TECHNOCRATIC DISCOURSE CODEBOOK

Note to users: This codebook was developed by Eri Bertsou, Daniele Caramani and the students enrolled in the MA Research Seminar on Political Representation in Comparative Perspective (Department of Political Science, University of Zurich) in Spring 2017. We thank all the participants of this course for their contributions. If you wish to use this codebook, please cite as Bertsou, Eri and Daniele Caramani (2017). Technocratic Discourse Codebook. *IPZ working papers*. A condensed version of this codebook is also available at Bertsou, Eri and Daniele Caramani (2020). Measuring Technocracy in *The Technocratic Challenge to Democracy* (Eds. Bertsou and Caramani). Routledge.

DEFINITION

Technocracy as a form of power and representation

Technocracy as a principle of representation and source of power within liberal democracies:
- Power: knowledge, expertise, competence, merit [as opposed to privilege (monarchy) or popular election (democracy)].
- Legitimacy: output, efficiency, effectiveness, problem solving, addressing complexity. Accountability: yes, but replacement from the knowledge elite.
- Institutions: neutral, independent, meritocratic appointment (no elections), distant from partisan interests.
- Actor: knowledge elites.
- Goal: monolithic, long-termism, responsible, maximization of social welfare, progress.

CONTENT

Note to researchers: Are all dimensions necessary for the presence of technocratic discourse? (for example, is an anti-political discourse technocratic? Is elitist discourse technocratic?)

Dimensions of discourse: These are the five dimensions of discourse content. The style followed and values perpetuated by the discourse (explicit or implicit) can be similar across dimensions or specific to them and help the coders identify the discourse of technocracy.

1. Elitism dimension: Emphasis on expertise, criticism of people-centrism

Elitism in technocratic discourse is present when the speaker separates a **society's elite group, based on its knowledge, expertise, superior academic credentials, intellect and know-how,** from the ordinary citizens. There is an implicit or explicit higher value attached to this group, as people 'who know best' and as those who can and should guide the society, in opposition to ordinary citizens who are less equipped and can be susceptible to the wrong motives. This speech promotes the 'trustee' over the 'delegate' model of representation and emphasizes that **only** this knowledge elite can guide the society responsibly, with long term goal of prosperity.

2. Anti-politics dimension: Critical of representative democracy

The anti-political nature of technocratic discourse serves two goals. Firstly, it separates the knowledge elite (good) from the political elite (bad) of a society. As mentioned above, technocratic discourse attaches a higher value to a group of knowledge elite, not only in opposition to ordinary less knowledgeable citizens, **but also in opposition to the political elite.** Politicians being selected by citizens through elections (essentially a popularity contest, which can never result in responsible government) are motivated by short-termism, their political career and the partisan interest of their immediate electoral base and political party. Secondly, technocratic speech criticizes the partisan/sectoral interests of organized political parties, the politicians that follow them and are committed to an ideology instead of the good of the whole society and the institutions and processes of the political system that allow this behavior.

3. Anti-pluralist dimension: Monolithic view of the world

The main reason that technocratic discourse is classified as anti-pluralist and heavily criticizes ideological and partisan interests (as above), is because technocrats adhere to a **monolithic view of the world**. What is right and good is right and good for the entire society. Technocratic speech does not recognize social conflict among societal groups on the basis of sectoral occupation/class/minority status etc and considers specific interest groups as damaging to the overall prosperity of the society. In addition, based on its knowledge, experience and skills, the solutions and policies offered by the technocratic elite are right/correct and any other course of action is wrong.

4. Scientific objectivity dimension: Positivist approach

The knowledge elite is superior on the basis of its expertise, **neutrality and objectivity** (which allows it to think long-term without partisan or compromised interests). Using their skills, technocrats can formulate an **optimal** solution/plan/policy for the society to maximize welfare - implying that all diverging proposals would be sub-optimal, and hence bad/wrong. The method used appears scientific. Facts are true and speak for themselves, independent of the preferences and subjectivity of the decision-maker who happens to relay them. Style of facts, figures, evidence and objective sources.

5. Crisis dimension: Urgency of fixing what is broken, emphasis on what works

Speech embodies a sense of urgency to fix what is broken and the need for expertise to tackle difficult/complex global problems facing the society. Any dramatization of an emergency is technically charged (machine, fixing, goal oriented, functioning).

FORM/STYLE

1. Descriptive representation: appearance and speech

- Authoritative, confident
- Goal of communicating information, not of convincing. The merits of what is said are self-evident
- No dialogue, non-discursive, but rather a one-directional message
- Smart appearance, intelligent speech (not everyone has to understand), well-articulated sentences, broad vocabulary, not simplistic,
- Dry speech (neither humorous nor sarcastic or anything similar)
- Speech presupposes a great amount of background knowledge, it is exclusionary
- Denigration of 'common-sense' (value-laden)

2. Terminology

- Scientific, technical jargon, neutral, like a manual
- "proof", "data", "evidence", "objective", "neutral", "expert", draw from previous experiences and knowledge, "Research suggests", "scientists have shown", not just state an approach but reason for it, "methodology", "technical"
- Specific, clear, issue orientated, Precise and with numerous reference to an objective knowledge
- Is addressed to insiders who have the "keys to understanding". Use of terminology specific to the domain in question (example economy and fiscal policy "debt to gdp ratio", "bond spread", "bank solvency", "non performing loans", "budget deficit", "primary surplus" etc/ Environment and technology, military defence etc) with the aim of excluding those who do not speak/understand those terms and limit the discussion among experts.
- Use of foreign words

3. Facts, statistics, sources, no personalization / anecdotes, general statements

- High importance of the "proof" of what is stated.
- Probably supported by expert researches on a specific topic.
  Ex: Commissions extraparlementaires in Switzerland (Deutsch: Ausserparlamentarische Kommissionen)
- Politics is not talked about in the language of social values and social interests and but in the language of objective 'fact and necessity'.
- No dramatization, no emotional language
- No reliance on anecdotes and general statements. Facts and figures over dramatization. For example % of bank foreclosures over the story of John* who lost his house.
- Emphasis on legitimate sources
  Above-average use of multiple sources, many references
  Preferred source of statistics are government agencies, as they probably produce less biased reports/facts than NGOs or other institutions/groups
- Quotes, references to other experts or studies, tables, graphs, plots
- Description of the methodology, transparency

4. Grammatical features

- Hiding direct action (passive voice, no active verbs assigning agency)
- Nominalization (giving a proper name and agency to phenomena, ex globalization, world migration etc)
- Third person forms (no "I" that speaks to you or solidary and inclusive "we") hence does not allow for dialogue, plurality of opinion and disagreement. Bakhtin calls it "monological" discourse.
- No interpersonal exchange and dialogical resources, claiming to be value neutral and objective reporting of facts.
- There is no agency (passive voice, nominalization, avoidance of active verbs).
- Facts are true and speak for themselves, irrespective of the researcher who happens to relay them. They are not inferences or judgments.
- No dramatization, figures of speech used or analogies.

THE CODING PROCESS

The coding process can be distinguished in three main steps: (1) search, (2) identification of relevant texts and (3) the actual coding. The first step is the search of relevant texts. You need to clearly explain how you searched and retrieved texts that are considered relevnt. The second step is to identify which of the texts need to be selected for analysis (if not the entirety of the texts, in which case steps 1 and 2 are merged). What was the method for selection? The third step is the actual coding of the selected text, in terms of its identity and characteristics (type of text, source, speaker, audience, written/spoken etc) and in terms of its content (technocracy).

(1) SEARCH FOR RELEVANT TEXTS

Data (text) will be collected during the time period XXX -YYY. In this time period we will collect X relevant speeches/reports/articles etc. from search results the two most often used search engine/search function of newspaper/website of the national Parliament/ European Parliament etc.

Decisions that the researcher needs to make at this stage:
Speaker/Author
Time period
Number of texts
Outlets (for example, if newspaper articles, which newspapers? If political speeches, which political speeches?)
Receiver/Audience (intended)

(2) IDENTIFICATION OF TEXTS FOR ANALYSIS

In the case that the entirety of the relevant texts is used in the analysis, this step is not necessary. If the relevant texts are numerous and the researcher will analyse only a subset of these, she needs to explain how the final texts were selected.

Texts can be selected because they contain most relevant information, or randomly to aim at a representative sample of the identified relevant texts (this is common practice in media and

communication studies, where newspaper articles are selected in a 'randomised' manner, for example the articles appearing the second Tuesday of every month etc).

(3) CODING

If a text is selected for analysis the actual coding starts. This is when the researcher uses the codebook on Technocratic Discourse to 'grade' each text.

I.   Text Identity:

- Speaker/Author
- Date
- Type of text
- Length
- ID number
- Audience
- Original Language (translated/original)
- Source
- Contextual information (comment)

II.   Coding scheme:

- Grade from __-2__ to __+2__
  - Presence high intensity _+2_
  - Presence low intensity _+1_
  - Absence _0_
  - Presence of opposite low intensity _-1_
  - Presence of opposite high intensity _-2_

III.   Unit to be coded :

- Sentences
- Paragraphs
- Section-based thematic coding

IV.   Aggregation

- Aggregation of technocratic dimensions: through **addition**
- Aggregation of text (sentences-paragraphs-text): through **averaging**

V.   Titles, Subtitles

- In the case of written text with title, subtitle, abstract, these are analysed as part of the text (sentences or thematic section)