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RESEARCH WORKSHOP

THE TECHNOCRATIC CHALLENGE TO DEMOCRACY

Organizers:

Eri Bertsou and Daniele Caramani

University of Zurich, October 5-6, 2017

Democratic governments around the world are forced to deal with an increasing need for expertise and technocrats for effective governance, while at the same time remaining committed to and representative of the citizens who voted for them. The European crisis brought this uneasy relationship to the forefront of democratic politics, with multiple appointments of technocratic ministers and governments across European states. But how can we understand technocracy and the political power of experts within democratic political systems? Before being able to address this puzzle there is a series of fundamental questions in need of answers: How much 'technocracy' is entailed in our democracies? What are the consequences of technocratic decision-making? At what point does the power of technocrats become a serious challenge for representative democracy?

This research workshop aims to bring together a group of scholars and strands of political science research to address the questions above. The objective is to generate a comprehensive study of technocratic politics in relation to representative democratic systems, clarify the concept of technocracy and identify the workings of technocratic politics in cabinets, governments, political parties, independent bodies and campaigns in a comparative political perspective. Each individual contribution focuses on a key question of technocracy and technocratic politics using original research. Bringing together these previously disconnected strands of research we aim to address the neglected but pressing question regarding the role of technocracy in democratic politics and provides key insights to current phenomena of rising democratic dissatisfaction, anti-politics, populist and post-factual politics.

PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4

Arrival of participants

19.30 Dinner at ZUM GRÜNEN GLAS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5

- 8.30–9.00 Welcome and introduction
- 9.00–10.00 Theory Session I: “People in this country have had enough of experts”: The Technocratic Challenge to Democratic Representation. Christ Bickerton and Carlo Invernizzi Accetti
- 10.00–11.00 Theory Session II: Technocracy, Neutrality and Self-Government. Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca
- 11.00–11.30 Coffee break
- 11.30–12.30 Method Session I: Measuring Technocracy in Democratic Political Systems: Levels of Analysis. Eri Bertsou and Daniele Caramani
- 12.30–14.00 Lunch: Restaurant UniTurm
- 14.00–15.00 Method Session II: Technocratic and Democratic Discourse. Miguel Centeno and Jean Nava
- 15.00–16.00 Technocracy in Parties: Technical Expertise in Democratic Politics: Asset or Liability? Richard Katz
- 16.00–16.30 Coffee break
- 16.30–17.30 Technocracy in Legislatures: Professionalization and Expertise in Parliamentary Cabinets. Despina Alexiadou
- 19.30 Dinner at Zeughaus Keller

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 6

- 9.00–10.00 Technocracy in the Executive: Diffusion of Technocratic Governments in Contemporary Europe.
Marco Valbruzzi
- 10.00–11.00 Technocracy in Central and Eastern Europe: Democratization and Technocrats in Central and Eastern Europe.
Joshua Tucker and Jan Zilinsky
- 11.00–11.30 Coffee break
- 11.30–12.30 Technocracy in Latin America: From Economic to Social Policy.
Eduardo Dargent
- 12.30–14.00 Lunch: Restaurant ETH Terrasse
- 14.00–15.00 Technocracy in the EU: The Eurocrisis and Technocratic vs. Democratic Legitimacy.
Marina Costa Lobo
- 15.00–16.00 Policy Session I: Technocratic Challenge for Environmental Democracy.
Frank Fischer
- 16.00–16.30 Coffee break
- 16.30–17.30 Policy Session II: The Crisis of Epistemic Knowledge in Politics.
Claudio Radaelli and Claire A. Dunlop
- 17.30–18.00 Conclusion and planning of collective book.
- 19.30 Dinner at Restaurant Rosso

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7

Departure of participants

PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSANTS

Each paper is assigned a slot of 60 minutes. We plan to maximize discussion time and propose the following format:

- Max. 10 minutes presentation paper by author with a focus on rationale, contribution, motivation, key findings.
- Max. 15 minutes critique by discussant with focus on strengths and contribution, critical points, theoretical and methodological weaknesses and problems, unclear points, suggestions for improvement.
- 35 to 40 minutes open discussion.

This format obviously assumes that papers are read in advance. Please circulate your paper by **August 31st 2017**.

Furthermore, common lunches and dinners, coffee breaks in the morning and afternoon, and having participants in the same hotel should give plenty of opportunity for informal exchanges.

Papers and discussants:

Paper by	Discussant
Chris Bickerton and Carlo Invernizzi Accetti	Miguel Centeno and Jean Nava
Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca	Marina Costa Lobo
Eri Bertsou and Daniele Caramani	Richard Katz
Miguel Centeno and Jean Nava	Eduardo Dargent
Richard Katz	Frank Fischer
Despina Alexiadou	Joshua Tucker and Jan Zilinsky
Marco Valbruzzi	Eri Bertsou and Daniele Caramani
Joshua Tucker and Jan Zilinsky	Marco Valbruzzi
Eduardo Dargent	Despina Alexiadou
Marina Costa Lobo	Claudio Radaelli
Frank Fischer	Chris Bickerton and Carlo Invernizzi Accetti
Claudio Radaelli	Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca

PAPERS

Theory Sessions I & II

“People in this country have had enough of experts”: The Technocratic Challenge to Democratic Representation

Chris Bickerton (University of Cambridge)

Carlo Invernizzi Accetti (The City College of New York)

Abstract: The debate around the role of experts in democratic politics has never been fully settled. For some theorists, expertise forms the core of the universality of the modern state, expressed in the policy-making power of national bureaucracies. For others, it signals an ever-present danger of slipping back into a pre-democratic era where the educated classes claimed to speak on behalf of society as a whole. Most recently, the rise of ‘post-truth’ politics has made some commentators nostalgic for an era where power was confidently delegated to non-majoritarian institutions such as central banks and independent fiscal councils. This paper seeks to cut through some of the contemporary political debate by looking more systematically at the relationship between technocracy and the political regime widely known as party democracy. Rather than seeing technocracy and party democracy as opposites that challenge one another in the manner of two clashing visions of politics, this paper looks at how technocratic understandings of politics are emerging from within actually existing party democracy regimes. It does this by focusing on two aspects in particular: (1) the critique of political mediation present within technocratic discourse; (2) the critique of procedural notions of legitimacy advanced by technocratic discourse. The critique of political parties has seen some political actors style themselves as ‘citizen-experts’ where the role of ordinary citizens in politics is justified in a technocratic way. The critique of procedural legitimacy has led to a return of truth as a source of legitimacy in politics but one that has been taken up not only by conventional experts but also by new political movements such as Italy’s Five Star Movement. The importance of technocracy today is therefore primarily as a symptom of an underlying crisis of party democracy itself.

Technocracy, Neutrality and Self-Government

Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca (University Carlos III de Madrid)

Abstract: The tension between democracy and technocracy depends to a large extent on one’s conception of democracy. If democracy is understood as an institutional system for rulers’ replacement (democracy as accountability), the expansion of technocratic decision-making is not particularly problematical. Technocracy, in fact, may help to fix some of the alleged shortcomings of democracy (voters’ ignorance, politicians’ short-term horizons). Technocracy, however, is a concern if democracy is somehow associated with self-government (people deciding their own fate). The insulation of policy-making from democratic input does not grant neutrality, particularly when policy decisions have distributional consequences.

Experts' decision making may be independent from politics, but this does not make it neutral. Since citizens may have different views and interests on the policy issues decided by technocrats, non-elected decision-makers cannot have the last word. The paper explores how the assessment of technocracy is conditional on theories of democracy and illustrates the argument analyzing the role of technocracy in economic policy-making, particularly with regard to central banks as the most powerful technocratic agency nowadays.

Methods Sessions I & II

Measuring Technocracy in Democratic Political Systems: Levels of Analysis

Eri Bertsou (University of Zurich)

Daniele Caramani (University of Zurich)

Abstract: The theoretical tensions between the idea of democracy and technocracy have been well developed in historical and recent political thought. Nevertheless, what is necessary for the study of technocratic politics and its challenge or contribution to democracy is an empirical measure that allows for comparative research. In this paper begins with an operationalization of technocratic politics as it materialises in democratic contexts and identifies five levels of analysis, at the citizen, party, parliament, government and system levels. We bring together previously separate strands of research to develop a comprehensive approach to measuring technocracy within democratic political systems. We believe this is a crucial step before being able to determine the causes of increased technocratization of politics and its consequences of democratic representation, legitimacy and performance.

Technocratic and Democratic Discourse

Miguel Centeno (University of Princeton)

Jean Nava (University of Princeton)

Abstract: Too often, the term technocracy (or its opposite, populism) is used to define the content of policies. We argue that the term "technocratic" must mean something beyond a political stance; the term reflects an alternate form of politics from democracy. We argue that the two have different referents for their legitimacy: democracy relies on procedural rules, technocracy on the quality of the analysis. To explore this, we will use text analysis to analyze debates about an issue whereby we can hopefully define and identify two different forms of discourse, one based on popular sentiment and the other on accuracy or factualness of views. Currently we are considering the case of Brexit with the intention of analyzing websites, policy documents, parliamentary debates, etc. to see if we can identify different forms of policy approaches over and above ideological preferences.

Instances of Technocratic Politics in Democracies

Technical Expertise in Democratic Politics: Asset or Liability?

Richard Katz (John Hopkins University)

Abstract: All policy making involves two kinds of questions: those of preference (what do we want to achieve) and those of technique (how can it best be achieved). Although some models of politics assume that these can be neatly separated, that is rarely the case. Following Oakeshott, we can also identify two classes of experts: those with technical knowledge (generally identified as technocrats and distinguished by their advanced degrees) and those with practical knowledge (in this context, perhaps “masters” of the art of politics). As political experts come increasingly to rely on technical experts not just in areas that have traditionally been the preserve of technocrats (highway design, health and safety regulation, military tactics) but in areas that have heretofore been dominated by politicians (message formulation and marketing, for example), what are the consequences for democratic, as opposed to technocratic, government?

Professionalization and Expertise in Parliamentary Cabinets

Despina Alexiadou (University of Pittsburgh)

Abstract: Who are the cabinet ministers who decide on socio-economic policy in Western parliamentary democracies? One would expect economic globalisation and economic interdependence to induce an increase in the number of experts appointed to parliamentary cabinets. And it has. Yet, over time the number of professional politicians, defined as those who never had a job outside politics, has increased dramatically as well. This paper makes two contributions: First, it illustrates the shifts in the professional and educational background of cabinet ministers since the end of WWII in 18 parliamentary democracies. A lot more cabinet ministers appointed today have postgraduate education and are drawn from the ranks of business but also from local politics and party back rooms compared to thirty years ago. Second, it aims at explaining this process with a special focus on the interaction of economic globalisation, the electoral system and labor market institutions.

Socrates's Revenge: Diffusion of Technocratic Governments in Contemporary Europe.

Marco Valbruzzi (University of Bologna)

Abstract: According to many journalists (and some scholars too), the recent governments of Mario Monti in Italy and Lukas Papademos in Greece in November 2011 represented the latest specter to haunt European democracy: technocracy. In reality, as this paper will demonstrate, technocratic governments remain rare in Europe and, even when they do occur, there are key differences between cases. To

establish some clarity regarding both the spread and types of technocratic government in European Union (EU) member states, this paper firstly will provide a definition of 'technocratic government' and classify those few such governments that have existed in the EU-27 since 1989 according to their degree of partisan composition and remit. As will be shown, the Monti government (which Monti himself defined 'a strange government') stands out. This is not because it is typical of a new type of government menacing European democracy, but because it is an extreme case of a technocratic government both in terms of composition and remit.

Technocratic Politics in a Comparative Perspective

Democratization and Technocrats in Central and Eastern Europe

Joshua Tucker (New York University)

Jan Zilinsky (New York University)

Abstract: In Europe, technocratic governments rarely assume power, but the sporadic cases of technocrat-led government are illuminating. This paper documents the prevalence of non-partisan governments in new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, and shows that many countries in the region have no experience with technocratic governments (however, we show that "token" non-partisan experts are sometimes appointed to ministerial posts). We use public opinion data to analyze citizen satisfaction with non-partisan governments in countries where non-caretaker technocrat-led governments stayed in power for at least 12 months. Finally, we address the question of expert credibility head-on by conducting survey experiments of citizens in an Eastern European society where citizens still remember the last instance of a technocratic government. The chapter concludes by assessing whether non-partisan governance can be helpful during periods of broader "party failure" in an environment with maturing but possibly precarious political institutions.

Technocracy in Latin America: From Economics to Social Policy

Eduardo Dargent (Pontificia Universidad Catolica del Perú)

Abstract: Technocrats are prominent actors in Latin American contemporary politics. Associated in the past with authoritarian regimes that allowed experts to adopt their preferred policies, technocrats remained relevant after the democratic transitions in the region. Furthermore, in recent years we find experts leaving their usual economic policy areas and colonizing social policy areas. This image of technocratic pre-eminence, though, has to be contrasted with strong variation in experts' power across countries and even within countries across time. What is the source of experts' power? Under what conditions do they gain, establish, and eventually lose, their powerful positions? And why have technocrats recently become more relevant in social policy areas? On the basis of my own primary research on technocrats in Colombia and Peru, as well as secondary literature on experts in the region, this

The Crisis of Epistemic Knowledge in Politics

Claudio Radaelli and Claire A. Dunlop (University of Exeter)

Abstract: Experts and expertise feature prominently in the policy process of the European Union (EU). And so do controversies and contestation of their legitimacy. To understand the politics of expertise, we need to draw explicitly and systematically on a theoretical lens on the policy process. In this paper, we use policy learning as theoretical lens to explore the dimensions of the crisis of legitimacy of expertise. Specifically, we go for a granular approach and start from two variables: the social certification of actors and the tractability of policy problems. We then further decompose the ways in which expertise operates in EU policy arenas with the aid of explanatory typologies. We end up with different modes of epistemic learning, some normatively attractive, some unattractive, and the scope conditions under which the modes are more or less legitimate. We find that the problem is neither one of technocratic challenges to democracy nor one of politicians not listening to truth and science. It is instead a problem of what role the expert has and should have, in relation to what level of problem tractability, and with what kind of social certification of expertise and science. A key variable is the prevalent mode of learning: the same role can be legitimate in a hierarchical, compliance-driven policy arena but not suitable in an arena dominated by the logic of bargaining. Since EU policy arenas differ on this dimensions (role, problem tractability, social certification, and prevalent mode of learning) we expect to find variability across EU policies. The same applies to solutions: if we want more legitimate usages of expertise, we cannot go for a one-size-fits-all solution but we need to legitimize expertise by tweaking different types of policy arenas. The paper is conceptual with illustrations from case studies of EU public policies.

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PRACTICAL INFORMATION

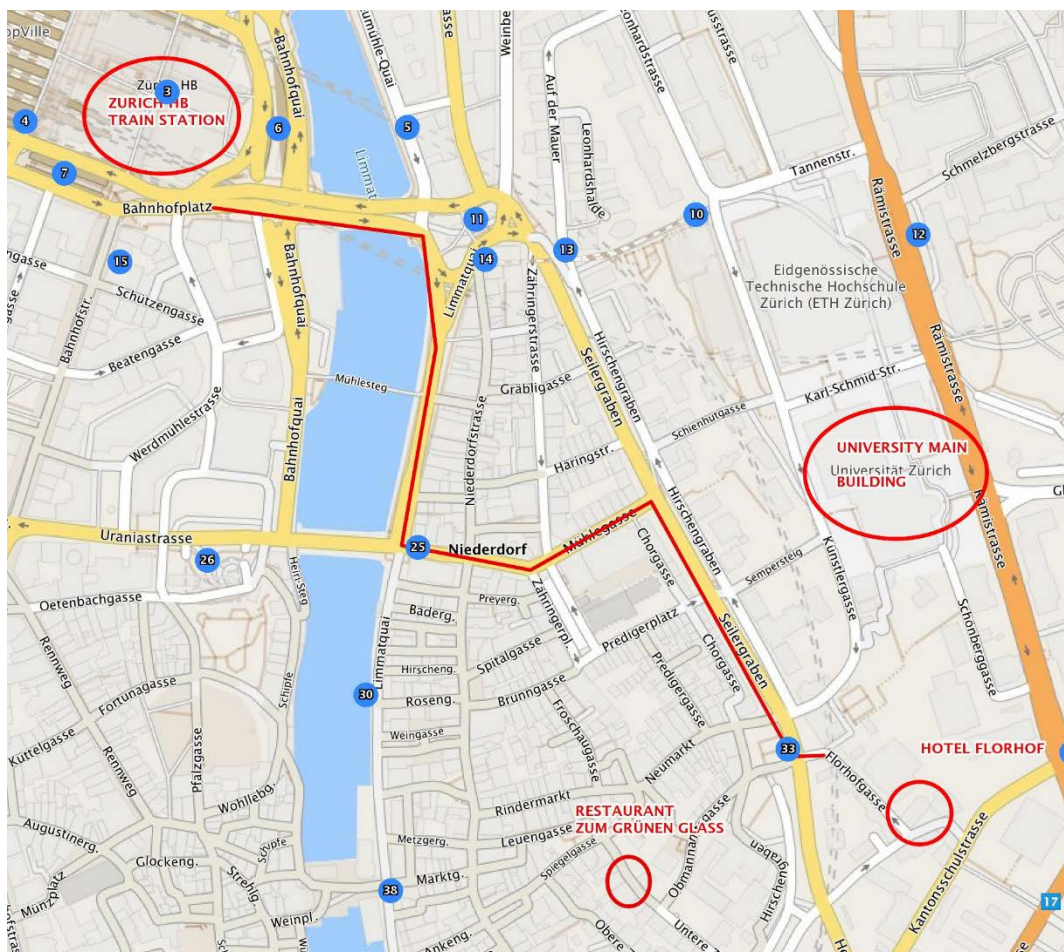
ARRIVAL

Upon arrival at Zurich International Airport participants follow the signs for “Trains”, buy a ticket at the counter (all cards are accepted) for Zürich Hauptbahnhof (or HB as the cool kids say) which is the main train station. The transfer is 15 minutes and trains run very frequently. If you like someone to pick you up, let us know.

HOTEL

The hotel is within walking distance from Zurich HB (app. 15 minutes). If you prefer to take a cab/taxi, please keep the receipt. Most accept card payments. You can also use bus number 31 with the same ticket from the airport. The bus stop is on Bahnhofplatz (see map) and you should get off at Neumarkt.

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Florhofgasse, 4
8001 Zürich
Phone: 0041 44 250 26 26
<http://www.hotelflorhof.ch/en/>
info@hotelflorhof.ch



RESTAURANT ON OCTOBER 4

Reservation has been made for 19.30. The restaurant is within walking distance from the hotel (less than 5 minutes). We can meet at the hotel a bit before and go together.

Zum Grünen Glas
Untere Zäune 15
8001 Zürich
Phone:044 251 65 04
www.gruenesglas.ch

VENUE WORKSHOP OCTOBER 5-6

The venue of the workshop is in the main building of the university. This is within walking distance from the hotel (app. 5 minutes).

Meeting room will be confirmed closer to the date of the workshop

Rämistrasse, 71
8001 Zürich
Main Building KOL (Hauptgebäude)



RESTAURANT ON OCTOBER 5

Reservation has been made for 19.30. The restaurant is within walking distance from the hotel (app. 15 minutes). We will walk together from the hotel.

Restaurant Zeughauskeller
Bahnhofstrasse, 28a
8001 Zürich
Phone: 0041 44 220 15 15
<http://www.zeughauskeller.ch/en/home>

RESTAURANT ON OCTOBER 6

Reservation has been made for 19.30. The restaurant is not within walking distance. We will go together by public transport from the hotel. We can decide how long before we meet and go for a drink before dinner.

Restaurant Rosso
Geroldstrasse, 31
8005 Zürich
Phone: 0041 43 818 22 54
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