.

It examines how digital media have transformed these processes, producing more fragmented and volatile forms of public life, and explores the implications for contemporary democracy and authoritarian populism.

Selected Books

- *The Last Man Takes LSD: Foucault and the End of the Revolution* (with Daniel Zamora), Verso, 2021
- *The Signature of Power: Sovereignty, Governmentality and Biopolitics*, Sage, 2013.
- *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (2nd ed.), Sage, 2010
- *State Phobia and Civil Society* (with Kaspar Villadsen), Stanford University Press, 2016
- *The Constitution of Poverty: toward a genealogy of liberal governance*, Routledge, 1991.

Academic Leadership and Citizenship

Dean has held senior leadership roles in both Australia and Europe, including:

- **Head of Department**, Business Humanities and Law, Copenhagen Business School (2019–2025)
 - including the founding, naming and integration of a major interdisciplinary department
- **Dean**, Division of Society, Culture, Media and Philosophy, Macquarie University (2002–2009)
 - leading a large faculty across multiple disciplines and significantly expanding research performance

His leadership has focused on research strategy, institutional development, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

International Profile

Dean has delivered keynote lectures and invited seminars at leading institutions worldwide, including Oxford, Berkeley, King's College London, Sciences Po, and the University of Amsterdam.

His work has been translated into multiple languages and has had broad international impact across Europe, North America, and Australia.

Editorial and Scholarly Work

He serves on the editorial boards of leading journals including:

- *Theory, Culture and Society*
- *Economy and Society*
- *Acta Sociologica*

Public Dissemination and Impact

Dean's work engages both academic and wider audiences. He has written for outlets such as:

- *The Guardian*
- *Los Angeles Review of Books*
- *Australian Financial Review*
- *Information (DK)*
- *Telos* and *Stanford University Press* blogs

His research contributes to contemporary debates on democracy, governance, and political change.

Contact

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