14

Technocracy and Democracy: Friends or Foes?

Eri Bertsou

From their outset, democratic political systems have sought to balance a simultaneous need for legitimacy and efficiency. At the heart of the democratic claim of a 'government *by* the people and *for* the people' lies dormant a tension between inputs and outputs. This tension might not be apparent at first glance. We often consider the two components to be perfectly aligned by definition, assuming that 'the people'[1] will be able and willing to produce outputs that are in line with the needs and wants of their community. In reality however, the business of translating the inputs of popular demands to outputs that will satisfy the needs of society, falls on the shoulders of the political system and the government of the day. Social complexity, an interconnected international order, the requirements of time, knowledge and attention, are some of the reasons that necessitate the selection of a group that devotes itself to the business of government. Representative government, at first, and then representative government through political parties, has been the process to resolve this tension so that the outputs of the political system can work *for* the people (Scharpf, 1999). The aim was to combine the popular with the elitist element of governance, the need for responsiveness to the demands of the people with the need for responsibility to the needs of the community at present and in future times. When we speak of representative democracy, we usually refer to representation that is achieved through the selection of individuals on the basis of merit and skill, rather than through random lot (Manin, 1997). Political parties have taken up the challenge of aggregating interests across lines of social cleavages, be it class, religion, ethnicity, ideology and values, and at the same time, of selecting and training skilled and competent representatives through their ranks (Katz,

---

[1] In this chapter, I use "the people" to refer to all members of a political community, the "demos" of a democracy. The delineation of the boundaries of each political community and the question of who belongs to "the people" have been subjects of intense academic and public debate (Morgan, 1988; Manin, 1997). Especially in the past decades when the traditional boarders of nation-states have been eroding and that political polarization, identity politics and populism have been on the rise (Cramer, 2016; Muller, 2016).

1987; Bardi et al, 2004). The goal of party governments has been to balance the popular mandate they receive with responsible governance for the benefit of the entire community, in what Peter Mair has advanced as the responsible party model (Mair, 2009).

Expertise and competence are deemed essential for the effective governance of democratic political systems. Their role is to contribute towards democratic outputs and satisfy the second part of Abraham Lincoln's aforementioned dictum; "government *for* the people". "Government *for* the people" requires that the government works for the entire community, not simply parts of it, even if that part constitutes a majority (Williams, 1998). Democratic institutions of checks and balances have been put in place to protect the political system and the community at large. While their purpose is often explained as a mechanism to insulate the system from potential abuses by ruling elites, they also serve to protect the system from another equally potent threat: abuses resulting from ephemeral popular majorities (McGann, 2006; Plattner, 2010). "Government *for* the people" also requires that government outputs satisfy true needs of the community, whether or not citizens are conscious and in support of these needs (Manin, 1997; Schumpeter, 1942).

Following this perspective, expert elites form an integral and essential part of representative democratic systems. They may pose constraints to the popular will of the day, and thus seem as challengers to the demands of the majority, but this is precisely their role in liberal democratic systems. Technocracy, however, seems to go one step further. Technocracy refers to political power that is not sanctioned through the electoral process and therefore challenges the democratic idea of "government *by* the people". In recent scholarly and public discussions, technocracy has been equated with the imposition of external rule and labelled by definition undemocratic. It circumvents democratic processes and channels to enact policy that might be opposed by large parts of the population. In particular during the European financial crisis of 2010 and its aftermath, the growing influence of non-representative European institutions and the appointments of technocratic governments across Europe to deal with economic and social crises brought the tension between technocracy and democracy to the forefront of the public debate.[2]

---

[2] The Italian government of Mario Monti (2011) and Greek government of Lukas Papademos (2011) attracted the most attention, especially as their programme was, in large part, to

Yet technocracy is a complex, multifaceted and multidimensional concept and an even more pervasive phenomenon than we acknowledge. Whether it is a friend or a foe to democracy, it certainly has an important role to play in modern political systems. The purpose of this book was to advance the comparative study of technocratic politics and assess its impact upon democratic political systems. It set out to define technocracy, to critically analyse the concept and its elements and to identify manifestations of technocratic politics across political systems. This was quite a challenging endeavour in itself. Yet, throughout the many contributions of scholars from various subfields of political science and comparative politics, a common conceptualization and definition for the study of technocracy emerged.

Technocracy is a form of political power and representation, where decisions are made by a technical elite of experts, independently and responsibly, with the aim of maximizing the long-term welfare of the entire community. Four elements or dimensions of technocracy follow from this definition: (i) Technocracy is *elitist*. It singles-out a group of people based on their abilities, skills and superior knowledge and argues that it should be given the role of governing the community. Technocracy is also (i) *non-partisan* and (ii) *anti-pluralist*. It rejects the representation of parts of society and opposes the notion that decisions should be made through the aggregation of pluralist interests. Technocracy transcends political ideologies and follows the principles of independence and neutrality to make political decisions. Finally, technocracy is positivist, it believes there is an optimal true solution that can be reached through (iv) *rational and scientific* analysis of available facts. In a political context, the exercise of technocratic political power is legitimized through the knowledge, skill and expertise of the elite. Technocratic representation of citizens is achieved through an extreme case of the "trustee" model, rather than the "delegate" model (Caramani, 2017). Technocracy aims for maximum responsibility, rather than responsiveness to the demands of any given majority, and remains accountable to the long-term interests of the community as a whole, rather than a specific electorate. The technocratic method of governance is through depoliticization; promoting the independent, rational and scientific analysis of governance problems. This extends to the

---

implement financial austerity measures. There have been other recent technocratic cabinet appointments in Europe, such as the Bajnai government in Hungary (2009), the Cioloș government in Romania (2015) and the Orešković cabinet in Croatia (2015).

identification of societal goals, the decision-making process, as well as the designing and implementation of policy solutions.

Bearing this definition and the four aforementioned elements of technocracy in mind, technocracy can span between a maximalist view and a minimalist view. At one end, the maximalist view is an ideal political arrangement of governance or political regime, where decisions are taken by independent experts according to their view of what is best for the community and without any input by citizens. Many chapters in this volume acknowledge this extreme to be an ideational concept that serves as a springboard for theoretical debate, but which is seldom advocated as a real alternative to democracy. In Chapter 1, Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti label this the *classical* conception of technocracy, which pits the technocratic state in contrast to a democratic state. Technocratic governments, may at first glance appear as the closest manifestation of such a technocratic state, but as Valbruzzi explains in Chapter 6, most technocratic governments in Europe still contain a multitude of partisan members or enjoy the support of elected representatives in parliament to fulfil their remit. At the other end of the spectrum, a minimalist view of technocracy includes any political act or stance that follows a legitimization principle based on the four elements outlined above: it is identified by an expert through the analysis of factual evidence and is presented as objective, with the goal of maximizing the welfare of the whole community, not just its parts.

In other words, it is advocated as the sound course of action to resolve the governance issue at hand. In this view, technocratic elements are pervasive among institutions, actors and arrangements of democratic systems. Technocracy can be found in discourse, in individuals, in institutional roles and functions. These two extremes open up an entire spectrum for the study of technocratic politics within democratic systems. Most contributors of this volume find the potential challenge to democracy to lie in this spectrum where technocratic power is exercised within democratic systems. That is, the real challenge occurs when democracy calls upon technocratic elements to contribute to the effective and stable governance of states or to insulate areas from popular and executive reach. This book provides the theoretical, analytical and methodological tools for the comparative empirical analysis of technocratic politics within democratic systems. This includes the study of technocratic cabinets mentioned above, but also

technocratic ministers, technocratic institutions, technocratic discourse, technocratic citizen attitudes and much more.

The combined insights of this volume shed light not only on technocracy, but also on the relationship between technocracy and democracy in theory and in practice. The starting point of the book was to ask whether there is a technocratic challenge to democracy. This concluding chapter seeks to answer this question by summarizing the rich, multifaceted arguments and empirical evidence presented by scholars in the preceding chapters. It also aims to highlight the similarities and differences in the approaches to define, measure and study technocratic politics in democratic systems. It was the firm belief of the editors from the outset (and one of the reasons for the creation of this volume) that one cannot possibly assess the existence and magnitude of a "technocratic challenge" to democracy if there is no agreement – at least in broad terms – regarding the concept, the identification and the measurement of technocracy across time and national contexts.

This concluding chapter proceeds in three parts. Having provided a brief overview of the definition of technocracy and identified the spectrum wherein a technocratic challenge to democracy potentially lies, the next section elaborates two main paths of challenge for the stability of democratic systems. The section that follows summarizes the conceptual and methodological advancements achieved, as well as the key arguments and empirical findings presented in the thirteen chapters of the volume. Finally, the overarching question of the volume is tackled: Is technocracy a friend or a foe of democracy?

How technocracy challenges democratic systems

Flipping the motivating question of this volume on its head, I ask how precisely technocracy can challenge democracy and threaten the stability of democratic political systems. For this, it is fruitful to turn to David Easton's (1965) comprehensive theory of system analysis, which emphasizes input and output elements, as well as the dynamic nature of feedback that connects the two. In its simplest form, Easton's systems analysis sees the political system receiving inputs from citizens in the form of demands and support and translating these into outputs. The

political system, with all its institutions, functions and actors, has the task of interpreting, analysing and acting on the basis of citizen inputs to govern the community. Crucially, there exists a continuous feedback loop joining outputs to inputs, whereby the decisions and actions that form the outputs of the political system become part of the new environment and influence citizen demands and their level of support that goes into the system. This means that outputs that do not accurately reflect the demands of the political community create ever-increasing demands for correction. If these demands remain unmet, citizen support for the system will begin to wither away. In a way "outputs return to haunt the system" (Easton 1965; 29). The stability of the system overall is at risk when the demands placed upon it far exceed the support citizen are willing to give or when citizen support for the system wanes altogether.

Technocratic politics can pose a threat to democratic systems when it reinforces this disparity between demands and outputs. This can happen in two broad ways. In the first, technocracy highlights the shortcomings of democratic systems, increasing citizen frustration with the ineffectiveness of politics and undercutting system support. In the second, technocracy poses a threat to system stability from within, by promoting depoliticization, constricting democratic decision-making and reducing democratic depth (Fishman, 2016; Sanchez-Cuenca 2017).

The first way in which technocracy may pose a threat to the stability of democratic systems is located in the growing citizen demand for better political outputs and declining system support. Technocracy can be perceived by citizens as an attractive alternative form of representation to the current party-based model through popular selection and can threaten the stability of a democratic system through the substitution of democratic actors and the diversion of citizen diffuse support towards more and more technocratic arrangements. The nature of this challenge, however, can be easily misconstrued if one only focuses on technocracy. The shortcomings of party governments and party-based representative democracies are an essential piece of this 'technocratic challenge'.

In this sense, technocracy does not operate in a vacuum. It is evaluated relative to the operations of the existing democratic system and necessitated by its shortcomings. Examples of this type of challenge is the appointment of technocratic cabinets, the replacement of democratically elected actors by technocrats and even citizen preferences for technocratic as opposed to

democratic governance. Technocratic politics become the response to the perceived (or real) incapacity of democracy's main actors and institutions to provide the expertise necessary to ensure political outputs that satisfy the needs of the community. Empirical studies have shown that technocratic cabinets emerge in the presence of a crisis, when the existing partisan actors are unwilling or unable to respond to the social, economic or structural failures of the system (Wratil and Pastorella, 2018). Citizen support for technocratic governance is strongly shaped by peoples' trust in the political system and their evaluation of the system's democratic performance (Bertsou and Pastorella, 2017). Similarly, Tucker and Zilinsky in this volume find that the experience of a technocratic government does not undermine citizen support for party-based democracy, as long as democratic cabinets are perceived to be governing effectively, battling corruption and satisfying citizen demands (Chapter 13).

This technocratic challenge materializes when the actors and institutions of the democratic political system, even though selected *by* the people, fail to govern *for* them and there is no real responsiveness to the true demands of the people. The specific target of this critique is often political parties, which have gone from instruments for the aggregation of interests and mobilization to 'electoral machines' (Caramani, 2017). Individual elected representatives are also not immune to this charge. Even when leaders are democratically elected they are not necessarily governing responsibly. They may serve particularistic agendas, cater to a thin majority and hence also suffer from a democratic deficit. Eduardo Dargent (Chapter 12 in this volume) explains that in the Latin American context "technocrats can sometimes initiate and implement policies that end up being closer to democratic concerns than those of elected politicians" (365). Over-responsiveness to polls and the tailoring of governmental policy with an aim to secure re-election does not amount to true responsiveness to the needs of a community and will inevitably result in tensions between system outputs and democratic inputs in the long-run. When this happens, technocrats may be required to step-in to govern responsibly and ensure the long-term survival of the political regime. In this sense, democracy is not really challenged by technocracy, but by its own self and the way it manages – or fails – to balance responsive and responsible governance. What happens once technocratic politics have been "invited" to participate in governance and whether technocratic elements indeed help to promote the long-term welfare of the community, is a ensuing question worth investigating – and one I attempt to answer below.

The second way in which technocracy challenges democratic political systems refers to a challenge from within. The argument here is that technocratic power operating within the democratic system challenges its stability by removing the breadth and array of options for political-decision making and by superseding the mandate of elected decision-makers. When more and more competencies are removed from the table of elected representatives, their actions are constrained and there is little space left for political manoeuvre. As a result, technocratic power hollows up democracy; it reduces its depth and impedes the ability of the political system to translate citizen input into outputs.[3] From the side of citizens, this means that their actions can no longer influence policy, decisions and outcomes.

This is a common charge against technocratic politics, especially due to the way it promotes depoliticization. When entire policy areas are cut off from the realm of decision-making by elected officials and are reserved for independent experts, democratic hollowing could take place. There need not be a complete supremacy of the unelected expert over the politician with a democratic mandate. Constraints can take multiple forms, such as the definition of boundaries of what belongs to the political and what belongs to the technocratic realm, the set-up of the political options available, the framing and language of the debate or the justification for what is and what is not possible to achieve. Yet, as mentioned above, the task of a political system has always been to morph democratic inputs into outputs, including the interpretation, prioritization, compromise and in some cases refusal of people's demands. Is it therefore fair to say that these constraints constitute a challenge to the stability of democratic systems?

Insulating policy areas from democratic influence and overly constraining the options available to elected representatives means that a democratic system loses its flexibility to respond to citizen demands as these occur. Due to technocratic depoliticization the existing democratic processes that require citizen participation and engagement, such as elections, advocacy and protest, lose their power and effect. Also, the political actors tasked with representing the interests and acting upon the demands of citizens, engage in political bargaining and debate

---

[3] Fishman (2016) warned that even an exclusive reliance on representative bodies that are elected periodically and then act in a purely trustee manner (even if democratic in principle), creates a rather shallow form of democracy that lacks the substance of popular self-rule.

that has no real impact on political outputs. This creates frustration with political parties and representatives who are perceived to be ineffective and unable to respond to the needs of citizens. In practical terms, therefore, the hollowing out of democracy caused by technocratic politics undermines the stability of the system because it devalues citizen involvement and it promotes alienation. Political efficacy is compromised, that is, the belief that the system is responsive and that with their actions citizens can influence politics in their community. Trust and support for the system also wither, disaffection grows and once these attitudes become pervasive across the political community, system stability is at risk. This is the dark side of depoliticization (Hay, 2007; Flinders 2010). Citizens may dislike the conflict of ordinary politics, but more than that, they hate conflict when being on the "winning side" yields no results. This is particularly true for issues that are important and political decisions that matter to citizens and their community. In such cases, depoliticization can be perceived more like a betrayal of the system's democratic promise, rather than an efficient or neutral way of making decisions (Bertsou, 2019).

Of course, one might argue that none of this matters in practical terms, as long as the outputs are of high quality. If system outputs meet the most important demands of the community, then the threat to the stability of the democratic system will not materialize. In today's terms this may be translated to a growing economy, promoting employment and social security, avoiding crises or managing them competently when they occur.[4] If the above are pursued then there will be no discrepancy between demands and outputs and no brewing challenge to the stability of a democratic system. Technocratic governance promises to do just that: to ensure the smooth functioning of the political system as an efficient machine. Therefore, if technocratic elements serve to produce good outputs, they effectively contribute to the stability of the political system. They help to satisfy citizen demands and balance system support - even if they do so primarily through outputs. In the early days of the EU, this rationale for system support through output

---

[4] There is a lively debate on whether economic or socio-cultural grievances are more important in building up a popular backlash in many established democracies and the identification of these particular outputs is by no means a claim that only economic outcomes matter. The arguments of both sides have merit and it is more fruitful to think of the two grievance models are intertwined, rather than separate. Economic growth through globalization has had a differential impact on social groups within countries and socio-cultural grievances have much to do with relative social and economic status (for more on this debate see De Vries, 2018 and Norris and Inglehart, 2019).

legitimacy was widespread, despite continuous efforts to include representative institutions that would help to carry the system's input legitimacy.[5]

There are two problems that underlie this reasoning, both of which have manifested in recent decades and have brought the technocratic challenge to democracy under the limelight. First, technocrats are not infallible. Even under the (overly-stretched) premise that economic outputs are all that matter, it is naïve to maintain that technocratic institutions within democratic systems can ensure an uninterrupted production of ever-increasing positive outputs. Crises do occur, the environmental context can change in unpredictable ways and, most importantly, superior knowledge, dedication and skill cannot ensure that technical elites can always produce optimal outputs for an entire community. Arguing that by virtue of their expertise and scientific method, technocrats can intuitively grasp and cater to the long term needs of society is a dangerous claim, more akin to the legitimation proclaimed by authoritarian or theocratic regimes.

The second problem lies is the myth of neutrality and objectivity. Together with depoliticization, these are the flagships of technocratic politics. The promise of a conflict-less society, where all needs can be satisfied simply through the pursuit of optimized and efficient processes is an extremely appealing narrative and a breath of fresh air compared to the commotion of political bargaining and conflict. No technocratic principle has been as successfully adopted as the need for independence and neutrality in designing optimal policy solutions (Flinders and Buller, 2006). There is almost a moral higher ground attached to the pursuit of neutrality, that of an adjudicator without an interest to serve any side (Walzer, 1994). But the very idea of neutrality in policy-making is worth revisiting (Adoph, 2013).

Politics is the authoritative allocation of values (Easton, 1953) and this allocation inevitably includes conflict. Separating policy from politics may be a noble endeavour that is worth pursuing to ensure more responsible governance, but it is important to note that despite even the best intentions, (i) true neutrality is difficult to ensure, and (ii) even neutral actors are

---

[5] Scharpf (1999) defined "output legitimacy" the performance criterion centering on the ability of EU institutions to govern effectively for the people, while "input legitimacy" the political participation by and representation of the people.

involved in political decisions that create winners and losers. The arguments and evidence presented in chapters 2, 3 and 4 of this volume help to illuminate these problems. The move towards depoliticization has been sustained by identifying "pareto improving" policy areas (Majone, 1994), where there is limited trade-off in the allocation of values and resources among different groups. Such policies are meant to ensure that no party is worse-off, that a consensus is possible and that depoliticization serves to improve the quality outputs.

However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to identify areas or policy domains without any redistributive effects among social groups. Crucially, technocratic depoliticization preaches the 'abolition of conflict' and, therefore, lacks the tools to recognize and deal with redistributive impact. Once policy decisions have been reduced to a choice between an objectively optimal or suboptimal outcome, the negative impact decisions may have on parts of the community are masked. Yet technocratic elements that are part of the political system and practice politics, inevitably play a role in the authoritative allocation of values system (see Tortola and Van der Veer in this volume). Thus, it is imperative to acknowledge the existence of 'conflict' and 'differential impact' and to ensure that the technocratic institutions charged with the task of managing this conflict do not hide behind the veil of neutrality. In Chapter 2, Sanchez-Cuenca's claim that the actions of technocratic actors, such as the ECB, are a threat to democratic systems rests on this premise: the institution failed to recognize the conflict inherent in its decision-making and the way its actions affect different members of the EU, presenting its decisions as neutral and necessary. This criticism is qualitatively different from the charge that accuses technocratic institutions of stealing power away from the people and their elected representatives.

There is another argument in favour of the need for depoliticization. Removing issues from the realm of political contestation may be needed precisely because of the existence of political conflict surrounding the allocation of values and finite resources. Depoliticization helps to avoid actual conflict and to provide legitimacy to processes that will inevitably create winners and looser. This is where neutrality as non-partisanship, i.e. removing one's self from conflicting interests and being neutral vis-a-vis that conflict, is welcomed as an effort to include impartiality in political matters. But it will always be open to debate and the agents involved will be expected to demonstrate that they have no conflict of interests and no partisan goals.

The threat technocratic politics poses to a democratic system is by feigning neutrality and not acknowledging the redistributive effects of its actions upon society. The differential impact of policy among different groups of society and the idea of neutrality are not mutually exclusive. Unfortunately, technocratic elements in political systems often lack the tools necessary to acknowledge and deal with the impact of their actions and the creation of winners and losers. Therefore, while technocracy within democratic systems may strive to improve efficiency and to ensure responsible governance, it also sheds all responsibility for the potential negative impact of political decisions on social groups and limits the ability of democratic politics to respond to citizen demands for change. The following section presents the main arguments put forth in each chapter of the volume and summarizes the findings of the contributing authors to assess the impact of technocratic politics upon democratic political systems.

Evaluating "the technocratic challenge" in this volume

The first part of the volume focuses on Theory and Concepts. It situates technocracy in the current framework of democratic political theory and bridges it to the central concepts used in the empirical study of comparative politics. The chapters tackle some of the most pressing conceptual questions in the effort to assess whether and how technocracy poses a challenge to liberal democracy. Chapter 1 addresses the "complementarity" argument, whereby technocracy is seen to complement and enhance the quality of democracy by insulating certain areas from political competition and contestation and allowing for more competent governance. The following chapter takes issue with the "neutrality" argument, warning against the invariably political business of value allocation. In the same line of thought, Chapter 3 addresses the "depoliticization" argument, claiming that while technocracy can be non-partisan, it cannot and should not claim to be non-political. Further arguing that technocracy is political Chapter 4 tackles the "unresponsive" charge against technocracy and shows that technocratic responsiveness is possible – inevitable even – once technocratic actors operate within a politics system. Finally, Chapter 5 moves from the conceptualisation of technocracy to the identification of categories, criteria and measures, which allow the empirical study of technocratic politics.

The second section of the volume is dedicated to studies of technocratic politics across the most prominent arenas where expertise complements and clashes with popular legitimacy. Chapter 6 classifies and analyses the prevalence of technocratic cabinets in Europe, while Chapter 7 identifies technocratic ministers and the effect of their appointment upon policy reforms. Both chapters take up the challenge of defining the relevant criteria for determining who is a technocrat, but also whether "technocratic-ness" as a characteristic could be a matter of degree in the executive arena. Chapter 8 looks at the negotiating stance of technocratic versus democratically elected governments and their ability to enact reforms during the period of the European financial crisis. Chapter 9 turns to the study of technocracy as discourse and examines the 'Vote Leave' and 'Britain Stronger in Europe' campaigns during the referendum on EU membership in the UK. Finally, Chapter 10 provides an insight into the study of technocracy through the lens of comparative public policy, focusing on the conditions under which expert technocratic knowledge can be employed and legitimized in democratic systems.

Finally, the third section of the volume is dedicated to empirical studies of technocratic politics in a comparative perspective. Chapters 11 and 13 focus on Europe and use technocratic interventions in European states to study citizens' reaction and subsequent attitudes towards technocratic and democratic governance. Chapter 12 adds the perspective of Latin America, highlighting the similarities and differences between the profile and role of technocratic actors across Latin American and European countries. Bellow, a brief overview of each chapter serves to summarize the main arguments made by the authors, as well as the way in which the contributions are in dialogue with each other, challenging or building upon the different perspectives of technocracy and pursuing different methodological approaches.

Chapter 1 traces the argument of complementarity between technocracy and democracy across classical and modern political thought. Bickerton and Invernizzi Acetti follow a minimalist definition of technocracy, as described above, which includes all "appeals to expertise as the ground for political legitimacy". They trace the appearance of technocratic arguments back to Plato and distinguish between classical and contemporary arguments for technocracy. The classical argument advances a criticism of democracy, for bounding politicians to the wishes of the community and not allowing them to fulfil the function of true statesmanship. The authors argue this is not a real threat to present democratic political institutions and systems. It

is merely an ideational challenge that highlights potential shortcomings of popular involvement in politics and can serve as a springboard for intellectual discussion. In contrast, the authors maintain that contemporary arguments that advance the idea of complementarity between technocracy and democracy represent an important challenge to democratic collective self-rule. While formally respectful of democratic traditions and institutions, contemporary arguments promote technocracy in specific areas, where it can better serve the political system. However, the authors argue that the delineation of the boundaries between technocratic and democratic areas of decision-making is treated increasingly as a matter of technical expertise and lies in the hands of technocrats. This draws attention to a crucial and somewhat uncomfortable question: where and with whom does ultimate authority lie? The authors argue that the power to draw the boundaries of what should be decided based on popular self-governance and what should be cut-out and reserved for non-political and expert-driven decisions currently lies with the experts. Of course, this is not a static reality, but a continuously changing process necessitated by the evolution of national and transnational systems of governance and the nature of democratic challenges.

In a similar line of argument, in Chapter 2 Sanchez-Cuenca picks apart the neutrality argument put forth by contemporary visions of technocracy. He argues that while technocracy does not pose a challenge to the individual conception of democracy, that is, "the protection of individual freedom", it does threat the 'collective self-governance' component of democracy. The chapter highlights the challenge and perils posed by the modern version of neo-liberal technocracy, which lurks not in the drawing of boundaries between the popular and elite realms of decision-making (as in Chapter 1), but in masking redistributive problems using the language of independence and neutrality. As an example, the author uses the European Union, and the European Central Bank in particular, to highlight this tension between "neutrality" and decisions that create winners and losers across the European continent. This is a more difficult claim to counter if one seeks to maintain the necessity and positive contribution of technocratic politics to democratic systems. Neutrality and objectivity are two elements that sit at the very core of technocracy, and therefore acknowledging their elusive nature would undermine the whole edifice on which proponents of technocratic power and expertise rest their case. It is a compelling argument nevertheless. The criticism levied on institutions of technocratic power, such as the ECB, is equally compelling and it is important to distinguish this from the

"populist" critique: The charge is not that the ECB has taken away control from the elected governments of nation states and legitimate holders of democratic power, but that it has failed to recognize the conflict inherent in its policy-making and the way it affected debtors and creditors, hiding itself behind the veil of neutrality, objectivity and necessity. The chapter concludes that because of this technocratic challenge, democracy is losing – and in some cases has already lost – its depth and its ability to enact change according to the people's will. As a result of this inability, new actors have appeared across established and more recent democracies, who promise to restore popular sovereignty.

Chapter 3 further tackles the neutrality and de-politicization 'badges of honour' of technocracy. Pier Domenico Tortola follows the same definition of technocracy that runs through the volume and puts these two attributes under the microscope. His approach is to distinguish between "de-politicization", as the non-partisan element of technocracy that aims to represent the whole rather than its parts, from the "non-political", that is the objective and non-evaluative nature of technocracy. He agrees with Sancez-Cuenca that this non-political element, paired with the claim to objectivity or neutrality, is to a large extent a myth. When it comes to the practice of politics, any type of governance involves choices and value judgments. Nevertheless, the author accepts the possibility for the re-politicization of technocracy (see also Chapter 4). The traditional view sees technocracy and democracy as a zero-sum game, with technocrats and representatives fighting for influence; the more room taken by one group the less room is available for another. An alternative approach is to see technocrats, technocratic institutions and technocratic governments as political forces that are part of the realm of "politics as usual". Technocratic agents can simply be an addition to numerous other parts of democratic political systems that also fight to influence and shape policy-making, such as lobbies, interest groups or international politics. Technocratic influence may also serve a useful representative function of trusteeship, focusing more on responsible governance. The argument advanced here by Tortola is in favour of the "re-politicization" of technocracy on the non-political dimension mentioned above. He argues that technocratic actors and institutions can remain a non-partisan force, but they must acknowledge their political nature once they are part of a democratic system.

Chapter 4 of this volume takes this proposal a step further, by arguing that, when technocratic power operates within a democratic system, technocratic responsiveness is also possible. Van der Veer starts from the same conceptual framework and definition of technocracy as other contributors in this volume, but he challenges the "unresponsive" view of technocratic governance. His approach also takes issue with the crude dichotomy that sees populism as equivalent to complete responsiveness and technocracy as complete responsibility in governance. He argues that, when put into practice, the reality of politics and executive survival force technocratic actors and institutions to act in a responsive manner.[6] Based on the theory of institutional risk and reputation, the author builds this argument and uses evidence from three cases of technocratic bodies in the EU; the European Food and Safety Authority, the European Commission and the European Central Bank. Studying the interaction between technocratic experts and the political environment, he shows how signalling and executive survival can promote responsiveness. This novel approach supplements theoretical arguments regarding technocratic responsiveness with empirical evidence and opens-up further avenues for studying technocratic politics among institutions and elites. His research raises a further question, that is, whether technocratic responsiveness (to the political environment) mitigates or aggravates the challenge that technocratic institutions and technocratic power pose to democratic politics. In other words, we cannot take for granted that the technocratic actors will be responsive to "the people", often because there is a multiplicity of other actors or different visions of "the people" with competing demands. For example, the author argues that in member states where the legitimacy of the EC was more contested and its involvement more politicized the Commission signalled even more competency and responsible governance. In other studies, the EC has been more responsive to citizens amid higher levels of public awareness for specific policies affecting consumers. Further studies of technocratic responsiveness can help better understand to which 'external audience' technocrats choose to respond and what effect this responsiveness has upon system stability.

---

[6] One could also extend this argument to the behaviour of populist actors. If their aim is to establish themselves and ensure long term survival, when deciding to govern populist actors will need to moderate their "responsiveness" to ensure some responsible governance and positive outputs for the political system. The executive record of the populist left party Syriza in Greece shows such evidence, which after the most recent election established itself as the legitimate opposition in a new two-party system.

Chapter 5 concludes the first part of the volume and serves as a bridge between the theoretical arguments and conceptualization of technocracy of this section and the empirical study of technocratic politics within representative democratic systems that follow. In this chapter, Bertsou and Caramani propose a categorization of levels and methodological approaches to the study of technocracy for comparative politics. Building upon the conceptualisation of technocracy as a form of power and representation that stresses the role of expertise, skill and unattached interest, rather than popular selection, the chapter proposes four methodological approaches across three main levels of analysis. The methodological approaches include sociological analysis, text analysis, behavourial analysis and procedural analysis, and further explain the data and empirical applications at the individual, organizational and systemic levels. The motivating argument behind this contribution is that political scientists and analysts are unable to assess the existence and breath of a technocratic challenge to democracy as long as there is no way of identifying where, who and what is part of technocratic politics. Measuring manifestations of technocracy within democratic politics is the necessary first step to before determining the impact it has a system's outputs, political support and overall stability. The chapter proposes a roadmap for the study of technocratic discourse and attitudes based on the dimensions of elitism, anti-pluralism, science and expertise, output focus and technical style, as well as the categorisation of technocratic actors based on their level of independence and expertise. While the chapter does not provide a fully-fledged measurement strategy for each method and level of analysis, it sets the basis for a comprehensive framework in the empirical analysis of technocratic politics, which is taken up by the chapters in the second part of the volume.

Chapter 6 investigates technocracy at the executive level with a focus on technocratic governments. Technocratic governments have been partly responsible for the surge in public discussions surrounding the technocratic challenge to democracy. Marco Valbruzzi begins with a concept analysis suggesting technocracy is a multi-locus concept, meaning that it can be applied to different contexts. While the author agrees with Bickerton and Invernizzi Acetti's argument in Chapter 1, that technocracy and democracy are incompatible, he argues this is only the case at the higher level of abstraction, when one speaks of a regime where technocrats are in charge. Technocracy and democracy coexist and are compatible at lower levels of abstraction, such as the phenomena of technocratic cabinets or technocratic ideas and attitudes.

This chapter expands our understanding of technocracy, adding a definition for technocratic cabinets, which is a concrete manifestation of technocratic politics. This criteria for identifying and classifying technocratic governments are built as the mirror image and antithesis of those of the 'party government'. The author stresses that although technocratic governments are qualitatively different from party governments, not all technocratic governments are alike. He draws attention to the different loci and the very specific nature of technocratic executives appointed in European democracies in the past decades. The exercise of classifying all non-party governments appointed in EU member states since the end of WW2 (1945-2018), reveals the limited spread of technocratic governments. There have been 28 cases among nine countries. Classifying them further on the basis of composition, duration and remit, Valbruzzi only finds seven fully technocratic governments, nine technocrat-led partisan governments and twelve non-partisan caretaker governments. Therefore, he concludes that technocratic governments are not common and that there has not been a "technocratic government invasion" in recent decades. What has increased steadily over this period is the frequency of non-partisan experts in European executives (from about 5% to 11% in the same period), a trend that is mainly bucked by developments in southern, Central and Eastern Europe. This finding merits further investigation, to examine where such technocrats are appointed and with what effect for policy portfolios (see Chapter 7). Overall, the author addresses the ongoing debate on the impact of technocratic governments for the stability, quality and future of democratic systems and concludes that there is no imminent threat posed by technocratic executives. While the chapter focuses on executive power, on those who decide and not necessarily on those who influence or constrain policy decisions, the classification, identification and assessment of technocratic governments is enlightening and very relevant for scholars on executive politics and democracy.

In Chapter 7, Despina Alexiadou asks what is the prevalence and the policy effect of technocrats in government. Her contribution includes a classification for technocratic members of the executive and an empirical investigation of the policy effects of technocratic ministers on the portfolios of finance and social welfare. Alexiadou's definition of a 'technocrat' runs along similar lines to that of Valbruzzi in the preceding chapter, with the pre-requisite of 'expertise' and 'outsider or non-elected' status. A technocratic minister, therefore, is a "professional appointed to the political ministerial post who has policy expertise in the

department's policy jurisdiction and has never held elected office". The employs a dataset that includes the professional and educational career paths of ministers of finance and of social welfare in 13 European democracies between 1980- 2010 to determine technocratic ministers and pairs these appointments with the policies enacted under their remit. She finds that technocratic ministers of finance are more effective in enacting reforms compared to experienced partisan ministers. These reforms, however, are associated with cuts in public spending in the social and health sectors. This chapter adds further support to the argument that parties and partisan politicians willingly relinquish their policy-making power to unelected experts in times of crisis to carry out unpopular reforms. Alexiadou confirms that difficult economic policies are not taken up by partisans, for fear of the electoral costs of implementing tough policies, even if these are deemed necessary for the healthy functioning of society in the long-term.

In Chapter 8 Tarlea and Bailer investigate the role of technocratic governments during the Eurocrisis. Their chapter supplements our knowledge about the actions and effects of technocratic governments. They use the time of the European financial crisis as a case to study how the replacement of elected partisan governments by technocratic ones in five EU members affected their negotiating stance. They contribute a wealth of empirical evidence on the positions of technocratic governments in the European arena and their effect on domestic politics. The authors find little difference in the position of partisan and technocratic governments during the EMU reform negotiations in the cases of Italy, Greece and the Czech Republic. In the cases of Hungary and Bulgaria, the technocratic governments were more supporting of European integration reforms than their democratically elected predecessors. Examining whether technocrats in office have been more effective at enacting necessary reforms domestically, the authors find that the ability to implement reforms was heavily conditioned by the political support the government enjoyed on that issue. An in-depth analysis of Mario Monti's technocratic cabinet in Italy, shows that it was successful at enacting reforms for pressing economic issues, but had to moderate and in some cases abandon other domestic reforms (such as labour market and electoral reform) due to fierce opposition. Therefore, the authors conclude that the completely unresponsive and unaccountable view of technocracy does not hold in practice and provide further evidence to supplement Van der Veer's contribution in Chapter 4 showing how technocrats moderate their political stance.

Chapter 9 focuses on another level of analysis for technocratic politics; namely technocratic discourse. Nava, Liu and Centeno claim that the success of populist candidates in 2016 and 2017 was the result of a narrative that presented them as the democratic response and opposition to elite technocratic rule. They use the UK's referendum on EU membership to study the different narratives and discourse employed by the 'Vote Leave' and the 'Britain Stronger in Europe' campaigns. The authors argue that while there was evidence of populist discourse in the 'Vote Leave' campaign, it mainly formulated a narrative of democratic representation, which was not countered at the same level by the 'Remain' side. On the contrary, the 'Remain' campaign relied on technocratic frames and as a result never managed to challenge 'Vote Leave's' frame to "take back control" on democratic grounds. In this chapter, technocracy and populism are taken in their ideal forms, representing the democratic tension between the elitist and the popular, reason and will, efficient outputs and democratic inputs, mentioned throughout the volume. The authors analyse news updates on the official campaign websites for the entire campaign period and use topic modelling methods to determine the prevalence and language associated with a topic used by each campaign. This novel approach represents only one of many possible ways to shed light on technocratic elements employed in public discourse and their effects. The authors provide a wealth of empirical evidence showing how the discourse frames employed by the two campaigns differed significantly in the values and visions of representation that they emphasized. They argue that the recent "populist backlash" has been successfully constructed as a narrative that pits a democratic against a technocratic choice.

In Chapter 10 Claire Dunlop and Claudio Radaelli bring in the public policy analysis to the study of technocracy. The space of public policy is where technocratic elements find a natural home and where expertise, neutrality and unattached interest are valued and welcomed. Comparative public policy adds a different perspective to the pattern of the technocratic challenge identified throughout the volume. Their emphasis is less on actors and institutions and more on modes of knowledge utilization and roles for expertise in the policy process. They assess under which conditions it is efficient and legitimate for a democratic political system to rely on policy processes where actors, discourses and institutions privilege professional expertise and technical-scientific knowledge. While in comparative politics the study of

technocratic elements had not been systematically pursued up to this point, comparative public policy has been preoccupied with questions of the democratization of expertise and the democratically legitimate usage of elite knowledge providers for decades. The tension between efficient outputs and popular inputs still exists, but it is treated as an inevitable part of the policy process. Using a taxonomic approach, the authors identify four types of epistemic learning where experts participate in policy-making. Further, they evaluate the effectiveness of experts in these roles and highlight the communication and political skills necessary for the democratization and impact of their contribution. Their conclusion supplements findings brought forth in earlier chapters, especially Van der Veer's study of technocratic responsiveness and Tortola's arguments for technocracy's politicization. Dunlop and Radaelli warn that expert knowledge that doesn't seek to dialog, to reach out and to persuade, runs the risk of "living in the fantasy that all policy can be driven by rational-technical inquiry alone." While many may shrug at the thought of centres of scientific expertise engaging in political bargaining or any part of the political process, the recent backlash to scientific recommendations, especially in the environmental, health and technology policy areas, make this a worthwhile endeavor.

In Chapter 11, Marina Costa Lobo and Ian McManus explore citizen evaluations of technocratic institutions. The authors argue that technocratic power is present even in the absence of an outright technocratic cabinet being appointed at the helm of a country. When the decision-making power of elected officials is constrained by technocratic agents, as discussed in earlier chapters of this volume, the tension between democracy and technocracy manifests itself. The authors take advantage of the Eurozone crisis and the interventions of technocratic institutions in the decision-making processes of member states in Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Italy and Spain, either in the form of financial bail-outs or technocratic cabinets. They study citizen attitudes towards technocratic institutions among all Eurozone members and specifically the countries that experienced a technocratic intervention, to test whether support for technocracy and democracy are negatively related. In the tumultuous years of the Euro-crisis, it appears that trust in national political institutions do not negatively affect citizens' views of technocratic institutions. Even in the countries that experienced bailouts and technocratic governments, there is no evidence of the negative relationship we might expect. The authors find that economic perceptions are strongly predictive of trust in technocratic

institutions and argue that overall, this represent further signs that European citizens assign responsibility for economic policy to the technocratic institutions of the EU. Nevertheless, they find that there are differences across countries, given the different experiences of technocratic interventions. While the country economic and cultural context remains important, the authors also find differences across groups of citizens. The authors find that for ideologically left-leaning citizens technocratic and democratic governance stand in a negative relationship, raising the possibility that technocratic EU institutions may be politicizing the public along existing left-right cleavages. These findings open up further fertile ground for studying the impact of country specific determinants and individual level characteristics upon attitudes and preferences towards technocratic institutions.

In Chapter 12, Edoardo Dargent brings a comparative perspective from Latin America into this volume. Dargent manages to condense the lessons learned from the rich experience of technocratic politics in the region and provide a road map for better understanding why technocrats are a recurrent and salient phenomenon in Latin American politics. In defining who is a technocrat, Dargent highlights that the 'technicos' or technocrats in the region might not have held necessarily executive positions, but held real power as they framed policy-alternatives and therefore limited the decision-making power of elected politicians (as theorised in Chapter 1 by Bickerton and Invernizzi-Accetti). Therefore, the distinction between those with the power to influence and those with the power to decide is not clear-cut, and in many cases this dichotomy can be misleading. Technocrats and technocratic institutions that are not part of the executive, can also constrain policy-making to such an extent that it is effectively removed from the executive decision-making realm. The author argues that the minimalist definition of technocracy is more appropriate for classifying who is a technocrat in the Latin American context. Technocratic actors use expertise as a legitimating principle for their power and influence. They claim to be immune to ideological bias and to be able to propose the best policies for their country. Crucially, this chapter highlights how the tension between technocracy and democracy (or the triangular relationship between technocracy-democracy-populism as conceptualized in the introduction of this volume) often plays out in the Latin American context. Democratically elected leaders across many states have used patrimonial and clientalistic practices, which do not fall neatly on the democratic conceptualizations of responsiveness. In practice, in many Latin American states technocracy

fights and co-exists with clientelism (theoretically neither pure pluralism nor populism, but in practice used by 'populist leaders'). Dargent argues that governance by democratically elected leaders can also showcase severe democratic deficits. He uses empirical evidence from Peru and Bolivia to show that a co-habitation or 'convivencia' of experts and politicians along different power arrangements is possible. The author develops a series of criteria to assess the power of technocratic elites within a regime, opening an avenue of further research that allows scholars to examine the effects of technocratic dominance and survival within democratic regimes.

The final contribution to this volume address the lingering question of whether technocracy damages public support for democratic regimes. In Chapter 13, Tucker and Zilinsky investigate whether the experience of a technocratic government undermines citizen support for party-based democracy. In their study, technocratic governments that interrupt the sequence of democratically elected party-governments are considered as a manifestation of technocracy. The authors theorize that the experience of technocracy can either be accepted by citizens as a temporary measure without any negative impact, or it can damage citizens' overall evaluations of representative democracy. Their rationale for the 'technocratic penalty theory' is that technocratic government experience makes citizens disillusioned with the way politics is carried out in their country. This of course can be interpreted in two ways: Citizens are put off by the suspension of democracy and traumatized by the technocratic experience, or alternatively, they may continue to prefer unelected leaders, if those govern in a more effective way than the democratically elected ones. The authors highlight that technocratic governments are often able to enact reforms much quicker and more efficiently than elected partisan governments, especially those formed by broad coalitions. In the case of recent technocratic and technocrat-led cabinets in Europe, technocrats have often been asked to govern by democratic leaders who find themselves unable or unwilling to deal with pressing economic or societal problems. As mentioned by other contributors in the volume, this puts the 'challenger' label of technocracy under question. Nevertheless, if a technocratic penalty does exist, the interruption of democratically elected party-government damages citizen support for the regime and may threaten the stability of democratic systems. In their analysis of European democracies, Tucker and Zilinsky find that while in countries with a technocratic legacy citizens do evaluate their current government more negatively than citizens in countries without

technocratic experience, technocracy is not the real driver of this lack of support. They find that when corruption perceptions are taken into account in the empirical analysis, there is no association between technocratic legacy and government approval. This leads them to conclude that technocratic legacies exist in countries where governments and political institutions are less likely to function effectively and address important democratic issues such as the curtailment of corruption or the response to urgent crises. Therefore, technocracy, in the form of technocratic government appointment, is not a challenge to democracy, but simply another symptom of a democratic system that does not function in such a way that satisfies the demands of its citizens, and is thus, a challenge to itself.

Technocratic politics in practice: Treading a fine line

In this conclusion, I have advanced two possible ways whereby technocratic politics could pose a challenge to the stability of democratic systems, following the Eastonian approach to system analysis. The technocratic challenge stemming from the inability or unwillingness of democratic actors to produce outputs in line with the needs of the community, to respond to crises or to make difficult governance decisions, is not truly a challenge levied by technocratic actors. If technocrats are invited by the elected representatives and political parties, which are willing to relinquish some of their power to technocratic actors, one cannot really speak of a "challenge". This is often the role technocratic actors are invited to play. Alexiadou shows in Chapter 6 that technocratic ministers of finance are more likely to be effective in enacting unpopular economic policies. Valbruzzi in Chapter 5 reminds us that all technocratic cabinets need to enjoy the support of a parliamentary majority. Mario Monti, the head of Italy's technocratic government from 2011-2013 has noted that his efforts to include partisan ministers in a 'grand coalition' or 'national unity' cabinet were rejected by the political parties at the time.[7] Also citizens seem to be able to discern that the real driver behind the need for a technocratic solution is the faulty functioning of democratic systems and actors. Tucker and Zillinski show in Chapter 13 that technocratic governments do not damage people's overall support for and evaluation of democratically elected partisan governments, provided that these

---

[7] Mario Monti (23rd of June, 2017), Keynote speech at the European Political Science Association annual meeting, Università degli Studi di Milano, Italy.

governments fulfil their mandate and govern effectively. Finally, most technocrats and technocratic cabinets have a limited remit and their ability to push deeply unpopular policies, such as severe austerity measures during the European financial crisis, depends on the popular support they enjoy (Tarlea and Bailer, Chapter 8). Therefore, there does not appear to be a technocratic challenge levied to democracy in that sense and the arguments put forth in public debates in the past decade bemoaning the appointment of unelected technocrats should be redirected towards the democratic actors, including representatives, political parties and institutions, that fail to fulfil their democratic roles.

A technocratic challenge to democracy was also identified through another avenue, that of technocratic forces advancing depoliticization and neutrality of policy-making, resulting in a loss of democratic depth. The evidence to assess the level of this challenge is more mixed. On the one hand, technocrats and technocratic institutions rely on democratic political actors for their survival, which results in some level of technocratic responsiveness as Van der Veer illustrates in Chapter 4. Further, insulating certain policy-areas from popularly elected representatives not only contributes to better outputs, but can also help a political system honour its liberal democratic credentials. In Chapter 12, Dargent shows that democratically elected politicians can promote even more 'unresponsive' outcomes than technocrats in systems where clientelism is pervasive and state capacity is weak. Blind responsiveness to a majority, even if sanctioned through electoral processes, can be even more damaging for parts of the community and minorities than the blind pursuit of technocratic responsibility.

On the other hand, the claims of technocratic depoliticization, neutrality and objectivity can be a double edged sword and need to be re-examined critically. It has been mentioned frequently throughout this volume that once technocratic power operates within a political system its actions become political by default (Chapters 2, 3 and 4). As appealing as conflict-free decision-making process might sound, masking impactful political decisions and actions as objectively optimal and necessary can pose a challenge for democratic systems.

A further caveat that remains is that technocrats are not immune to biases and mistakes. Despite their expertise, skills and knowledge, it is possible that technocrats may not intuitively grasp

the needs of a community and deliver high quality outputs. This problem is aggravated by the technocratic claim to objectivity and the belief that there can only ever be a choice between a 'correct' or optimal decision and a 'wrong' or suboptimal one. In this view, opposition to the technocratic processes and outcomes becomes illegitimate. If one argues against an outcome that is derived through objective, rational and scientific analysis, then they must be 'wrong' by default. It is important to point out that true scientific inquiry rests on proving and disproving hypotheses to advance our understanding of the world. Nevertheless, it is possible that without enough diversity in their midst, even when adhering to the scientific method, technocrats may be prone to biases.

In the early days of technocratic politics, most scholars believed it would be the engineers that spearheaded the technocratic revolution (Crick, 1962; Akkin, 1977), but in the end it was the economists that became synonymous with technocratic governance, and in many cases with technocratic governments (Alexiadou, 2018; McDonnel and Valbruzzi, 2014). In Latin America the developmentalist experts and diverse professionals that were placed in charge of boosting development across the areas of health, agriculture and planning in the 1960s and 1970s were eventually also replaced by economists (Silva, 1991). From the 1990s onwards, 'technocrats' became synonymous to economists and, more precisely, 'neoliberal economists' in line with the trend in European democracies. Economics is a social science, in which conflict is inherent as it seeks to satisfy unlimited wants with limited resources. Neoliberal economics is a particular strand of economics, with very specific assumptions regarding optimal outputs and the effectiveness of policy tools and associated to political ideologies of the right.[8] The fusion of technocratic politics with neoliberal economic principles is also evident in political behaviour research, which finds that citizens with right-wing ideology tend to be more supportive of technocratic governance than left-leaning citizens (Costa Lobo and Macmanus in this volume, Bertsou and Pastorella, 2017). It becomes apparent, therefore, that technocratic politics in practice are not immune to discipline biases.

---

[8] McDonnell and Vabruzzi (2014) found that technocrat-led governments are associated with neoliberal market reforms, while Alexiadou (Chapter 7, this volume) finds that technocratic ministers of finance are more likely to implement cuts in social spending. However, it is impossible to determine whether technocrats' neoliberal economic policies are a result of their personal policy preferences or necessitated by the crises they are often called to manage.

In conclusion, technocracy is a *friend* to democracy when it helps representative democratic systems to balance the need for expertise, efficiency and responsibility in governance with the demands placed upon the system by its citizens. Technocracy may help to articulate a critique towards failing democratic politics, but it does not directly challenge it. The challenge is posed by democratic actors themselves, either because of the over-responsiveness that debilitates them from pursuing the long-term best interest of citizens or because of their lack of skill and expertise necessary to produce outputs that promote the welfare of society.

Technocracy is a *foe* to democracy when it is blind to the existence of conflict and disregards how technocratic decisions impact various groups in society. Hiding behind a veil of objectivity, necessity and neutrality, technocratic politics may contribute to an illiberal approach to governance, in much the same way as blind responsiveness to fleeting popular majorities. Technocratic politics can also act to destabilise democratic systems when political outputs fail to meet the demands of the community while under technocratic oversight. If this occurs and the political system is not flexible enough to allow for a re-orientation of political outputs, the stress placed upon the system through increasing demands and lowering support will be destabilizing.

A question that lingers over much of current public and academic discussions is whether technocracy is to be held responsible for the rise of populism and the appeal of populist messages across democracies in Europe, North and South America in the past decade. The "populist backclash" thesis has often interpreted political developments of the past few years (such as that of British voters choosing Brexit over the technocratic EU, US voters choosing Trump over the experienced Hillary Clinton) as a popular rejection of technocracy in favour of populism.[9] Yet, an opposing view is that preferences for more technocratic governance will increase and eventually, technocracy will act as a corrective to the populist drift (such as French voters choosing Macron over LePen). This is hard to assess. First, the work presented in this volume has highlighted the problem of assigning the democratic, technocratic and populist labels inconsistently across actors and phenomena. As Nava and colleagues show in this volume (Chapter 9) a choice for Brexit was presented using a democratic frame. Similarly, Donald Trump can be considered as a political outside and expert (businessman) as opposed to

---

[9] For more examples see Alexiadou (2018) and Norris and Inglehart (2019).

Hillary Clinton's long career as a member of the political establishments. For this precise reason, clear definitions, classifications and consistent empirical treatment are key to researching the political choices, trends and consequences observed around the world.

Second, questions regarding a 'populist' or 'technocratic' backclash are reminiscent of the 'chicken-or-egg' dilemma, meaning that a conclusive answer will always be elusive. A more fruitful approach is to think of the tension between input legitimacy and efficient outputs, between responsiveness and responsibility, between the popular and the elitist elements, as inherent to the continuous process of democratic governance. If the pendulum swings too far to either side, there will be a push towards the opposite end in an effort to correct the drift and re-balance the system.

This means we do not have a static picture in our hands. The answer to the question "is there a technocratic challenge to democracy" offered in this volume may change as political systems and actors develop in the coming years. Important questions still remain and further research on the pervasiveness and impact of technocratic politics is not only possible, but warranted. These are questions that often transcend the borders of sub-fields in political science. For example, the institutional and behavioural perspectives are necessary to investigate how representative institutions can respond to the simultaneous demands for more responsiveness and more responsibility. Can democratic innovations provide insights through the promotion of citizen assemblies or the democratization of expertise (Dryzek et al. 2019)? Similarly, public policy and political behaviour scholars could find common ground to explore citizen preferences for technocratic expertise in different policy areas and the best way to promote expert findings in public debates. With pressing issues emerging across environmental and health policy areas, informing citizens and creating support for local, national and supranational programs becomes an important piece of the political puzzle, and one where technocrats play an important role (Aitken, 2010). In comparative politics there is still a lot of research that can be done to investigate where technocratic power is exercised and with what effect (Wratil and Pastorella, 2018; Adolpho, 2013; Alexiadou, 2018). Citizen preferences for technocratic governance, technocratic and stealth democratic attitudes also provide a wealth of opportunity for further research (Bertsou and Pastorella, 2017). Exploring the individual and contextual determinants of technocratic attitudes, as well as their consequences in terms of

participation, electoral behaviour and democratic support are key to understanding the demand-side for technocratic politics.

Important questions also remain regarding the role of political parties and elites. Can technocratic expertise provide a boost to the responsible image of political parties (Dommet and Temple, 2019)? Are political parties and cabinets with more technocrats in their midst perceived as more capable? Without a doubt, political parties have an important role to play – in their current or some other form - in representing the true interests of their electorate and promoting skilled and expert representatives through their ranks. Finally, better understanding public perceptions towards technocratic politics and the impact of technocratic institutions on democratic systems is crucial to the future of the European project. For all of the above, it is our hope that this book provides a helpful point of reference.

Aitken, Mhairi (2010). Why We Still Don't Understand the Social Aspects of Wind Power: A Critique of Key Assumptions Within the Literature. *Energy Policy* 38(4): 1834-1841.

Bertsou, Eri (2019). Rethinking Political Distrust. *European Political Science Review* 11(2): 213-230.

Cramer, Katherine J. (2016). *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

De Vries, Catherine E. (2018). *Euroscepticism and the Future of European Integration*. Oxford University Press.

Dommett, K., and Temple, L. (2019). The Expert Cure? Exploring the Restorative Potential of Expertise for Public Satisfaction With Parties. *Political Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321719844122

Bertsou, Eri (2020). "Technocracy and Democracy: Friends or Foes?" in Eri Bertsou and Daniele Caramani (eds.) *The Technocratic Challenge to Democracy*, London: Routledge.

Dryzek, John; Bächtiger, André; Chambers, Simone; Cohen, Joshua; Druckman, James; Felicetti, Andrea; Fishkin, James; Farrell, David; Fung, Archon; Gutmann, Amy; Landemore, Hélène; Mansbridge, Jane; Marien, Sofie; Neblo, Michael; Niemeyer, Simon; Setälä, Maija; Slothuus, Rune; Suiter, Jane; Thompson, Dennis; Warren, Mark. (2019).The crisis of Democracy and the Science of Deliberation. *Science* 36(6432): 1144 - 1146

Easton, David (1953). *The Political System: An Inquiry into the State of Political Science*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Flinders, Matthew (2010). In Defence of Politics. *The Political Quarterly* 8: 309-326.

Hay, Colin (2007). *Why We Hate Politics*. Cambridge: Polity.

Hernandez, Enrique, and Hanspeter Kriesi (2015). The electoral consequences of the financial and economic crisis in Europe. *European Journal of Political Research* 55: 203–224.

McGann, Anthony (2006). *The Logic of Democracy: Reconciling equality, deliberation and minority protection*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Norris, P., & Inglehart, R. (2019). *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781108595841

Pitkin, Hannah F. 1967. *The Concept of Representation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Plattner, Marc F. (2010). Populism, Pluralism, and Liberal Democracy. *Journal of Democracy* 21(1): 81-92.

Walzer, Michael (1994). *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad*. Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Bertsou, Eri (2020). "Technocracy and Democracy: Friends or Foes?" in Eri Bertsou and Daniele Caramani (eds.) *The Technocratic Challenge to Democracy*, London: Routledge.

Williams, Melissa S. (1998). *Voice, Trust, and Memory: Marginalized Groups and the Failings of Liberal Representation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press