The Technocratic Challenge to Democracy

Edited by

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Preface and Acknowledgements

Manifestations of technocracy have become frequent. They include "war" declarations from Mexico's new president on the technocrats from the "Salinas revolution" in the 1990s, but also recent technocratic cabinets in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary and Italy, non-partisan ministers in Portugal, and the appointment of new versions of neo-liberal "Chicago Boys" in President's Bolsonaro cabinet in Brazil. More generally, one observes the growth of supra-national technocratic bodies such as the IMF or the EU. Examples include also populist attacks to the independence of the Federal Reserve and the ECB (as aired by US President Trump or Greek Finance Minister Yannis Varoufakis, among others), pension institutions (by Interior Minister Matteo Salvini in Italy), courts and judges (by tabloids in Britain and populists in Switzerland) as well as the Yellow Vests' protest against Emmanuel Macron, the French president often described as technocratic. Brexit Minister David Davis and the UK Independence Party have accused the civil service of sabotaging Britain's exit from the European Union. Similarly, it is claimed that climate scientists and experts act based on "an agenda" that they are politicized and not neutral. On the opposite side, the reliance on experts finds increasing support driven by citizens' scepticism toward bickering parties and politicians, and by distrust toward democratic institutions' efficiency and competence in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

Issues of technocratic neutrality, its politicization, its role as counter-weight to populism, the role it plays in responsible and responsive representation in democratic systems but also the "democratic deficit" of technocratic regimes are the themes of this volume.

Although the issue of technocratic politics is propelled in the public debate when technocratic forces manifest themselves, it has become clear that the questions it poses have roots in the very foundations of our governance systems and will become ever more pressing in the decades to come. As the complexity of political systems increases, due to technological advances and an interconnected world, and citizen demands for efficient outcomes grow, the tension between responsible and responsive governance will intensify. How can democratic systems manage to use independent knowledge and expertise to deliver effective governance without losing their democratic credentials? While the "technocratization" of politics (decicion making being removed to unresponsive, unelected elites) is often considered the underlying reason for the current populist backclash, technocracy can also offer a corrective for democratic systems that swing too far toward irresponsible governance. We therefore see technocracy as a challenge, but also as a potential corrective force, as a "friend" and as a "foe" of democracy. The aim of the volume is to understand and explain these dynamics, both in theory and in practice, and to provide a common framework for the study of technocratic politics for the future.

The book developed out of various research initiatives. In 2006, the University of Zurich launched a broad research programme on the challenges to democracy in the 21st century funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (NCCR programme). While dealing primarily with populism and mediatization, parts of its research were devoted to the growing demands for expertise and supra-national governance in the context of globalization. At the closing of the programme in 2017, it had become clear that beside populism, technocratic governance constituted an equally challenging alternative to representative democracy, albeit a neglected one. This prompted theoretical work and, eventually, empirical research on technocracy, most notably with a new comparative survey on technocratic

attitudes among European publics (Bertsou and Caramani 2017). In October 2017, the new research cluster on technocracy at the chair of Comparative Politics in Zurich organized a two-day workshop on "The Technocratic Challenge to Democracy" followed up by a workshop at the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops in Nicosia in 2018 and a book panel at the Council for European Studies in Madrid in 2019.

For these workshops, leading academics on technocracy and related subjects were able to come together for the first time and think systematically from comparative politics and public policy perspectives about technocracy in the current "crisis" of representative democracy. This book is the result of these efforts to address technocracy and the challenge it poses to contemporary democracies theoretically and empirically at the level of state structures, policies, politicians and citizens.

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Abbreviations

ANSES	French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety
BU	Banking Union
CSR	Country-Specific Recommendation
ECB	European Central Bank
ECJ	European Court of Justice
EFSA	European Food Safety Authority
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
EMU	European Monetary Union
ERA	European Regulatory Agency or Agencies
ESFS	European Financial Stability Facility
ESM	European Stability Mechanism
EU	European Union
EVS	European Values Survey
IFI	International financial institutions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INPS	Italian National Social Pensions System
ISI	Import substitution industrialization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMT	Outright Monetary Transactions

PR	Proportional representation
QE	Quantitative Easing
UN	United Nations
WTO	World Trade Organization
WVS	World Values Survey

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