Paper prepared for ICPP 2017, Singapore
T07P08: The Accountability and Legitimacy of Knowledge Experts in Policy Making

The technocratic take-over of democracy: connectivity, reflexivity and accountability

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Introduction

It took the dramatic rise of populist parties and movements across the Western hemisphere to generate even modest academic acknowledgement of the fact that liberal democracies have for a long time been submitted to an altogether different system of rule: that of technocracy. After a period of relatively sustained interest in the subject in the 1960's and the 1970's, serious debate about technocracy effectively died out together with the enthusiasm for the planning and social engineering model assumed to be the essence of the technocratic project. However, technocracy has gradually entered the debate again through the backdoor, that is to say as an explanation for the mounting populist challenge (Müller 2016, Urbinati 2014, Bickerton and Accetti 2017). To be sure, there were precursors to this development, in particular the characterization of the EU as the 'ultimate technocratic project' (Schmidt 2006) generating the kind of national backlashes that ultimately gave us Brexit. Similarly, the arrival of Donald Trump was not entirely unforeseen, given that the political system of the U.S. had already been described as a destructive spiral of technocracy and populism (Fukuyama 2014).

However, the rediscovery has yet to yield a comprehensive analysis of technocracy. Even if technocracy is now a consistent factor in the surging interest in populism, it is often discussed rather superficially and in terms dependent on the particular definition and understanding of populism applied. There is a need for a better understanding of the technocratic project in itself and the particular nature of the technocratic challenge to democracy that ultimately spawned the populist counter-reaction. Such an approach starts with the acknowledgement of the fact that technocracy is, in the strict sense of the term, a system of rule even if it lacks a proper political theory and

constitutional underpinnings. Technocracy is a 'system of governance in which technically trained experts rule by virtue of their specialized knowledge and position in dominant political and economic institutions' (Fischer 1990, 17). As such, technocracy fully deserves a place alongside democracy and bureaucracy in the history of the modern polity.

The introduction of democratic rule always depended on the development of a working compromise with bureaucracy and the cadre of expert officials ('Beamtentum') previously allied with monarchs and dynastic power. As Weber was acutely aware, this intrinsic tension between bureaucracy and democracy also means that 'direct rule of the *demos*' and broad public influence 'inevitably comes into conflict with bureaucratic tendencies' (1978, 985). Nevertheless, the emergence of the monocratic bureaucracy as the prototypical form of the modern organization and the wider process of bureaucratization also accompanies the process of 'passive democratization', 'the levelling of social differences' and ultimately 'modern mass democracy' (Weber 1978, 983). Hence, bureaucracy has become inseparable from 'constitutional democracy and the separation of powers' (Olsen 2006, 9) and 'part of society's long-term commitment to a *Rechtsstaat* and procedural rationality for coping with conflicts and power differentials' (Olsen 2006, 3).

The third alternative offered by technocracy is, by the same token, fundamentally opposed to bureaucracy as well as democracy. Even if technocracy is often superficially associated with bureaucracy to the point of indistinction, it is a particular form of rule that has a deeply antagonistic relationship with both of these more established systems of rule. However, this antagonism has also been subject to an important reversal in the history of the technocratic project. The original version of the technocratic project that reached its pinnacle during the 1960's and 70's was deeply entrenched in mechanical industrialism and combined an overtly and aggressively anti-democratic stance with an attempt to appropriate and expand bureaucratic organization for purposes of planning and social engineering. By contrast, the current post-industrial version of the technocratic project, which has been on the rise since the 1980's, is radically anti-bureaucratic while straining itself to embrace democratic vocabulary and develop its own form of democratic legitimacy.

It has been suggested that this development corresponds to a shift towards a 'quiet' and 'faceless' technocratic 'revolution' (Fischer 1990, 19). Rather than posing as the 'new men' of the future with sweeping statements about technological and scientific progress and blunt rejections of politics, current technocrats 'modestly step forward' as organizational 'servants' in a 'subdued and pragmatic language addressed to organizational and technical "imperatives"' (Fischer 1990, 110). With the benefit of a few more decades of hindsight, however, we can now substitute the idea of a

quiet revolution for a more specific claim: what we have witnessed since the 1980's is a technocratic revolution carried through primarily by the governance paradigm of public policy and public sector reform.

Although the governance paradigm certainly deploys the language of technical and organizational imperatives extensively, it has also been hiding in plain sight as an open, assertive and largely transparent paradigm that has brought technocratic principles to bear on government for decades. In contrast to the planning and social engineering model of industrial technocracy, however, the postindustrial version of the technocratic project is defined rather by the interlocking principles of *connective governance, risk management and performance management*. I have elaborated on the implications of these principles for bureaucracy elsewhere (Esmark 2017). The very same principles are, however, also at the heart of a technocratic 'take-over' of democracy based on the attempt to establish connectivity, reflexivity and accountability as core standards of democratic legitimacy. Before examining these standards in more detail, we must first outline the basic parameters of the technocratic project.

The technocratic project

The technocratic project has never been associated with a particular class, elite or cadre, but rather with a heterogeneous group of people from different backgrounds operating from the top to bottom in public and private organizations, defined only by a shared capacity to bring specialized knowledge, experience and expertise to group decision-making. This group is usually referred to as the 'technostructure', originally meant to comprise the specialists and technicians responsible for the extensive planning and control necessary in the big organizations of 'new industrial state' (Galbraith 1967). In a more recent and updated inventory, the technostructure has been substantially expanded: 'From this vantage point, the technostructure – policy planners, economists, engineers, management specialists, computer analysts, social scientists and technologists – process the critical information essential to the stable and efficient operation of our contemporary institutions' (Fischer 1990, 110).

In addition to vague contours of technocrats as a social group, the comparatively sparse literature on technocracy has always been faced with the problem that there never was a Weber of technocracy. Or, more specifically: although Weber did not use the term, he subsumed technocracy under the broader process of rationalization of which bureaucratic organization is an expression. Weber's foresight notwithstanding, however, the postwar period saw a 'new or second phase in that

"rationalization" which Max Weber already comprehended as the basis for bureaucratic domination', defined by the 'scientization of politics' (Habermas 1971, 62). Although 'technical expertise' and 'officialdom' is important in a bureaucracy, Weber also saw it as being confined by rational-legal authority, the status of the university-trained jurist and submission to the charismatic authority and power instincts of political leaders (Weber 1921). The new form of domination based on the scientization of politics thus corresponds to a shift from Weber's 'decisionistic' model for the division of labor between professional staff and political leadership to a 'technocratic model' (Habermas 1971, 63).

In this technocratic model, the relation between the professional expert and the politician appears to have effectively 'reversed itself', making the latter 'a mere agent of a scientific intelligentsia, which, in concrete circumstances, elaborates the objective implications and requirements of available techniques and resources as well as optimal strategies and rules of control' (Habermas 1971, 63). The technocratic model thus leaves the politician with a 'fictitious decision-making power', acting simply as a 'stopgap' in a 'still imperfect rationalization of power in which the initiative has in any case passed to scientific analysis and planning' (Habermas 1971, 62). In a wider sense, the technocratic model calls for the creation of a 'technical state' where the state 'no longer appears as an apparatus for the forcible realization of interests that have no foundation in principle and can only be answered decisionistically. It becomes instead the organ of a thoroughly rational administration' (Habermas 1971, 64).

The original incarnation of this technocratic model represents the realization of industrialism as a form of political theory, for which Bacon and Saint-Simon are the original exponents. The concept of technocracy itself, however, is usually attributed to the now forgotten American engineer William Henry Smith who defined technocracy as 'national industrial government' (1919), which later spawned a short-lived and curious attempt by fellow engineers and thinkers such as Thorstein Veblen to turn technocracy into a fully-fledged political movement (Akin 1977, Segal 1985, Tilman 2014). From these sources, and their idealization of the technical sciences, engineering, mechanics and the machine, the technocratic project has derived its founding idea that 'technology's productive potential holds the promise of a society of abundance. Its link with science and its inherent dynamism have the allure of modernity. Its efficiency, the perfect mating of men and machine, is a model for society' (Kuisel 1981, 76).

The breakthrough for this idea and the technocratic scientization of politics is the postwar development of a 'feedback relation' between technical development and scientific progress

intimately related to industrialism and the emergence of the industrial society in which 'science, technology and industrial utilization were fused into a system' (Habermas 1971, 104). The result is a form of scientific management, based on 'a logical, practical, problem-solving, instrumental, and disciplined approach to objectives', as well as a 'reliance on a calculus, on precision and measurement and a concept of a system' (Bell 1974, 349). The technocratic system of rule is based on the 'assumption that human problems, like technical ones, have a solution that experts, given sufficient data and authority, can discover and execute. Applied to politics this reasoning finds interference from vested interests, ideologies, and party politics intolerable. Its antithesis is decision making through the weighing of forces and compromise' (Kuisel 1981, 76).

More than just a nullification of the bureaucratic compromise with political leadership as understood by Weber, the technocratic form of rule requires the expulsion of politics as such from the state, and the political system in a wider sense, in order to bring about a properly rational administration of society based on scientific management. Technocratic scientization of politics, in other words, inevitably means *depoliticization*. The technocratic 'scientization of politics' effectively 'severs the criteria for justifying the organization of social life from any normative regulation of interaction, thus depoliticizing them' (Habermas 1971, 112). Technocracy is fundamentally at odds with the practical experiences of ordinary citizens, public involvement, as well as the influence of interests groups, bargaining and the discretion and leadership of elected representatives. Indeed, technocracy means that any kind of societal 'progress can be achieved only by the 'depoliticization' of problems' (Ridley 1966, 43).

Correspondingly, Putnam sums up the implications of the 'technocratic mentality' applied to the field of politics in six guiding principles for depoliticization. 1) The idea that the replacement of politics with technics provides experts and professionals with an essentially apolitical role. 2) Skepticism and even hostility towards politicians and political institutions. 3) A more or less blatant disregard for the openness and equality of political democracy tending towards authoritarianism and absolutism. 4) The belief that social and political conflict is misguided or even contrived. 5) The interpretation of effective policy as a question of pragmatics, not ideology or moral. 6) The notion that technological progress is good and questions of social justice are unimportant (Putnam 1977). In other words, the commitment to scientific management makes the technocratic project anti-political, anti-ideological and anti-democratic. However, the particular form of depoliticization characteristic of industrial technocracy also seems to have vanished with governmental enthusiasm for extensive planning and social engineering that reached its peak during the 1960's and 70's.

A quiet or not so quiet revolution: the new technocratic governance

This abandonment of earlier postures was precisely what Fischer identified as a new form of 'quiet' technocratic revolution (1990). By substituting the overt and aggressive form of anti-politics for a new role as the modest servants of organizational and socio-economic necessities, technocracy became all the more influential by receding into the background. Whereas early technocracy was in some sense too overtly political in its call for scientization and depoliticization, the quiet technocratic revolution managed to effectively conceal the inherently political nature of depoliticization, thus fulfilling the promise of true scientific management. Although Fischer's analysis deserves recognition for bringing this fact to light at a time when technocracy was indeed very much left to its own devices, the technocratic project has clearly developed well beyond the parameters of the quiet revolution in t1he ensuing years, in particular through the governance paradigm of public policy and public sector reform, which has imbued the technocratic project with a distinct logic of transforming government to governance.

The quiet revolution was seen by Fischer to display a 'striking continuity of basic technocratic ideas' (Fischer 1990, 109), echoing the notion that technocracy is simply an 'ever-recurring intellectual doctrine' of which Saint-Simon is one of the most 'original exponents' (Meynaud 1968, 12). The most original exponent of this idea is Bell's landmark analysis of postindustrial society as 'the age of technocracy'. Bell states that technological, economic and social transformations associated with post-industrialism provide the conditions for the realization of the technocratic project as it was conceived prior to these transformations, making postindustrial society a society permeated by the 'fundamental themes' of 'rationality, planning, and foresight – the hallmarks, in short, of the technocratic age. The vision of Saint-Simon seemingly has begun to bear fruit' (Bell 1974, 348). Looking ahead, with Bell, Fischer thus concludes: 'there is an increasing reliance in the political system on technical expertise for the definition of, if not the actual resolution of, social and political problems. As result, there will be more and more emphasis on the planning of political and social life' (Fischer 1990, 102).

As it turned out, postindustrial society came to present technological and socio-economic changes that made the model of planning and social engineering more or less obsolete, or at least resulted in complete governmental abandonment of the model. This development is reflected in a steady stream of programs concerned with recreating the public sector and public policy in the image of postindustrial society, starting with the NPM reforms of the 1980's, but becoming more pronounced with post-NPM reforms, network governance and New Public Governance (Christensen and

Lægreid 2007, Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011, Olsen 2006, Lodge and Gill 2011, Christensen 2013). These reform waves are normally seen as competing quasi-ideological configurations separated by their commitment to markets vis-à-vis networks, but ultimately reaching a compromise in the current reality of the mixed administration. Seen in the context of technocracy, however, these reform waves appear rather as a steady development from the model of planning and social engineering towards a carefully balanced program for the transformation of government to governance based on the intersecting principles of *connectivity*, *risk* and *performance*. Figure 1 provides an overview of this model.

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It is not surprising then, that it fell to critical governance studies to discover that depoliticization is a crucial dynamic inherent in the transformation from government to governance. Hay's explanation for 'why we hate politics', in particular, has drawn attention to the challenges posed by the 'public politics of depoliticisation' were experts and politicians alike converge on the notion that politics 'can only prevent the adoption of the technically most proficient solution to any given challenge./../it lacks the technical proficiency and specialist knowledge required to select the optimal policy choice; it is costly, inefficient, bureaucratic and self-referential to the point of being tiresome' (Hay 2007, 93). Indeed, the basic technocratic idea seems 5 as forceful and radical as ever, although Hay makes no mention of technocracy as such: 'politics is a pathogen; depoliticization an antidote' (2007, 93). Initially seen as the source of political distrust and fatigue, such depoliticization has since become a vital component in the interpretation of populism as form of 'repoliticization' and counter-reaction (Stoker, 2017).

The politics of depoliticization was also found in the statecraft pursued by New Labour and the Blair Government, based on the third way and acceptance of 'structural dependence dilemma' where 'government, left wing or not, are constrained in what they can do by the need to sustain economic conditions that promote investment' (Burnham 2001, 128). In the field of economic policy, this approach replaced ideological conflicts between Keynesianism and monetarism with a form of 'technocratic managerialism emphasizing the constraints imposed by "global capital"'(Burnham 2001, 129). In contrast to earlier versions of the technocratic project, however, the depoliticization inherent in the transformation from government to governance is 'a process cloaked in the language of inclusiveness, democratisation and empowerment (..) a potent form of

ideological mobilisation, which reflects and capitalises on the rejigging of domestic bureaucratic practices and the changes in the wider international political economy' (Burnham 2001, 129). Such astute observations notwithstanding, critical governance studies have yet to analyze the transformation from government to governance as a technocratic challenge to democracy more comprehensively. This requires a further look at the principles of connectivity, risk and performance.

Connectivity: networks and communication

Connective governance is an umbrella term for a number of governance programs shaped by the postindustrial logic of network society. Although the network society is in many ways an extension of post-industrial society, it also embodies an 'information age' defined by digital information and communication technologies (ICT's) in a way not considered by Bell and other early observers of the post-industrial age. The principal analysis of this leap in the history of media technology sparked by the emergence of digital ICT's, is Castells' exploration of how digitally enhanced networks processing information have become the primary principle of societal organization across the economy, civil society and the state (2000-2004). Faced with the transformations brought on by the proliferation of informational networks, states are forced to engage in what Castells has defined as the imperative but often difficult transition from the modern state to a late modern 'network state' (2005, 15).

The principal goal of connective governance is thus to ensure this imperative but difficult transition to a network state faced with the connective logic of informational networks including, inter alia, globalization (networks have the potential for global reach and reduce the importance of space and territory), openness (the organization of networks in nodes and hubs ensure multiple points of entry and continuous extension), flexibility (networks can be build and modified faster than other forms of organization), scalability (networks can be formed and reformed to suit any level of action or governance), complexity (networks represent a form of 'ordered complexity', making disordered complexity manageable), self-organization (networks can form and function without central or hierarchical guidance) and recursion (networks process information in a non-linear and modulating way) (Castells 2005, Lash 2002, Crozier 2007, Chadwick 2013).

Thus, connective governance involves a complete 'transformation of political management, representation and domination under the conditions of network society' (Castells 2005, 16). The most basic expression of this development is 'the diffusion of e-governance (a broader concept than e-government because it includes citizen participation and political decision-making); e-health; e-

learning; e-security; and a system dynamic regulation of the communication industry, adapting it to the values and needs of society' (Castells 2005, 17). As suggested clearly by Castells, the diffusion of e-governance has from the outset been followed by a promise of increased citizen participation and democratic innovation. Following an initial focus on rationalization and increased efficiency in the 1980's, citizen involvement, participation and even the realization of 'e-democracy' have consistently been highlighted as the real potential of digitalization and implementation of new ICT's in what has also been called digital era governance (Dunleavy et al. 2006, 478).

The same logic is clearly visible in other versions of connective governance such as network governance, collaborative governance and New Public Governance. Although networks are interpreted more broadly in these approaches, 'joined-up government' and 'whole of government' based on horizontal coordination, collaboration and involvement of external stakeholders are still seen to open up new avenues for participation and involvement in political decision-making (Stoker 2006, Rhodes 2007, Ansell and Gash 2008, Goldsmith and Kettl 2009, McGuire and Agranoff 2011). The proliferation of networks thus creates the potential for a more open, responsive state committed to the 'meta-governance' of self-governing networks (Sørensen and Torfing 2007, Klijn and Edelenbos 2007). Such meta-governance, in turn, requires a more performative and communicative form of political authority (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003, Bang 2003).

That e-governance, network governance and communicative governance mostly fall short of the democratic promises made is well documented, occasional exceptions notwithstanding (Dawes 2008, Sørensen and Torfing 2007, Klijn and Edelenbos 2007). In order to come properly to terms with this problem, however, it is necessary to start with the realization that the difficult but imperative transition to a network state is a process directed *against bureaucracy* rather than a transition *towards democracy.* As Castells makes abundantly clear, 'the rational bureaucratic model of the state is in complete contradiction to the demands and process of the network society' (Castells 2005, 17). Unfortunately, this claim all too easily invokes a sense of democratic progress when the starting point is a basic opposition between bureaucracy and democracy. In a logic illustrated with particular clarity by critical media studies, the proliferation of informational networks is fundamentally a force on the side of political insurgency, social movements and counter-power against established powers trying to quell network society through the old bureaucratic means of censorship, surveillance and policing (Bennett and Segerberg 2008, Castells 2007, Trottier and Fuchs 2015).

However, the fact that the creation of a network state is a decisively anti-bureaucratic project does not make it inherently democratic. With the addition of the third alternative offered by the technocratic project, it becomes readily apparent that the difficult but imperative transformation to a network state is an expression of the quintessentially technocratic idea of the state as an expression of a thoroughly rational administration and a form of government organized and conducted in accordance with the requirements of the lead technologies of society. That the defining technologies of network society are digital ICT's rather than the machines and factories of mechanical production characteristic of industrial society certainly makes an important difference in the basic technological-scientific rationality of the technocratic project. Rather than planning and engineering of the great social machine, connective governance requires the adoption of an informational logic and the attempt to deal with the transformative effects of informational flows (Crozier 2007, 7).

E-governance, network governance and communicative governance have undoubtedly made government more informational, communicative and open to stakeholder involvement. Networks have, however, largely remained an instrument of technocratic governance meant to ensure coordination, negotiation, qualification of knowledge and increased implementation capacity. The IT-specialist is of course the most apparent cousin to the mechanical engineers of early technocracy. The principal governmental function of networks has, however, been to increase the connectivity of a drastically increased technostructure. The increased connectivity is an organizational framework for a form of technocratic governance exercised through the mutually supporting and reinforcing principles of risk management and performance management.

Risk management: reflexivity and irony

Connective governance is the bedrock of the governance paradigm. It provides political-administrative elites with a specific program of transformation from government to governance on the level of state form and organization. Risk management, for its part, provides a supporting and partially overlapping program of transformation from government to governance on the level of basic state functions and capacities. As understood in risk management, the transformation from government to governance involves a fundamental reversal of state functions and capacity from the provision of safety to the development of resilience necessitated by the internalization of risk and the impossibility of insurance against dangers and uncertainty. Faced with fundamental uncertainty, looming global catastrophes and wicked policy problems, the primary function of the state is to build resilient societies, organizations and individuals.

This variation on the transformation from government to governance corresponds to a subtle shift in the logic of postindustrialism from proliferation of informational networks to global risk and uncertainty. Although networks and increased connectivity are clearly a source of increased risk, the key 'epochal difference' between industrial and postindustrial society occurs at moment the economic, social, biological and ecological hazards facing the political system '*undermine and/or cancel the established safety systems of the provident state's existing risk calculations*' (Beck 1996, 31). What Beck refers to as the provident state is essentially the welfare state of the industrial era, forced by its own 'cognitive and institutional apparatus' of 'insurance calculation' to stem the autonomous forces of economic and social development through planning and 'after-care', for the purpose of which 'there exist accident scenarios, statistics, social research, technical planning and great variety of safety measures' (1996, 30).

In risk society, such measures are undercut for two reasons. For one, hazards and dangers have multiplied and infiltrated each other to a level where existing safety systems offering insurance and compensation for exposure to risk are overburdened. Secondly, risk society implies a growing realization that even more than autonomous forces outside the state, hazards and dangers are produced by the state itself. Decisions invariably produce unintended consequences and further risk. Risk is, according to the standard definition, the 'effect of uncertainty', and risk management is based on an injunction to relinquish the demand for certainty and cope with uncertainty and change (Renn and Schweizer 2009, Beck 1996). Risk management consists in the combination of comprehensive risk assessment of hazards with workable forms of damage control in the occurrence of 'catastrophe' (IRGC 2005, 20).

Risk management is often related to large-scale catastrophes such as global financial crisis, overpopulation, climate change or natural disaster. As Beck has highlighted, however, risk means the anticipation of catastrophe rather than responses to catastrophe itself: when the catastrophe actually occurs, risk as always 'moved elsewhere' to the anticipation of new dangers and catastrophes (2006, 332). Moreover, the internalization of risk and impossibility of insurance against dangers and hazards equally concerns the problem-solving capacity of everyday policies faced with unintended consequences and wicked problems. Indeed, Rittel and Webber's original characterization of wicked problems as being diffuse, open-ended, uncertain, unique and relational precisely embodies the problems facing decision-making in a risk scenario (1973). More than isolated procedures related to natural disasters and other large-scale catastrophes, the internalization of risk and decisions based on the impossibility of insurance involves the reconfiguration of the vast

majority of policy problems as wicked problems and efforts to deal with such problems on all levels of governance.

The primary role of the state in this state of permanent crisis is to build resilient societies, organizations and individuals capable of continuous change and transformation in response to risk and uncertainty (Syrett and Devine 2012, 96). This may involve the use of markets to 'force individuals to take cost-effective protective measures prior to disaster based on risk assessments', whereas networks ensure the flow of information that 'may influence individuals to behave differently with respect to the actions they take before and/or after disaster' (Daniels, Kettl, and Kunreuther 2006, 8). However, markets have also been criticized as a framework of risk management due to their dependence on economic incentives, fragmentation, turf wars and, in cruder forms of NPM, an idealization of private business practices that tend to reinstate planning systems cloaked as corporate strategies (Head and Alford 2013, 721, Stoker 2006). Networks are, according to this line of argument, more suited to ensure critical components of risk management such as collaboration, coordination, accumulation of knowledge, and the flow of information (Syrett and Devine 2012, Conklin 2006, Helbing 2013).

This network-oriented form of risk management has been described as risk governance, i.e. a form of risk management based on openness, coordination and the application of 'the principles of good governance to the identification, assessment, management and communication of risks' (Renn and Walker 2008, 11, see also Renn 2008). In this sense, risk governance arises at the intersection of connectivity and risk management, of network as organization and problem-solving capacity as function. The link relation between risk and connectivity is, by the same token, entirely reversible and fundamental to the governance paradigm. Rather than a limited subcategory of risk management, the concept of risk governance suggests that the requirements of effective risk management, although often implicitly, provide the basic rationale for a substantial part of the networking activities pursued by current governments and administrations (Koppenjan and Klijn 2004).

Risk management is ultimately about survival. Only resilient societies, organizations and individuals will have the capacity to survive the disruptions of risk society. The legitimacy of risk management, however, not only extends to governmental efficiency in the fight for survival, but also to the potential for a more *reflexive* and even enlightened form of government. As Beck has highlighted, risk society coincides with the onset of 'reflexive modernity' (Beck 1996, 39). Acknowledging uncertainty, the impossibility of insurance and the recursive nature of risk involves

a reflexive moment defined by the 'self-confrontation with the effects of risk society that cannot be dealt with and assimilated in the system of industrial society – as measured by the latter's institutionalized standards' (Beck 1994, 6). Such reflexivity is indeed more essential to the legitimacy of the transformation from government to governance than claims to increased participation and deliberation in and of themselves.

A particularly pronounced example of this logic is Beck's discussion of the 'enlightenment shock' of risk society (Beck 2006). If the internalization of risk and impossibility of insurance against global risks are acknowledged as a starting point for political action, there 'are only three possible reactions: *denial*, *apathy* or *transformation*' (Beck 2006, 331). Apathy comprises governmental retreat as well as political fatigue and mistrust on the side of citizens alike. Denial can largely be equated with post-factualism and populism. Transformation of political action, for its part, involves a 'cosmopolitan moment' and acceptance of 'global risk as an impersonal force in the contemporary world' (Beck 2006, 338). The force of global risks includes the emergence of risk as a new medium of communication across borders and differences, risk as a source of new social vulnerabilities and power asymmetries, and the necessity and possibility of a new cosmopolitan form of statehood. Denial and apathy are of course still visible, but transformation means that 'global risks enforce an involuntary democratization' (Beck 2006, 340). In the face of risk society, the transformation from government to (global) governance is not only normatively desirable, but even normatively necessary.

For all the normative 'force' of global risks and the 'wake-up call in the face of the failure of government in the globalized world', the 'cosmopolitan moment' of statehood in risk society is also a situation defined deeply and pervasively by the *irony* of risk. The reflexivity of risk management is, through and through, a formula for how to 'live in the shadow of global risks' (Beck 2006, 331). For Beck, such irony is more or less identical to the catharsis of tragedy as conventionally understood in political philology and theory. In the wider governance paradigm, this intrinsic link between reflexivity and irony is both a formula for statehood (Willke 1992) and the logic behind the exercise of risk management as 'meta-governance' (Jessop 2011). Meta-governance, thus conceived, consists in the 1) 'deliberate cultivation of a flexible repertoire (requisite variety)' of government responses 'in the face of turbulence in the policy environment and changing policy risks', 2) a 'reflexive orientation about what would be an acceptable policy outcome (..) and regular assessment of the extent to which current actions are producing desired outcomes, and 3) 'a self-reflexive "irony" such that the participants in governance recognize the likelihood of failure but then continue as if success were possible' (Jessop 2011, 117).

The transformation from government to governance, in other words, requires a governmental cultivation of reflexive irony as formula for statehood as well as specific policy intervention. Whether or not such irony is necessary in the face of global risks, it is a rather shaky foundation for claims to democratic legitimacy. Rather it appears to represent a new type of adaptive and recursive technocracy invested in the continuous observation and accommodation of external circumstances quite distinct from, and to some extent even a reversal of, the staunch belief in the power of technology to ensure control of the economy, society and the material environment characteristic of early technocracy (Habermas 1971). That risk, uncertainty and wicked problems pose a problem for planning and foresight was already clear to Rittel and Webber (1973), who nevertheless insisted on the viability of the planning model (see also Webber 1978). Since then, however, risk management has more or less come to mean the opposite of planning.

As Beck states, risk awareness and reflexivity are completely irreconcilable with 'linear models of technocracy', which proceed from the assumption that technical knowledge and planning capacity will ensure the development towards a society of 'zero risk' (Beck 1996, 35). The very idea of planning is to ensure certainty and maintain stability. Unexpected occurrences are the result of insufficient planning and will only require more comprehensive planning. Current technocracy, however, has substituted the idea of zero risk for the notion of permanent risk and continuous adaptation to changing circumstances. Planning and forecasting have clearly not disappeared from government. It has, however, largely been subsumed under an overriding concern for risk assessment, adaptation and continuous change. Risk management supplants this proactive and assertive belief in mechanical control with a more reactive and defensive idea of adaptation in the face of risk and uncertainty.

Whereas Beck seems to assume that this rejection of the early industrial version of the 'linear' technocracy that served as the operational infrastructure of the provident state implies a new era of voluntary or involuntary democratization, risk management seems rather to have brought about a new type of adaptive and recursive technocracy. To be sure, the old technocracy project now looks like a fata morgana of control and engineering of the great social machine, compared to which the current late modern version of technocracy is indeed self-aware of governmental limitations, reflexive and open towards external circumstances, resources and perspectives. Reflexivity is not, however, an invitation to the exercise of free and unbounded debate and contestation. It is a particular mode of thought and action strictly limited to the parameters of continuous adaptation, resilience and even 'survival'. It is also a form of governmental reasoning that more or less

invariably leads to performance management in the search for certainty and best practice in the state of permanent crisis and uncertainty.

Performance management: experimentation and accountability

In his invaluable analysis of 'audit society', Michael Power observed that 'the audit explosion suggests that audit is emerging as a powerful institution of risk processing' (1999, 139). This observation, made almost in passing, has proved to be one of the most acute insights into a now consolidated and still developing partnership between risk and performance management in current government. In a situation defined by risk, uncertainty and the recursive nature of wicked policy problems, performance management has been charged with finding out what works and why in order to provide at least a form of temporary certainty and proof of effects to guide public policies in the process of continuous adaptation to changing circumstances. The various concepts and standards of performance management, including quality management, evaluation, evidence-based policy, budgeting for results and auditing etc., can in this sense be summarized under the general principle of learning from evidence and continuous improvement of public policy.

On the societal level, this juxtaposition pits audit society against risk society. Beyond the critical undertone and particular focus of Power's analysis, this society is a reflection of what Donald T. Campbell, the godfather of evaluation in public policy, called the 'experimenting society' (1998 [1971]). Defined in explicit opposition to the social engineering, the experimenting society was put forward as a vision of a 'truly scientific society' that would be active (preferring exploratory innovation to inaction), evolutionary (learning), honest (committed to reality testing and self-criticism), non-dogmatic (committed only to explicit and testable ideals), decentralized (to provide the autonomy and variation required for experimentation), responsive (always with an eye for the collective good) and accountable (allowing challenges and due process). In a more recent formulation, the experimenting society has been called a 'learning' society defined by a pervasive commitment to the emancipatory potential of experimentation, innovation, reality testing and self-criticism (Sanderson 2002).

Defined in the image of the experimenting society, performance management is meant to ensure a process of rationally guided social and organizational change, policy experimentation, trial and error, emphasizing 'the role of reflection, lesson drawing and continuous adaptation' (Stoker 2006, 49) and ultimately 'reflexive social learning' (Sanderson 2002, 9). The overall goal of performance management is to link the sequences of the traditional linear process of policy-making together in a cyclic and continuous process of innovation and learning that will ensure the development of better

policy solutions (Van Dooren, Bouckaert, and Halligan 2015, 21). This requires development of internal procedures for performance measurement based on relevant indicator selection, data collection, analysis and reporting, and the subsequent use of the performance information by relevant decision-makers (Van Dooren, Bouckaert, and Halligan 2015, 65). In other words, the transformation from government to governance here implies the transformation of the policy process so that it finally functions as a process of scientific discovery.

Correspondingly, it is necessary to disassociate performance management somewhat from the NPM wave reforms that it is conventionally seen to reflect. The importance of contracts and the emulation of business leadership notwithstanding, the principal legacy of NPM is the intrinsic relation between the construction of public quasi-markets as frameworks for performance management, and vice versa (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011, 10). The market model is thus dominant to the point of sometimes being synonymous with performance management, specifically in the shape of cost/benefit analysis and so-called ratio-indicators, including efficiency, productivity, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness, which in turn requires specific types of data on costs, inputs, outputs and outcomes (Van Dooren, Bouckaert, and Halligan 2015, 21).

However, the type of indicators and information associated with the market has also been subjected to post-NPM criticism calling for 'wider' and 'deeper' understanding of performance information (Van Dooren, Bouckaert, and Halligan 2015, 21). This NPG approach to performance management involves broader standards of public and social value beyond the market (Moore 1995, Stoker 2006), as well as a more holistic perspective on the role of performance management in the 'whole of government' (Sanderson 2002). Moreover, this approach to performance management mirrors the overall post-NPM emphasis on the value of networks. The use of networks in performance management has been described as performance governance, i.e. an 'interactive' and 'hyper dynamic' form of performance management, based on a recognition of the need to 'organize the public sector to allow for citizens and customers of public services to participate in the whole policy cycle. This means that citizens are involved in co-designing, co-deciding, co-producing and co-evaluating public services in society' (Bouckaert and Halligan 2008, 189).

The goal of co-designing, co-deciding, co-producing and co–evaluating resonates deeply and widely within the wider governance paradigm. Even more than improved risk management, improved learning and innovation provide proponents of network governance and NPG with a key rationale for the use of networks (Osborne 2010). The systematic integration of networks in the policy process is seen here not merely to qualify public services from a user perspective, but to

deliver critical information about policy problems, as well as knowledge about concrete effects of public policies that are vital to collaboration, learning, innovation and the development of sustainable policy solutions in a wider sense (Agranoff 2007, Ansell and Gash 2008, Goldsmith and Eggers 2004, Eggers 2005, Goldsmith and Kettl 2009, Ulibarri and Scott 2016). Indeed, this line of argument has developed into a substantial literature on networks as a source of public sector innovation and user-driven innovation (Bason 2010).

This overlap between performance management and connective governance may go a long way in explaining why the latter tends to fall short of actual citizen participation and deliberation, but it must also be seen in the context of the particular claim to democratic legitimacy advanced by performance management: increased governmental *accountability*. Accountability implies transparency and a governmental responsibility to continuously demonstrate results and provide evidence to the general public, the media and stakeholders with a vested interest in particular issues (Lonsdale, Wilkins, and Ling 2011). As such, the concept of accountability has been essential in the attempt to establish 'output legitimacy' as a governance supplement to traditional 'input legitimacy' of representative democracy, particularly with reference to the EU (Scharpf 1999). With the backing of the World Bank, the EU and a near-universal commitment across national governments, it is hardly controversial to state that this attempt has been a resounding success.

What has perhaps been lost in this process is that the accountability of performance management is a standard of scientific management, not democracy. As Campbell made perfectly clear in his original argument for evidence-based public policy: accountability is the result of an experimentalist scientific rationality and procedural arrangements for testing and debating the results produced by policy interventions designed and conducted as social experiments (1969). Public policy makers committed to the experimentalist society are more accountable only to the extent that they are committed to scientific facts and the procedural arrangements ensuring the responsibility of empirical science. Accountability is, at its core, a standard of scientific responsibility as developed in academia and the scientific institution. As such, accountability may indeed be a necessary correlate of evidence-based policy making in order to protect against political manipulation of facts, secrecy, distortion etc.

More generally, accountability serves to maintain a scientific or at least quasi-scientific structure of information. Performance management is clearly responsible for an intensive mining of data sources, specifically designed studies and program evaluations, as well as the comparative approach found in the emblematic expression of current performance management: grading, scoring and

ultimately ranking of individuals, organizations, types of policy and, in the case of 'good governance indicators', the entirety of government as such (Pollitt 2014). Provided that such information is made accessible to the general public, the traditional form of scientific accountability is indeed also being extended and becoming more inclusive, allowing citizens (although clearly only the more capable and resourceful) to become part of 'review' processes previously reserved for specialized scientific audiences and peers.

What this amounts to, however, is less a reinforced democracy than a more open and transparent form of scientific management. Performance management is to some extent the most obvious heir to scientific management and, in this capacity, a strong candidate for confirmation of the idea that current technocracy is the latest incarnation of an ever-recurring intellectual doctrine. The history of performance management has, for example, been presented convincingly as a succession of eight performance movements, leading from Taylorism to NPM and current evidence-based policy claiming that 'research and indicators rather than ideology and opinion have to undergird policy' (Van Dooren, Bouckaert, and Halligan 2015, 51). However, the part played by performance management in the transformation from government to governance goes beyond 'revitalization of old concepts' and increased 'intensity in the use of performance information' due to 'technological changes' (Van Dooren, Bouckaert, and Halligan 2015, 55).

The obsession with quantification and the 'culture of objectivity' was always endemic to the technocratic project. In the original version of the technocratic project, however, measurement and quantification was a means to provide political-administrative elites with the numbers necessary to exercise 'expert judgement and general managerial skills' with a significant degree of discretion and even secrecy (Porter 1995, 146). Compared to this, performance management is by and large committed to openness, transparency and even inclusion of citizens in the scientific process. In this sense, Power was not entirely correct when observing that 'paradoxically, the audit society threatens to become an increasingly closed society, albeit one whose declared programmatic foundation is openness and accountability' (Power 1999, 128). The problem is not so much one of closure as the assumption that accountability should or could ever mean more than a relatively transparent and inclusive vis-à-vis closed scientific management.

Conclusion

Technocratic scientization and depoliticization has been called an 'apolitical ideology' (Fischer 1990, 21). On the one hand, the technocratic project is strongly opposed to the established ideologies of parliamentary and democratic politics. On the other hand, scientific management can

be said to constitute an ideology in its own right insofar as interest politics is supplanted by a 'politics of expertise' where political decisions are presented as necessary interventions above political contestation and debate (Fischer 1990, 26). In Habermas' original outline of this argument: scientific management may be less apparently 'repressive' and less relevant for a critique of ideology than the conventional list of grand ideologies. Nevertheless, the abstraction from questions of practical experience and social forces also make the technocratic 'fetish of science' functionally equivalent to an ideology insofar as it even more efficiently impedes broad political thought, reflection and debate about the foundations of society (1971, 111).

In this sense it is perhaps not surprising that decades of technocratic governance has now resulted in a populist counter-reaction. However, a more substantial engagement with the technocratic project also deepens our understanding of the destructive spiral between the two. Technocracy and populism are caught in a perfectly symmetrical rejection of democracy as we know it, and the current attempts to reassert scientific management against post-factualism is as misguided and doomed to fail as the hysteria and postures of populism are dangerous. In the current situation, any confusion of technocracy with democracy contributes to a deepening of existing problems. Populism is, for all its apparent flaws, a sign that the bluff of technocracy has been called.

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Figure 1: Technocratic governance