



C
o
n
c
e
p
t
s
&
M
e
t
h
o
d
s

Volume 3
Spring 2007
Issue 1



N
E
W
S
L
E
T
T
E
R

O
F
T
H
E
I
P
S
A

C
O
M
M
I
T
T
E
E
O
N

C
O
N
C
E
P
T
S
&
M
E
T
H
O
D
S

C
O
N
T
E
N
T
S

2

Editorial

Bernhard Kittel

3

Wrestling With Methodology: Considerations about Policy Learning

Peter Biegelbauer

6

Negative Results in Social Science – Summary

David Lehrer, Janine Leschke, Stefan Lhachimi, Ana Vasiliu, and Brigitta Weiffen

8

What Role for the Numbers in Text Analysis? Resuming Franzosi's Journey From Words to Numbers

Jan Zutavern

12

Problems of Political Accountability in Network and Multi-level Governance

Yannis Papdopoulos

16

Democratic Accountability Deficits of Network Governance: A Comment on Papadopoulos

Mark Bovens

19

About C&M



EDITORIAL

In its third year, **Concepts and Methods** starts to resemble the discussion forum which IPSA Research Committee 1 hoped to initiate when Andreas Schedler asked me to edit a new committee newsletter in 2005. As the somewhat desperate comments in my previous editorial have exhibited, this process is not an easy one, given restraints on the side of potential authors, but also on the side of production. Although the papers arrived in time to publish this issue of **Concepts and Methods** in March, I am profiting from the day off on a rainy Whit Monday as I am writing this editorial – torn between project application deadlines, departmental profile papers, preparation of the accreditation of BA and MA programs and family life on a holiday.

Nevertheless, **Concepts and Methods** can pride itself with a set of articles that do exactly what should be done in these pages: They are brief statements and contributions to debates that partly span several issues and bring forward the conceptual, methodological and method-related concerns that are often neglected in mainstream journals, in which authors seem to have to suggest that all these problems have been solved and that the substantive results are unambiguous.

This issue is no easy read, however. In contrast, it offers a choice of difficult and serious topics. Peter Biegelbauer reflects on a nasty problem in a currently booming industry in policy studies: how can we observe policy learning and how can we distinguish it from other, perhaps related, but often rather different phenomena like power politics?

David Lehrer and his co-authors, in their summary of an article recently published in *European Political Science* 6(1), 2007, present a typology of negative results that never make publication. This is a consequence of selective reporting of results that is induced by the practice of the scientific community to accept only results that are deemed significant, relevant or interesting. We are glad to support the aims of the project by spreading the news and we thank EPS and Palgrave publishers for kindly permitting us to print this piece.

Next, Jan Zutavern follows up on a discussion that is going on in these pages since the first issue: Highlighting the advantages and dangers of formal approaches to text

interpretation, he challenges some aspects of Roberto Franzosi's method for numerically representing and analysing narrative text.

In the debate between Yannis Papadopoulos and Marc Bovens, another conceptual issue is at stake. To what extent do network forms of governance in the multi-level setting, which are currently rather popular alternatives to the more "traditional" democratic procedures of political problem solving and decision-making, endanger political accountability? Both authors highlight the potential dangers of such procedures, referring to the trade-offs and implicit undermining of the democratic legitimacy of modern politics.

Let me finish this editorial by inviting you, the reader, to contribute to the discussion if you feel challenged by an argument presented in these pages, or if you simply want to make a brief comment on any topic related to concepts and methods in the social sciences. Please note that we have changed our email address to an address that is easier to access for us:

maw@uni-oldenburg.de

Bernhard Kittel
Chief editor

Bernhard Kittel

is professor of social science methodology at the Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg, Germany

bernhard.kittel@uni-oldenburg.de

PETER S.
BIEGELBAUER

Wrestling With Methodology: Considerations about Policy Learning

Since the early 1990s a number of papers have been written utilising the notion of policy learning, with different conceptualisations of actors, places and fora of learning, reflected in concepts such as policy diffusion (Bennett 1991), transfer (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000), learning (Hall 1993, Sabatier 1998) and lesson-drawing (Rose 1993). The promises of a policy learning approach include the widening of the scope of research questions on policy innovations and the flexibility of the approach regarding its combination with more classical political science categories such as power, interests and representation. The learning notion also fits easily into other approaches such as different variants of neo-institutionalism and it allows for an incorporation of ideational and cognitive components in explanations negotiating issues such as worldviews and knowledge of actors.

Yet the learning approach - if indeed we can speak of a single approach - has also been charged with a number of criticisms (James and Lodge 2003, Maier et al 2003). Most importantly, the danger of developing a catch-all terminology at risk of describing every action as learning will be discussed, which is related to the problem of pinning down a concept that, upon closer inspection, turns out to be rather slippery.

What is policy learning?

The first hurdle to overcome by the researcher is to find a definition of the term at hand. Indeed a number of different definitions of policy learning do exist, yet until the present time none of these have been recognised by a majority of researchers dealing with policy learning. For example, subject to learning may be decisions (made in the past), as well as knowledge, skills and attitudes (moral and causal beliefs), which might lead to decisions in the future, near or far. Moreover, a processual dimension of learning might be juxtaposed to one concentrating on outcomes. Different definitions of policy learning then are possible, three of which shall be mentioned here.

First, policy learning might be understood as a mere change of action. This rather loose definition is often implicit in the usage of the term in public discussion. Second, policy learning might be seen as the change or confirmation of action following the assessment or evaluation of other policies. This notion of learning might still include trial and error elements (Rose 1993); it might be unconscious and it might be unplanned. Third, policy learning might be conceptualised as a change or confirmation of action, following from a systematic evaluation of other policies. Such a systematic evaluation must be conscious and explicit; if it is systematic, it must also be planned. A definition of this kind is often implicit in the work of policy consultants.

The first of these definitions is very wide, whereas the last is quite narrow. Both positions carry dangers: all too narrow definitions run the danger of overlooking examples of learning and concentrating on technocratic approaches to policy-making that entail structured consultancy-driven processes. Even more dangerous are cases in which definitions are too wide, as they risk interpreting every action as learning.

It therefore is sensible to use a definition of policy learning that should be exact, yet at the same time allow for a certain flexibility, so as to be capable of being applied to different policy fields at different times. I propose the following definition: The term "policy learning" stands for the change of policy relevant knowledge, skills or attitudes, which are the result of the assessment of past, present or possible future policies.

An important element of this definition is the reflexive dimension of the process, which centres upon the assessment of a policy and its results. Thereby the effects of the policy are reflected upon and new knowledge, skills and attitudes become the basis for considerations, which might result in political action taking place immediately or in the future. There is also a chance that policy learning

has happened, but no action is taken - for example in the case of satisfying behaviour, when a certain policy is considered satisfactory only in the face of scarce resources. Another example would be a case in which a policy is seen as fit for change, but the political resistance against a change is estimated to be too strong in comparison with the gains expected from deploying the policy. Yet another example for not taking action despite policy learning having taken place would be a policy which seems to reach its goals better than expected.

Furthermore, learning does not have to be based on some kind of strict evaluation that typically might be explicit, systematic and planned, although this may be the case. Learning, as understood here, may be a relatively unsystematic act, happen alongside other daily practices, as for example in the case of "learning by doing".

Operationalising Policy Learning

Next we have to decide how to apply the term on the social phenomena we observe. And again a danger lurking for the researcher is that everything can be understood as learning. One must be able to differentiate, for example, between outcomes of negotiations on the one hand, and learning processes, on the other; the term learning otherwise becomes meaningless.

But how can we distinguish between policy learning proper and strategic behaviour of political actors which are part of the every day trade of politics, as in the case of negotiation situations, when everyone tries to obtain good outcomes serving their best interests? One way out would be the way often chosen by anthropologists: participant observation. Unfortunately, social scientists often encounter difficulties in establishing the necessary level of trust that would make it possible for her or him to observe, for instance, two members of parliament engaged in log rolling, i.e. in trading political positions in order to end an impasse and get their pieces of legislation through a parliamentary committee.

Another solution to the problem would be to simply ask the political actors what the reasons for their decisions were. This provides us with an opportunity not only to learn more about the actions of the interviewed person, but also about the interpretation of these actions by the person her- or himself. We can make an effort to tap into the implicit knowledge of the interviewee, his or her understanding of how policy-making works and what the social practices of policy-making look like.

Importantly, an interview of this kind should not simply be seen as an instrument used by a neutral researcher to extract data on an objective world from a passive research object. Rather, it is understood as a complex social interaction in which interviewer and interviewee play different and often even several roles during the course of an interview (Bogner/Menz 2005).

This becomes all the more interesting when other sources are taken into consideration, too, such as policy papers, pieces of legislation, or election platforms, which can be examined with regard to the reasons provided for policies carried out or asked for. These data can become

even more valuable if they are not being assessed for a certain point in time only, but are part of a longitudinal study. In the latter case it is possible to determine whether there have been changes in positions of actors over time.

Observing Policy Learning

Of course these changes could be the result either of policy learning or strategic behaviour such as, for example, efforts to appease a coalition partner or to react to changing public opinion. This means that we still have not dealt with the central problem at hand, i.e. to distinguish between policy learning and other reasons for policy change! One way to do so is to tackle the problem not directly, but laterally. If it is so difficult to directly distinguish between policy learning as a cause for policy change (or reinstatement) and other causes which may even be covariant, it might make sense to look for a central precondition for policy learning and infer the existence of a case of policy learning from the existence of the central precondition.

Indeed the existence and expansion of policy relevant knowledge can be seen as such a central precondition for policy learning as long as we understand the reflective aspect of the process of policy learning as its central characteristic (which we do, if we accept the above definition). The researcher then would have to look for the knowledge upon which a certain policy is based (which in turn is found by an analysis of documents and statements as described above) on time 0 and compare it with the knowledge available at time +1, when the policy was assessed and either reinstated or changed.

Policy learning is likely to have happened if indeed the knowledge of a single or a group of actors responsible for a certain policy has changed over time, this change has been found to be relevant for the assessment of the policy and has indeed been linked to the policy by some statements of the involved actor(s), drawn from participant observation, interviews, document analysis or other techniques.

Final Caveat

We can use the interesting concept of learning in policy-making, in order to see if political actors in specific cases were engaged in "powering" and in "puzzling", too (Heclo 1974). But this is only possible after we have spent some time on the conceptualisation of the term and after conceding that it is not possible to simply speak of learning in policy-making as if we could observe actors directly engaged in the learning activities, ignoring all the pitfalls along the way.

Yet, while concentrating upon the factor learning, it is important not to forget other central categories of social science such as power, representation and interests. Without taking into account power relations between policy actors – visible and invisible (Bachrach/Baratz 1962) – it is not possible to arrive at a sensible interpretation of political actions. Policy learning takes place before and in the framework of power relations: sometimes

it is even driven by these. In analyses of policy-making, the employment of the notion of policy learning, should therefore not replace an analysis of power relations, but should supplement it. ■

Bibliography

- Bachrach, P. and M. Baratz (1962) 'Two Faces of Power', *American Political Science Review* 56 (December): 947-952.
- Bennett, C. (1991) 'Review Article: What is Policy Convergence and What Causes It?', *British Journal of Political Science* 21: 215-233.
- Bogner, A., B. Littig, W. Menz (2005) *Das Experteninterview. Theorie, Methode, Anwendung*. Opladen, Leske + Budrich.
- Bogner, A., W. Menz (2005) 'Das theoriegenerierende Experteninterview – Erkenntnisinteresse, Wissensformen, Interaktion', in: Bogner, A., B. Littig, W. Menz (2005): 33-69.
- Dolowitz, D. and D. Marsh (2000) 'Learning from Abroad: The Role of Policy Transfer in Contemporary Policy Making', *Governance* 13(1): 5-24.
- Hall, P. (1993) 'Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State', *Comparative Politics* 25(April): 275-296.
- Hecló, H. (1974) *Modern Social Policies in Britain and Sweden: From Relief to Income Maintenance*. New Haven/London, Yale University Press.
- Maier, L. M., F. Nullmeier, A. Hurrelmann, T. Pritzlaff, A. Wiesner, Eds. (2003) *Politik als Lernprozess? Wissenszentrierte Ansätze in der Politikanalyse*. Opladen, Leske + Budrich.
- James, O. and M. Lodge (2003). 'The Limitations of 'Policy Transfer' and 'Lesson Drawing' for Public Policy Research', *Political Studies Review* 1(2): 179-193.
- Peters, G. B., Ed. (1996). *Lessons from Experience. Experimental Learning and Administrative Reform in Eight Democracies*. Oslo, Scandinavian University Press.
- Rose, R. (1993). *Lesson-Drawing in Public Policy*. Chatham, New Jersey, Chatham House.
- Sabatier, P. (1998). 'The Advocacy Coalition Framework: Revisions and Relevance for Europe', *Journal of European Public Policy* 5(1): 98-130.

Peter Biegelbauer

is Senior Researcher at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Vienna, Austria. He teaches at the Universities of Vienna and Innsbruck on social learning and public policy making, political economy, comparative politics and social science methods as well as political, sociological and economic theory since industrialization. His research work focuses on the fields of research, technology, industry and innovation policy, where he has coordinated several national and international research projects. He has been engaged in the Austrian Political Science Association and has held various positions there, including Secretary General 2000 and 2001. In 2006 he was guest professor at the Charles University in Prague. Currently he is preparing an issue of the "Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft" on learning in politics together with Erich Griessler. This is to be published in fall 2007.

beagle@ihs.ac.at

DAVID LEHRER
JANINE LESCHKE
STEFAN LHACHIMI
ANA VASILIU
BRIGITTE WEIFFEN

Negative Results in Social Science – Summary

(Summary of an article published in *European Political Science*, vol. 6 no. 1, January 2007. Full article available at: <http://www.palgrave-journals.com/eps/index.html>)

In the social sciences, conventions of academic publication lead to selective reporting of results. Potentially useful information is lost. This does not mean that unexpected findings which eventually prove to be stimulating and seminal never appear in print. But these are not regular events, and publishing such results can be difficult. Relegated to informal communication, rather than citable publications, surprising evidence that might be useful to other researchers goes to waste.

Results are generally good and positive things. A carefully constructed referential system validates certain statements as useful and worthy of dissemination, and discards statements that fall outside this set. Yet these other findings are also an important output of the research process; they are conclusions not within the range of the validation system used to select some of the output as 'results'.

Given the heterogeneity of social science methods and the lack of a grand unified theory, the odd, unexpected or 'negative' result cannot be justified only by the soundness of the method applied; and negative results are arrived at *via* diverse paths. We therefore propose a processual, rather than a generic, definition: negative results are findings that are validated *outside* the research context in which they were generated, but *not* by the standards of the heuristic process that generated them. This tension between the research process and some of its output may be one recognisable feature of negative results.

Results become 'negative' due to bias, intended or not, on the part of the researcher himself or in the research community: significance, confirmatory or publication bias. The following typology differentiates negative results based on the relationship they bear to the research process that generated them:

Inconclusive results in part confirm and in part reject theoretical expectations. They may be highly sensitive to model choice. They arise when analysis leads to diverse outcomes depending on what data are used, which cases or periods are observed or which methods are employed.

Reporting inconclusive results might enable reconciliation of contradictory evidence. It might lead researchers to reformulate or refine questions, or open debate on the applicability and limitations of particular methods and approaches.

Non-results bear a relationship to existing theory and hypotheses, but neither confirm nor reject researchers' assumptions. They are results that at first glance say nothing. A finding may be termed a non-result when the independent variable in question, contrary to prior expectations, is not significant. Here 'significant' refers not only to statistical significance strictly defined, but more generally to the ability to confirm or reject a hypothesis or assumption.

A non-result might lead us to reformulate the hypothesis. This is often beyond the scope of a research project and therefore may not be pursued further. Yet, were non-results reported, it might be useful to the scientific community to know that a research path has been followed up to a certain point and that, if one wishes to explore the matter again, the research design may have to be adjusted.

Confutative results appear to contradict previous findings, established theories and paradigms, or the stylised facts of a particular subfield. They may emerge as a by-product of a research programme, or from explicit questioning and replication of existing studies. As long as there is a concise explanation of why the old studies need updating (e.g. bad data quality or new methods available) and the new analysis generates a convincing result, then we are not dealing with negative results. When, moreover, a new, alternative explanation is identified and demonstrated, this 'positive' result might fit into an ordinary journal. In other cases, however, we may find empirical evidence that contradicts current theoretical tenets but that fails to lead to new theoretical developments.

Sound empirical evidence that questions established paradigms, even if no alternative theoretical framework is offered, is worth presenting to the scientific community, since it might reorient research.

Ersatz results are empirical findings that bear no clear relationship to any theory. These 'theory-free' results fail to fit the theory their finders happened to be interested in, or any existing theory at all. Like caffeine-free cola or alcohol-free beer, they seem to be something we were looking for, but not quite. Clearly, some results have emerged from the research process, either a statistically significant association or a systematic pattern in the material analyzed. However, these patterns appear to lack context and do not relate to any theoretical expectations or assumptions. They may of course be spurious correlations; however, they may also indicate relationships between phenomena that had previously been ignored.

It might therefore be worthwhile to explore the connections indicated by ersatz results further, and to consider alternative theoretical contexts. Were such results to be published and discussed within an enlarged theoretical context, they might open new paths of research.

What could social scientists learn from reporting a wider range of results? Perhaps that negative results are not so 'negative' after all; perhaps that 'positive' results are not so positive. Disseminating negative results might show what did not work; augment our knowledge of what is *not* there; save other researchers from wasting time trying operations that have already failed; and demonstrate the limits and upper bounds of previously reported results. Most important, it might help to increase the speed and transparency with which new ideas are introduced, tested and filtered in social science research.


The technical standards for selecting good negative results are familiar ones: logical consistency, methodological correctness, replicability, and engagement with relevant phenomena of social and political life. Making such results widely available through specialised forms of publication depends crucially on separating methodological mistakes or empirical flukes from truly unexpected and interesting insights. Inspired by frequently cited procedures for assessing measurement validity, we define three criteria which ensure a negative results' relevance to a wider research community: content, consistency and connectivity.

Publishing negative results in peer-reviewed, citable form might aid social scientists in refining theory or methods. Published negative results could enhance quality control, incite wider discussion of the relationship between theory, methods and evidence, and lead to reinterpretation or contextualisation of specific empirical phenomena or even to the rethinking and reframing of theories.

The Journal of Spurious Correlations: Qualitative and Quantitative Results in the Social Sciences (www.jspurc.org) was established as a forum for increasing transparency in research and for exploring pure and applied methodological questions in the social sciences. The journal was launched at the ECPR Budapest Conference in September 2005, and is an affiliated project of the ECPR Standing Group Political Methodology and of the ISA Research Committee on Logic and Methodology. In August 2006, the journal editors organized the short

course *Rethinking Publication* at the APSA Annual Meeting in Philadelphia. *JSpurC* has been profiled in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and *New York Times*.

Rather than replication or review of prior publications, *JSpurC* will focus on publication of original negative results. These will be presented in articles of approximately 2500 words, without the extensive theory-building or literature review found in articles reporting 'positive' results. Articles in the negative results series will be accompanied by expert commentary on both substance and method, and by author response when appropriate. *JSpurC* will also publish longer substantive articles on social science metatheory and methods.

We invite you to dig into your file drawer, hard drive or wastebasket for the unexpected, unexplained, outlier or otherwise 'unpublishable' results that are a necessary by-product of social science research. Send them to us! 

David Lehrer is a doctoral student at the University of Helsinki and a lecturer at Humboldt University Berlin. His research on the comparative political economy of post-communism has been supported by the US State Department, the German Marshall Fund of the United States, and the Harvard Center for International Development. davlehrer@aol.com

Janine Leschke is a researcher at the European Trade Union Institute in Brussels. She wrote her PhD thesis on flexible employment and social insurance coverage at the Social Science Research Centre, Berlin (WZB). Her research interests include comparative welfare state analysis, labour market and social policies, and quantitative analysis. jleschke@etui-rehs.org

Stefan Lhachimi is a PhD candidate at the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Germany. He holds a Master in Public Policy from Duke University, a Master in Political Science from the Free University Berlin and a Bachelor in Statistics from Humboldt University Berlin. lhachimi@jspurc.org

Ana Vasiliu is a consultant to private enterprises in transition economies and on international development projects. She studied business administration in Romania and economics at Cambridge and at Brown University, and has been a visiting fellow of the Center for Business and Government of the Kennedy School of Government, US. anavasiliu101@yahoo.com

Brigitte Weiffen is a PhD candidate in sociology at the University of Bonn, and is currently working as a research fellow at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Tübingen. Her research interests include comparative democratisation, international organisations, Latin American politics, and research methods. britta.weiffen@uni-tuebingen.de

What Role for the Numbers in Text Analysis? — Resuming Franzosi's Journey From Words to Numbers

Two years ago, this newsletter was launched with an issue devoted to an intricate research frontier on the quantitative-qualitative debate, the formal, numerical representation of texts. The issue began its mission to extend our methodological horizons with an interview, in which Roberto Franzosi presented the journey he had embarked on in *From Words to Numbers* in search of “mixed methods” for text analysis (Franzosi 2004). The first half of this journey had led him to propose a set of tools for the systematic coding of text and its transformation into numbers. In the second half he visited a number of linguists, historians, sociologists and philosophers critical towards the empiricist project, and engaged them in putting his own tools in their place. Instead of letting the reader off the hook with a revised set of instructions for how to use his method under “post-empiricist” auspices, he ends the main part of his travel writing by quoting John Mandeville: “I do not want to say any more about marvels that there are, so that other men who go there can find new things to speak of which I have not mentioned. For many men have great delight and desire in hearing of new things; and so I shall cease telling of the different things I saw.” (John Mandeville, cit. in Franzosi 2004: 273).

In what follows, I will speak of a few – hopefully new – things I saw on my own present journey into text analysis. This journey more or less started where Franzosi left his readers with Mandeville’s hint at the marvels that are still somewhere out there. To give the reader a taste of the marvels I found – I argue that there is indeed a place for formalisms in text analysis, that allow the numerical representation of text. Franzosi’s attempt to define this place is far from exhausting their possible scope of application. However, formal representations of text are not a stairway to heaven by which objectivity is finally brought to text analysis. Rather, they are aides to interpretation, based on regularities in the multiple ways texts convey meaning, each one of which introduces its own bias in processing textual data. They do not release the researcher from his own interpretative efforts. And they call for their own deconstruction. Following in Franzosi’s footsteps made me marvel at the potentials for formal

analyses of texts buried in a vast variety of regular patterns in which texts impart meaning. But these regularities are rarely if ever universal properties of text. So no matter how marvellous a formalism may appear to be, its capacity to deliver lucid (or valid, if you wish) interpretations is a direct function of its mastery by the researcher and its adequacy for both the kind of text on which it is applied and the research question at hand.

Before we go any further, let’s briefly resume Franzosi’s attempt at turning words into numbers. In a nutshell, Franzosi proposes to analyze narratives of social conflict with a semantic grammar structuring such narratives. This grammar is based on the canonical syntactic structure of assertions (subject-verb phrase-object) and a set of recursive rewrite rules that integrate this basic linguistic structure upwards into a higher-order structure (events, nested in disputes) and downwards to the terminal symbols of the text (the actual words). Franzosi applies his grammar in the form of a coding scheme to newspaper reports on industrial conflicts. Codes are stored in a relational database that assigns each code a number, while preserving the original terminal symbols and the relations among them. This database is accessible to a large range of analytical tools, from ‘manual’ interpretation and aggregation of codes, to frequency counts, more complex statistics and network analytical representations of narrative structures (see Franzosi 2004: ch. 1-3).

In the second part of his book, Franzosi sets off to questions the empiricist underpinnings of his own methodological approach, adopting a standpoint akin to a sociology of knowledge or of what Dvora Yanow has described in the last issue of this newsletter as phenomenological constructivism (see Vol. 2:2). Step by step, he dismantles what he assembled in the preceding chapters. Among the problems he expounds are the selectivity of newspapers as a source of information about the world and the specific bias they introduce in reporting based on journalistic practices and news value; the rhetorical and ideological effects of meaning production in texts; the construction of social reality through texts; the embeddedness of texts in cultural and ideological frame-

works; and the situatedness of the researcher in a community of (scientific) practice. Undergirding this critique is a view of sociology as the study of emerging social relations between agents, of which social scientists form part. This “recontextualization” of his method leads him to acknowledge that his approach works well only for narrative texts, that the process of deriving meaning from texts poses the same problems to formalisms as it does to ‘manual’ coding and escapes whatever instrument of “variance control”, and that the “full” meaning of a text, or rather, the range of potential interpretations it allows for and the potential information it yields is far too large to be captured in a single text analysis procedure and therefore beyond Franzosi’s approach (or any approach, for that matter; Franzosi 2004: 224-5).

Franzosi has thus begun to go down the path of a sociology of knowledge, and an analysis of knowledge as it is expressed in, diffused, negotiated and transformed in texts. What happens to the general intention of combining “qualitative and quantitative” methods for analyzing text when one continues along this path? The often repeated claim that meaning is essentially contextual can be seen to include the assertion that the meaning of a word, a sentence or a text passage only emerges from its position within its respective intra- and extralinguistic relations. We (humans) reconstruct these relations making use of our interpretive capacities as members of a community of language users. An explicit *analysis* of a set of relations that has become problematic would typically proceed “manually”, by reflecting upon and contextualizing one’s own interpretations (e.g. by entering a hermeneutic circle). Alternatively, it can seek refuge in formal representations of such relations. Here, one has two options. Relations can be modelled either as simple co-occurrences (correlations) between words (or categorized sentences/passages), typically the approach of automated quantitative content analysis algorithms. Or, they can be seen as conforming to a more or less fixed and in itself “meaningful” (grammatical) structure or pattern – “meaningful” because such a structure is assumed not to be fully neutral with respect to what can be and is conveyed through a text conforming to it. Franzosi’s approach is an example of the latter. The question stated above is thus a question of the adequate place for linguistic formalizations (“grammars”) as one possible way of reconstructing text meaning in the toolboxes of social researchers. How one answers this question critically depends, first, on one’s conception of how meaning is conveyed through language, and second, on the extent to which one assumes interpretation to be structured by patterns internal to texts. These criteria make it necessary to briefly turn to theories of meaning and linguistics.

In a conception of text meaning in line with a sociology of knowledge, the representational view of language implicit in Franzosi’s original approach is to be replaced by a performative conception of language. Texts not only represent the social world but are an integral part of it. Through texts, social actors create, act upon and interact within the world. In such a perspective of speech or written texts as action (and, in its more stable manifestations, as activity and practice), actors enter the scene of

text analysis as producers and receivers of texts. As a consequence, meaning is no longer a mere matter of relations between words. Rather, it unfolds in a contextualized situation of purposeful text production by the speaker and interpretation by the receiver. Therein lies the first source of complication for text analysis, that meaning is not (fully) determined by intralinguistic factors. And among extralinguistic factors, global conventions are only one of its sources. Many of its subtleties are rooted in local practices and situational strategies. In both text production and reception grammatical conventions meet with cultural frames (schemata, scripts, protocols, call it what you may), that invest a text with precast purposes and significance, and situated goals of individual actors in conferring meaning on a text. As a consequence, any (manual or automated) procedure for text interpretation, be it with the aim of accessing social reality represented in texts, reconstructing significations of the social world (and the “frames” that structure them) or retracing social interaction through texts, needs to produce a certain degree of familiarity with the particularities of a given speech situation. The adequacy of this degree may depend on the research matter. But there is no straight road, no shortcut to meaning that would leave aside social actors and the relations in which they are embedded (and that includes to some extent the researcher). Insofar as grammars are unlikely to contribute to gaining such a familiarity, they at best complement the interpretive capacities of the researcher. However, they may make the use of these capacities more comprehensible for others and thus increase the acceptability of our research results. And they may open up ways for the recognition of patterns in texts that elude “manual” investigation or that the eye has missed. Four “eyes” often see more than two, and that they look through rather different lenses – one hermeneutic, one formalized – might be a welcome advantage.

Thus, the “validity” of any formalized procedure for text analysis depends first and foremost on how it is applied and how the results it produces are treated. As a rule of thumb, any researcher who seriously claims that a (partly automated) formal method for text analysis completely frees him or her from the “manual” interpretation of text to a large degree forfeits the credibility of his or her conclusions. Good interpretation is a reflexive process, in which the background knowledge used to code, classify and aggregate text, and to make sense of text representations produced by formalized procedures is made explicit, put into perspective, and questioned. Consequently, good reporting of results provides an annotation of this interpretative process. Clearly, this requires an awareness of what went into the process. Hiding behind numbers will not do.

Besides this general attitude towards text analysis, the soundness of a formalized method of text analysis is, secondly, intimately tied to the appropriateness of its implied structure to the analyzed text and to the research interests. Formalisms need to assume the presence of a structural regularity in a text that is relevant for what the text means (in one of the many dimensions of text meaning). For the formalism, this structure is expressed in a

number of text categories and a finite number of possible relations between them (e.g. Franzosi's semantic triplet of subject-action-object categories). More rigid formalisms then provide a number of rules or guidelines of how parts of a text are assigned to the coding categories. The reason they can support "manual" interpretation lies in the assumption that the structure they attribute to a given text has pre-defined consequences for its interpretation. The appropriateness of a formalism for text analysis thus hinges upon the presence of sources stabilizing the internal organization of a text and the substantiation of the assumed structural effects on meaning. Unfortunately, they can only be assessed in view of a given set of texts and research interest.

Scores of ingenious linguists, psychologists, sociologists and others have discovered regularities in the composition or structure of natural language use. In order to illustrate the kind of evaluations necessary to gauge the adequacy of a formalism based on such a regularity for a given research purpose I will briefly discuss two types of such regularities, discourse genres and discourse modes. The term genre typically refers to types of texts that have a distinct textual composition and a set of conventional purposes (e.g. newspaper articles or software manuals). From the perspective of texts as manifestations of social activities, genres can also be seen as patterned and partly stabilized ways of (inter-) acting through language use. In this reading of the term, a genre has structural and interpretative implications. The difficulty in using them for a formalization of text analysis lies in their heavy dependence on extralinguistic, social factors such as institutions and practices, and in the multitude of cues that people use in identifying genres, which allows authors considerable leeway in assembling their texts and still making use of genre conventions. As a consequence, attempts by linguists to find generative text grammars for particular genres, which would function analogous to syntactic rules, have been largely abandoned. However, there might be some more narrowly defined, strongly institutionalized genres, for which the reconstruction of a grammar is reasonably adequate. Franzosi's newspaper reports could be seen to represent such a genre. Building a formalism on genre thus requires first of all to judge the actual structural stability provided by the genre in light of the research interest, and this is to a large extent an empirical question.

Besides stability, the researcher needs to carefully assess which aspects of text meaning a given genre structures. A classification of different text dimensions that is useful for such an assessment has been developed by the French linguist François Rastier (Rastier 1997). He distinguishes between thematics (that, which a discourse selects from the semantic universe), dialectics (the representation of time and aspect in a discourse), dialogics (the modalities introduced by a discourse), and tactics (the sequencing and composition of discourse). Text genres typically structure tactics (e.g. academic journal articles with research problem, question, hypotheses, etc.). Dialogical structure sometimes emerges from such sequences, where different parts of the sequence

are characterized by a dominant modality (e.g. asserted research problems, hypothesized propositions, and necessary conclusions from of empirical results). The degree to which genres determine thematics varies, but might in a given policy area within a set time frame be large enough to define fixed issue codes.

Dialectics are a slightly more special case, since linguists have detected stable patterns of time and aspect representation in text, so-called discourse modes. Forms of dialectics thus have a linguistic basis and are tacitly available to the speakers of a language (Smith 2003). Five basic discourse modes can be distinguished (narrative, report, description, information, and argumentation) and most text passages can be attributed to a single mode. For the social researcher, discourse modes have certain interesting properties, that are revealing both with respect to likely text interpretations and to intentions of the speaker (e.g. about the kind of causality between entities implied or about the status of an entity as either uncontroversial or problematic). Furthermore, they can facilitate the selection and further analysis of those text passages that are of particular interest in light of the research matter (e.g. reported events for the application of Franzosi's text grammar).

If linguists such as Smith are correct and discourse modes are indeed grounded in a tacit understanding of language, then their stability as a source of structure for text analysis is not dependent on social context and they should be suitable also for the analysis of only little institutionalized discourses. In contrast, discourse genres are heavily dependent on institutionalization. Note, however, that discourse modes are situated on the level of text passages and thus require a more local analysis than some genre-based coding schemes would allow for. In general, the less institutionally structured a text, the more the analysis needs to focus on local relations in a text, that is, the less room there is for interpretative shortcuts based on assumptions contained in a defined structure of text composition. On the other hand, the more universal a formalism for text analysis (such as discourse modes) is claimed to be, the less likely it is to directly contribute to a given theoretical or practical research interest. Their rootedness in social context gives text genres the advantage of structuring the social relations in which a text is embedded to a much larger extent as compared to e.g. discourse modes.

With this brief passage through some of the issues involved in using formal representations for text analysis I have tried to demonstrate that there is considerable room for formal approaches to text interpretation and analysis, but they do not come without strings attached. Formalisms can be very useful tools, especially when we need to process large amounts of text data, as long as we do not treat them mechanically, be clear about their limits, and take them to complement, rather than replace, "manual", hermeneutic interpretation. No method is "innocent" in the way it represents social reality (given that this social reality itself is in no way "innocent"). But researchers are not helpless victims of their own creations, who cannot rid themselves of the spirits that they called. We need not believe blindly in the output gener-

ated by a formal procedure for text analysis. And just as there is no compelling reason to blindly trust formal procedures for text analysis, there is little ground for believing that numerical representations of text are generally of evil. The key to good practice is to choose them carefully, to be aware of their limits, and to resist the temptation of hiding behind their alleged “objectivity”. Franzosi has provided a promising example of how to dismantle one’s own method – why don’t we make that a method.



References

- Franzosi, Roberto (2004). *From Words to Numbers. Narrative, Data, and Social Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rastier, François (1997). *Meaning and Textuality*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Smith, Carlota (2003). *Modes of Discourse. The Local Structure of Texts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jan Zutavern

is PhD candidate at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy. He holds an MA in Political Science from the University of Bern, Switzerland. His current research centers around the question of how policymakers design, negotiate and manage legislative reforms of labor market and social policies in Germany and the US.

Jan.Zutavern@EUI.eu.

PROBLEMS OF POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN NETWORK AND MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE

INTRODUCTION

Numerous political science studies – focusing on different policy sectors, in diverse national and local environments – find broad convergence toward a policy-making style dominated by cooperation among government levels and between public and non-public actors. This is referred to as “governance” (see recently Kooiman 2003; Kjaer 2004; Pierre & Peters 2005), a particular style of governing that implies the formulation or the implementation of public policies by networks involving public actors (politicians and administrators) belonging to different decisional levels, together with non-public actors of different nature (economic agents, interest representatives and stakeholders, experts). Deliberation, bargaining, and compromise-seeking are the rule in governance arenas, which are characterised by cooperative relations between governmental units attached to different territorial levels (subnational, national, European, etc.), and by collaboration of these units with various non-public bodies (associations, third-sector organisations, firms, etc.) instead of top down policy-making.

It is expected from network forms of governance to lead to decisions enjoying a strong “output” legitimacy (Scharpf 1970), because their content is more appropriate, or because they are better accepted by target-groups. In a functional perspective network governance is expected to be conducive to technically more adequate and politically more realistic decisions (Bevir 2006).

I would like to expose the reasons why this, at first glance promising and in all likelihood necessary, shift to more cooperative and horizontal forms of policy-making can generate problems with respect to the quality of our democracies. These problems are caused by a “democratic accountability deficit” of governance structures, which mainly stems from four properties of network governance:

- the weak presence of citizen representatives in networks
- the lack of visibility and uncoupling of networks from the democratic circuit
- the multi-level aspect of governance
- the prevalence of “peer” forms of accountability.

Accountability can be defined as “a social relationship in which an actor feels an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct to a forum” (Bovens 2007). In other words A is accountable to B when A is obliged to inform B about A’s decisions and actions, to justify them, and to suffer punishment if B is not satisfied with A’s performance and justification. Although I will refer only to political mechanisms of accountability, and not to legal, administrative, or financial accountability, I think that this broad definition can be applied to them too.

THE ACCOUNTABILITY PROBLEM IN NETWORK GOVERNANCE

The weak visibility and uncoupling of networks

Lack of visibility impedes accountability in network governance. Decisional procedures in policy networks are often informal and opaque, as this is deemed to facilitate the achievement of compromise, and the growth of policy networks (plus of various forms of public-private partnerships) dilutes responsibility among a large number of actors. This is the “paradox of shared responsibility”, to use again Mark Bovens’s concepts. Even if that problem is attenuated through provisions for transparency and access to information, the latter are no substitute for traditional accountability mechanisms. There is no guarantee for a feedback: accounts may be given, and then nothing happens.

Policy networks are often uncoupled from the official representative bodies (the concept of a “post-

parliamentary” governance has even been coined to describe this phenomenon: Andersen & Burns 1996), whose capacity to exert effective oversight over such parallel decisional circuits is questionable (Voelzkow 2000). In network governance the initiative and control functions of parliaments are in all likelihood weakened, with parliaments possibly confined to a role of ratifying bodies. True, parliaments have the formal right to overrule decisions made by policy networks. The question, however, is to what extent they can be a credible menace. The capacity of representative bodies to nullify decisions prepared in networks can be questioned because some elected officials are close to the private interests represented in policy networks, or for sheer lack of expert knowledge. Of course, this is above all an empirical issue and institutional arrangements are of major relevance in that respect. On European matters, the competencies of the European Parliament are not comparable today to the competencies of national parliaments on national matters, that depend in turn on the system of government and on parliamentary resources. Also oversight of EU legislation by national parliaments is subject to considerable cross-country variation (Auel & Benz 2005).

There is therefore a risk that decisions will be made by actors other than those regarded as legitimate decision-makers by the people or the affected communities. It has for instance been argued by French political theorist Jean Leca (1996) that a sphere of (problem-solving oriented) „politique des problèmes“ – dominated by governance arrangements - is to a large extent disjointed now from the sphere of „politique d’opinion“, which is the traditional realm of party competition but seems to play an increasingly symbolic role. The EU is particularly emblematic: “politique d’opinion” is virtually absent (Schmidt 2006), unless if politicisation of the public opinion occurs through referendums, which seems to be an increasing trend these days. When the sphere of “policies” (decision-making) is disjointed from the sphere of “politics” (electoral competition), the effectiveness of accountability procedures is undermined: both the retrospective evaluation of office holders on the grounds of their policy achievements, and the prospective evaluation of candidates on the grounds of their pledges become hardly possible. The incumbent parties are held responsible for political decisions whose formulation in fact largely escapes their control.

The composition of policy networks

Policy networks are largely composed of top level bureaucrats, policy experts, and interest representatives. Some of these actors are only indirectly accountable to the citizenry due to a long “chain of delegation” (administrators), or only to their peers (experts) or to limited constituencies (interest group negotiators). Several actors taking part in policy networks are not necessarily mandate holders, are not constrained by any electoral pledges, and do not have to anticipate any electoral sanctions.

- High rank civil servants are accountable to their minister, but this is administrative, not political accountability, lacking the public dimension. Democratic control is much attenuated by the long chain of delegation, and this is even more the case in the administrative structure of the European Commission, or in the cases of the blossoming regulatory agencies.
- As far as experts are concerned, in order to claim credibility they have to convince about their independence. Experts are of course subject to “peer-review” within the scientific community, and risk loss of reputation. Control is here internalised by the profession, but again this soft and horizontal form of accountability is not political or public accountability.
- Network governance also implies the cooperation of public officials with non-public actors. It is useful to distinguish between two sorts of them: interest groups and NGOs, or private firms. The accountability problems are not exactly the same. Interest groups and NGOs are mainly accountable to the rank-and-file who entrust them with power (“internal” accountability: see Koenig-Archibugi 2004), and to donors. This is partial accountability, neither to the general public, nor to the populations affected by their actions (“external” accountability). It is also argued that these organisations do not escape problems of elitism (Warleigh 2006). Big private firms for their part are primarily accountable to their shareholders: this poses again the problem of partiality and lack of external accountability, as these firms are not accountable to those who can be subject to their externalities (workers, residents in neighbouring areas, etc.), apart through the market (NGOs for instance threaten with boycotts firms reluctant to apply social and environmental standards), but again this is not political accountability. Also, even this form of accountability of the management to shareholders is not equally developed across “varieties of capitalism” (Hall & Soskice 2001).

The “multi-level” aspect of governance

In addition, network governance can be “multi-level”, consisting of complex structures cutting across decisional levels (say the European, national, subnational or regional, and the local level, as for instance in the EU structural and regional funds policy: see Bache & Flinders 2004). Accountability is further inhibited by the multi-level aspect of governance. Not only is “Politikverflechtung” (effective interpenetration of competencies in spite of their formal division) likely to lead to non transparent decision-making mechanisms (Benz 1998), but as it often rests on mechanisms operating along an intergovernmentalist logic and implicating sometimes multiparty executives, it can exacerbate problems of delegation and of dilution of responsibility. We may refer here to intergovernmental relations between the subunits of federal systems, or to the relations between national governments in the EU Council. The accountability problem has to do with the fact that in principle accountable actors are only fictitiously accountable for this kind of relations because of lack of information on their positions and decisions, or

because the accountability links are only indirect. Again the long chain of delegation makes the policy processes visible only to those who are close to network members (many intergovernmental negotiations are made by administrators who can enjoy considerable discretion). It is equally related to the problem of shared responsibility, because decisions are taken by representatives of collective bodies in processes involving a multitude of them (interorganisational decision-making).

“Peer” accountability in networks

On the other hand, forms of network governance are propitious to “peer” accountability “based on mutual monitoring of one another’s performance within a network of groups, public and private, sharing common concerns” (Goodin: 2003: 378). Participants are deemed to be (perhaps primarily) accountable to their negotiation partners (horizontal accountability), usually in a “soft” sense. For instance within networks the fear of “naming and shaming” should yield disciplining effects because “free riders” or unreliable actors risk loss of reputation on behalf of their partners, who will not trust them any longer in the future. In order to function properly however, peer accountability necessitates from networks to be sufficiently representative and pluralist, i.e. not to exclude weaker interests, or actors whose preferences do not coincide with the network’s “mainstream” orientation. Whether this is the rule is debatable, as lack of pluralism might result from strategic behaviour by ‘insiders’ whose interest may lie in using benefits from network participation as exclusive goods and in externalising the costs generated by their choices (“rent-seeking” behaviour). For instance, in his “democratic audit” of the EU C. Lord (2004: 114) stresses the danger “that instead of balancing and checking one another, networks or their members may collude to suspend competitiveness between themselves, to reduce prospects of challenge from the constituencies to which they are supposedly accountable and to freeze new entrants out of access to the benefits of engagement with the political system”.

In addition, the requirements of “peer” accountability can weaken public accountability: we may well have here a not so easily escapable trade-off. Traditional requisites of delegation are undermined by awarding a central role to elite bargaining or deliberation: actors involved must often be more accountable to their partners of discussion than to their reference groups or constituencies (Schmitter & Streeck 1999). Problem-solving may legitimately require confidentiality, so that increased exposure to controls can lead to blame-avoidance behaviour. Political actors for instance may opt for informal “escape routes” in order to avoid media scrutiny in policy-making, or as we learn from organisational sociology actors perceiving to be the objects of « excess accountability » can adopt risk-avoiding behaviour. It should also be taken into account that popular accountability can become problematic for compromise-seeking and for problem-solving that are necessary in differentiated and complex societies, or for solutions that cannot be « sold » with populist justifications.

CONCLUSION AND PROSPECTS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Network forms of governance entail a number of accountability problems. “Shared responsibility” and lack of visibility are aggravated by the frequent “multi-level” aspect of these forms of governance. The relations between actors involved in such networks are not sufficiently exposed to public scrutiny, or to the scrutiny of the legitimate, democratic, and representative bodies. This is not to say that actors involved in such networks are not accountable at all. They are subject to “peer” or professional accountability, to public reputational and market accountability, to fiscal/financial, administrative or legal accountability. Yet one gets the impression that accountability mechanisms tend to proliferate while at the same time:

- the impact of democratic accountability decreases, so that there is not only a trade-off between democratic accountability and policy efficiency (the input-output dilemma), but also a trade-off between democratic accountability and other “peer”, informal and “soft” mechanisms of accountability
- these mechanisms do not form a coherent accountability system, but rather a syncretic arrangement best portrayed by the metaphors of the “patchwork” or of the “marble cake”.

Some would argue that, given the increased complexity of contemporary decision-making procedures and the role played by supranational and transnational bodies, effective democratic accountability has become illusory. But this kind of assertion should precisely become the object of a democratic debate in the public sphere. ■

References

- Andersen, S.S. and Burns, T.R. (1996). The European Union and the Erosion of Parliamentary Democracy: A Study of Post-parliamentary Governance, in S.S. Andersen & K.J. Eliassen (eds.), *The European Union: How Democratic Is It?* (pp. 226-251). London: Sage.
- Auel, K. and A. Benz (2005). *The Europeanisation of Parliamentary Democracy*. London: Routledge.
- Bache, I. and M. Flinders (2004). *Multi-level Governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Benz, A. (1998). Postparlamentarische Demokratie? Demokratische Legitimation im kooperativen Staat, in M. Th. Greven (ed.), *Demokratie - eine Kultur des Westens?* (pp. 201-222), Opladen: Leske + Budrich.
- Bevir, M. (2006) Democratic Governance: Systems and Radical Perspectives, *Public Administration Review*, 66 (3): 426-436.
- Bovens, M. (2007) Analysing and Assessing Accountability. A Conceptual Framework, *European Law Journal* (forthcoming).

- Goodin, R. E. (2003). Democratic Accountability: the Distinctiveness of the Third Sector, *European Journal of Sociology*, 44 (3): 359-393.
- Hall, P. and D. Soskice (2001). *Varieties of Capitalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kjaer, A.M. (2004). *Governance*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Koenig-Archibugi, M. (2004). Transnational Corporations and Public Accountability, *Government and Opposition*, 39 (2): 234-259.
- Kooiman, J. (2003). *Governing as Governance*. London: sage.
- Leca, J. (1996). La „gouvernance“ de la France sous la Cinquième République. Une perspective de sociologie comparative', in F. D'Arcy & L. Rouban (eds.). *De la Ve République à l'Europe* (pp. 329-365), Paris: Presses de Sciences Po.
- Lord, C. (2004). *A Democratic Audit of the European Union*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Pierre, J. and B. G. Peters (2005). *Governing Complex Societies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Scharpf, F. W. (1970). *Demokratiethorie zwischen Utopie und Anpassung*. Konstanz: Universitätsverlag.
- Schmidt, Vivien A. (2006). *Democracy in Europe. The EU and National Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2006.
- Schmitter, P.C. and Streeck, W. (1999) *The Organization of Business Interests. Studying the Associative Action of Business in Advanced Industrial Societies*, Discussion paper 99/1, Cologne: Max-Planck-Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung.
- Voelzkow, H. (2000). Von der funktionalen Differenzierung zur Globalisierung: neue Herausforderungen für die Demokratiethorie, in R. Werle & U. Schimank (eds.), *Gesellschaftliche Komplexität und kollektive Handlungsfähigkeit* (pp. 270-296). Frankfurt/Main: Campus.
- Warleigh, A. (2006). Making Citizens from the Market? NGOs and the Representation of Interests, in R. Bellamy et al. (eds.), *Making European Citizens* (pp. 118-133). Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Yannis Papadopoulos

is a professor of political science at the University of Lausanne. His current research interests are the legitimacy of multi-level forms of governance, the impact of international factors on domestic policy-making processes, the politicisation and democratisation of the EU, and more generally the transformations of democracy. He recently co-edited with Arthur Benz, *Governance and Democracy. National, European and International Experiences* (Routledge: 2006), and is also co-editor of two journal special issues forthcoming in 2007: 'Innovative, participatory and deliberative procedures in policy-making: democratic and effective?' with Philippe Warin (*European Journal of Political Research*), and 'Accountability in EU multi-level governance' with Arthur Benz and Carole Harlow (*European Law Journal*).

ioannis.papadopoulos@unil.ch

Democratic Accountability Deficits of Network Governance: A Comment on Papadopoulos

1. Network governance: the case of WIPO

In December 1996 the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) met in Geneva to adapt the Berne Convention, the most important international treaty on copyrights, to the rise of internet (Dixon & Hansen 1996; Reunbothe 1997). Diplomats, delegates and lobbyists flocked the town. The stakes were high. Internet had started to spread and its enormous impact on the information and amusement industry was becoming clearer by the day. An alliance of publishers, software producers, and the entertainment business had successfully lobbied for an amendment of the Berne Convention that would make the unauthorised view of any webpage on the internet an infringement of copyright. The consequences of this amendment were enormous. It would make surfing on the internet virtually impossible without the authorisation of publishers and film companies and would give them almost a monopoly on the development of the internet as a channel for the exchange of information (Vinje 1996).

The Geneva conference of the WIPO is a fine illustration of the important issues that Yannis Papadopoulos addresses in his very clear paper. The WIPO is one of these international networks with regulatory powers, in which public actors, such as diplomats and civil servants, deliberate, bargain, and collaborate with a variety of non-public bodies, such as associations, firms and NGO's. It is only one example of a series of regulatory and adjudicatory networks that constitute 'a new world order' (Slaughter 2004) that is supplementing and superseding the 'old' national legal order. These networks may be quite efficient from a professional point of view, but they are often deficient in terms of democratic accountability. I agree with most of Papadopoulos observations, but will try to further refine his concepts in order to get an even more precise picture of the issues at stake. I will use the WIPO example to illustrate my points. I will start with a few clarifications of the concept of democratic accountability.

2. What is democratic accountability and why would we need it?

Anyone studying accountability will soon discover that it seems to be an ever-expanding concept (Mulgan 2000). However, there is a pattern in the expansion. In American academic and political discourse, accountability is used predominantly as a normative concept, as a set of standards for the evaluation of the behaviour of public actors. Accountability or, more precisely, 'being accountable', is seen as a virtue, as a positive quality of organisations or officials. Accountability in this very broad sense is basically an evaluative concept which is used to positively qualify a state of affairs or the performance of an actor. Hence, American accountability studies often focus on normative issues, on the assessment of the actual and active behaviour of public agents (Dubnick 2005; Koppell 2005).

On the other side of the Atlantic, in British, Australian, and continental European scholarly debates, accountability often is used in a more narrow, descriptive sense. Accountability is seen as a social mechanism, as an institutional relation or arrangement in which an actor can be held to account by a forum (Day & Klein 1987; Mulgan 2003). More specifically: accountability is a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pass judgment, and the actor may face consequences (Bovens 2006). Hence, the locus of accountability studies is not the behaviour of public agents, but the way in which these institutional arrangements operate. And the focus of accountability studies is not whether the agents have acted in an accountable way, but whether they are or can be held accountable *ex post facto* by accountability forums. Papadopoulos' paper stands firmly in the latter tradition.

Accountability as a social mechanism is extremely

important from a democratic perspective. It enables citizens and their representatives to make those holding public office answer for their deeds (March and Olsen 1995:141-181; Mulgan 2003). It is often conceptualized in terms of a principal-agent model. It stipulates that a modern representative democracy can be described as a concatenation of principal-agent relationships (Strom 2003; Lupia 2003; Strom 2000). The citizens, who are the primary principals in a democracy, have transferred their sovereignty to popular representatives, who, in turn, have transferred the drafting and enforcement of laws and policy to the government. Ministers subsequently entrust policy implementation to their ministries, who proceed to delegate parts of these tasks to civil servants and diplomats. Each principal in the chain of delegation seeks to monitor the execution of the delegated public tasks by calling the agent to account. At the end of the accountability chain are the citizens, who pass judgement on the conduct of the government and who indicate their (dis)pleasure in the ballot box. Hence, public accountability is an essential precondition for the democratic process to work, as it provides citizens and their representatives with the information needed for judging the propriety and effectiveness of government conduct (Przeworski et al. 1999). From this perspective, then, the quality of accountability arrangements hinges upon their demonstrated ability to consolidate and reaffirm the democratic chain of delegation.

3. Democratic accountability deficits of network governance

Network governance can be quite deficient from a democratic perspective, but not all of these deficiencies are accountability deficits in the narrow sense as used by Papadopoulos and myself.

A major problem, mentioned by Papadopoulos, is the unrepresentative composition of these policy networks. The WIPO, for example, formally consists of national delegates who represent their governments. However, over 70 different interest groups, associations, and NGO's, have acquired the status of official observer. These observers are allowed to attend the official meetings and take the floor, which they often do. At the Geneva meetings, the number of lobbyists equalled, if not surpassed, that of the official delegates. These observers were not at all representative, however, of the interests that were at stake at the conference. Some interest groups, such as the American film and music industries, had a very strong presence. They mustered delegations of over 20 professional lobbyists and lawyers, who attended most of the three week conference and organized daily presentations and briefings in some of the best restaurants and hotels of Geneva. Other very relevant stakeholders, such as consumers, universities, or libraries, had only one or a few lobbyists, who could barely afford their stay. It was estimated that about 75% of the observers and lobbyists were defending the interests of the various information industries. The rather unrepresentative nature of the network resulted in a regulatory agenda that was tilted towards protecting the interests of the information

industries. This is indeed a major democratic deficit, but it is a representational deficit and not an accountability deficit per se.

In the case of the WIPO, as in many other regulatory networks, these ex ante flaws are not compensated for by strong ex post accountability mechanisms, for the reasons Papadopoulos aptly points out. Here we can distinguish two major types of accountability deficiencies.

- 1) Absent accountability arrangements: actors with formal or informal regulatory powers are not accountable at all, or not accountable to forums with democratic legitimacy. The very powerful lobby groups and NGO's in Geneva, for example, were not accountable to the general public or to its elected representatives. Experts may be accountable to their professional peers, but this is not democratic accountability, because professional forums lack democratic legitimacy – in the end, nobody can vote the rascals out.
- 2) Deficient accountability arrangements: actors are linked to the democratic chain of delegation, but the accountability forums cannot adequately monitor the behaviour of the actors, because of a variety of agency problems. Parliamentary commissions, for example, often lack the expertise and oversight to monitor the regulatory activities of ministers and their delegates. Individual delegates and diplomats can easily evade their responsibility and play two-level games (Putnam 1988). Although national parliaments officially had to ratify the WIPO treaty, this was often a formality. After all, the dice were cast - WIPO has 177 members, and single countries, with the exception perhaps of the US, are not in a position to renegotiate a compromise that has been reached after three weeks of hard bargaining. The multi-level character of some of these networks may add to these agency problems. National parliaments in EU member states had even less to say, because the EU was itself also a formal party to the treaty and thereby bound its member states directly.

4. Should we still care about democratic accountability?

There is one small comfort in the WIPO case. On the early morning of the final day of the conference, after a frantic night of wheeling and dealing, the amendment that would formally establish copyrights for viewing web pages was deleted from the text of the treaty. This happened only because the powerful lobbyists from the telecom industries, computer companies and chip manufacturers, such as AT&T, Philips and British Telecom, who stood much to gain with the unlimited growth of internet, had decided to join the camp of the libraries and the consumers. In the end market accountability came to the aid of the libraries and the consumers. This suggests that the 'patchwork' of accountabilities that surrounds these regulatory networks may offer enough checks and balances to remedy democratic deficits. Maybe we do not need democratic accountability in these supra national, post modern regulatory networks? I think this would be a dangerous

illusion. Democratic accountability is necessary for the same reasons as it was instituted in the 19th century on the national level: to provide legitimacy for rules and regulations, to counteract representational distortions and to prevent professional groupthink. Regulatory networks, such as WIPO, are the modern equivalents of the benevolent kings and we need democratic accountability to prevent them from turning into Leviathans. ■

References

- Bovens, M. 2006. Analysing and Assessing Public accountability: A Conceptual Model, *European Governance Papers* (EUROGOV), C-06-01 (January 16, 2006), <http://www.connex-network.org/eurogov/pdf/egp-connex-C-06-01.pdf>.
- Day, P. and R. Klein. 1987. *Accountabilities: Five Public Services*, London: Tavistock.
- Dixon, A.N. & M.F. Hansen. 1996. The Berne Convention Enters the Digital Age, *European Intellectual Property Review*, 18 (11): 604-611.
- Dubnick, M. 2005. Accountability and the Promise of Performance: In Search of the Mechanisms, *Public Performance and Management Review*, 28, 3, 376-417.
- Koppell, Jonathan G.S. 2005. Pathologies of Accountability: ICANN and the Challenge of "Multiple Accountabilities Disorder", *Public Administration Review*, 65, 1: 94-107.
- Lupia, A. 2003. Delegation and its Perils, in K. Strom et al. (eds.), *Delegation and Accountability in Parliamentary Democracies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 33-54.
- March, J. and J. Olsen. 1995. *Democratic Governance*, New York: The Free Press.
- Mulgan, R. 2000. "Accountability": An ever expanding Concept?, *Public Administration*, 78: 555.
- Mulgan, R. 2003. *Holding Power to Account: Accountability in Modern Democracies*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Przeworski, A., S. Stokes, B. Manin (eds.). 1999. *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Putnam, Robert D. 1988. Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games, *International Organization*, 42, 3 (Summer, 1988): 427-460.
- Reunbothe, J. et al. 1997. The New WIPO Treaties: A First Résumé, *European Intellectual Property Review*, 19 (4): 171-184.
- Slaughter, A. 2004. *A New World Order*, Princeton: Princeton UP.
- Strom, K. 2000. Delegation and Accountability in Parliamentary Democracies, *European Journal of Political Research*, 37, 3, p. 261-289.
- Strom, K. 2003. Parliamentary Democracy and Delegation, in K. Strom, W. Müller, T. Bergman (eds), *Delegation and Accountability in Parliamentary Democracies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 55-106.

Vinje, Th. C. 1996. All's Not Quiet On the Berne Front, *European Intellectual Property Review*, 18 (11): 585-589.

Mark Bovens

is a Professor of Public Administration at the Utrecht School of Governance of Utrecht University in The Netherlands. His research interests include accountability and governance, citizenship and democracy in the information society, success and failure of public governance, and trust in government. A relevant project in this regard is the NWO-funded project Multilevel governance and public accountability in Europe. Forthcoming relevant publication: New forms of accountability and EU-governance, *Comparative European Politics*, 2007/1. Find more about the author at: www.usg.uu.nl/research/m.bovens

m.bovens@uu.nl

A

BOUT C & M

The IPSA Committee on Concepts and Methods (C & M)

The IPSA COMMITTEE ON CONCEPTS AND METHODS (C&M) promotes conceptual and methodological discussion in political science. It provides a forum of debate between methodological schools who otherwise tend to conduct their deliberations on separate tables. It grants the tri-annual "Award for Conceptual Innovation in Democratic Studies," publishes two series of working papers, "Political Concepts" and "Political Methods," and coordinates "Les Intraduisibles: The Dictionary of Untranslatable Terms in Politics".

Chairperson: Andreas Schedler (CIDE, Mexico City), www.concepts-methods.org

Concepts and Methods

Concepts and Methods is the newsletter of the IPSA COMMITTEE ON CONCEPTS AND METHODS (C&M). Its aim is to support discussion and exchange among scholars on conceptual and methodological issues in the social sciences, with a special emphasis on political science. The newsletter is published three times a year and is available in pdf format free of charge after subscription: www.concepts-methods.org/join.php
Free download: www.concepts-methods.org

Chief editor: Bernhard Kittel (Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg) **Editorial team:** Rüya Gökhan Koçer, Gerben Korthouwer, Katharina Paul, Damian Raess, and Nynke Wiekenkamp (all University of Amsterdam www.uva.nl)
Layout&Typesetting: Doris Jagersbacher-Kittel

Contributions do neither represent the official position of the editorial team nor that of the IPSA COMMITTEE ON CONCEPTS AND METHODS. As an open and plural forum of debate, **Concepts and Methods** welcomes various kinds of contributions to methodological and conceptual debate: essays, research notes, interviews, data base, literature and book reviews, as well as proposals for thematic issues. All submissions will be carefully considered by the editorial team. For advertisements please contact the editorial team.

Contact: msw@uni-oldenburg.de

C & M working papers

The C&M working paper series are published by the COMMITTEE ON CONCEPTS AND METHODS (C&M), the Research Committee No. 1 of the INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION (IPSA), hosted at CIDE in Mexico City. C&M working papers are meant to share work in progress in a timely way before formal publication. The Committee publishes two series of working papers:

Political Concepts contains work of excellence on political concepts and political language. It seeks to include innovative contributions to concept analysis, language usage, concept operationalization, and measurement.

Political Methodology contains work of excellence on methods and methodology in the study of politics. It invites innovative work on fundamental questions of research design, the construction and evaluation of empirical evidence, theory building and theory testing. The series welcomes, and hopes to foster, contributions that cut across conventional methodological divides, as between quantitative and qualitative methods, or between interpretative and observational approaches.

SUBMISSIONS

All papers are subject to review by either a member of the Editorial Board or an external reviewer. Only English-language papers can be admitted. Authors interested in including their work in the C&M Working Paper Series may seek initial endorsement by one editorial board member: www.concepts-methods.org. Alternatively, they may send their paper by e-mail to: workingpapers@concepts-methods.org.

Authors bear full responsibility for the content of their contribution. All rights reserved.

ACCESS

The C&M webpage offers full access to past working papers as well as to commentaries by readers: www.concepts-methods.org

Supported by



UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM