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TRANSNATIONAL GOVERNANCE BY NUMBERS: RANKINGS AS MECHANISMS OF GOVERNING

Academic dissertation

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Opponent: Academy Professor Pertti Alasuutari, University of Tampere

ABSTRACT

Quantitative knowledge plays an increasing role in transnational governance, even when not explicitly part of formal processes of decision making. This study consists of five research articles that individually and together deal with the subtle ways by which socio-political quantification influence governance and politics. Rather than looking at the direct impact a specific ranking has on a particular policy or set of policies, the articles focus on processes that precede and frame individual and institutional decision making and conduct. As such, this research aligns with certain variants of new institutionalist literature, the theory of interactive governance and the idea of metagovernance (Torfing et al. 2011), and with the Foucault-inspired studies in governmentality.

The empirical cases – democracy and good governance, and higher education policies and university autonomy – demonstrate how quantification constitutes (1) knowledge in setting the parameters within the limits of which a concept, idea, domain, empirical fact or a policy prescription comes to be understood collectively; (2) identities in individualizing social units, making them appear separate, self-sufficient, responsible and competitive; (3) authority in transferring legitimacy to the participants of the numbers industry, bestowing on them an aura of expertise, or to those who numbers present in a favorable light. Comparative rankings tell us what the world is like, who we are, what we should accomplish, how we can reach our objectives, and who we should look up to.

In addition to shedding light on and systematizing the ways in which quantification functions as a mechanism of governing, the empirical cases build up evidence for arguing that the contemporary trend for quantification – manifest in the proliferation of demands for evidence-based policy making, managerial reforms in national public administration and supranational efforts to produce accessible knowledge for various purposes – is often premised on an atomistic social ontology that reinforces the ideology of competition and supports economistic problem setting and policy solutions. Whether or not one likes the role quantification plays in governing, there is no doubt that the analysis of socio-political quantification forms an important aspect of governance research, which the articles in this thesis strongly confirm.

ALKUSANAT JA KIITOKSET

Vaikka en olekaan suuri akateemisten perinteiden ystävä, haluan näissä alkusanoissa tuoda esille yliopistoa, akateemista yhteisöä ja sen tekemää työtä kohtaan tuntemani arvostuksen. Tämä ei ehkä ole yllättävää, sillä olen ollut yliopistolainen aina vuodesta 1998 lähtien, jolloin aloitin opiskelut Helsingin yliopiston silloisella yleisen valtio-opin laitoksella. Akateeminen urani on pitänyt sisällään opiskelua, tutkimusta, opetusta sekä tietenkin rahoituksen hakemista. Kahteenkymmeneen vuoteen mahtuu monenlaisia kokemuksia, myös epämieluisia: opettamisen epämukavuusalueet, työsuhteiden epävarmuus sekä yliopistoon tuotu harhainen tehokkuusajattelu ja sen seuraukset. Myönteiset kokemukset kuitenkin helposti ylittävät vähemmän mieluisat. Nostan esiin kaksi minulle erityisen arvokasta akateemiseen elämään ja uraan liittyvää seikkaa.

Ensimmäinen näistä koskee yliopiston päätehtäviä, sivistyksen ja tieteellisen ajattelun edistämistä sekä tiedon lisäämistä. Yleisesti katson, että nimenomaan yhteiskuntatieteellinen ajattelu voi olla merkittävä ylikorostunutta yksilökeskeistä ajattelua ja lyhytnäköistä politiikkaa patoava voima. Henkilökohtaisella tasolla yhteiskuntatieteellinen koulutus on antanut minulle sellaista sivistystä ja ymmärrystä, jota ei voi mitata, eikä helposti ulosmitata. Se ei vaikkapa työpaikan menettämisen takia katoa mihinkään. Työpaikka on kuitenkin säilynyt ja tästä saan kiittää useaa rahoittajatahoa: Suomen Akatemian rahoittamaa globaalin hallinnan tutkimuksen huippuyksikköä (2006), valtakunnallista politiikan tutkimuksen tohtoriohjelmaa, POLITU:a (2007–12), HY:n Eurooppa-tutkimuksen (2011) ja korkeakoulu- ja innovaatiotutkimuksen (2012) verkostoja sekä viimeisimpänä Suomen Akatemiaa ja hanketta "Policy Instruments and Global Governance: Concepts and Numbers" (2012-).

Toinen mittaamattoman tärkeä asia liittyy akateemiseen yhteisöön ja konkreettisella tasolla työyhteisöihin, joihin minulla on ollut etuoikeus viimeisen noin kymmenen vuoden aikana kuulua. Vaikka mainitsenkin joitakin tämän työn valmistumisen kannalta erityisen tärkeiksi kokemieni henkilöitä nimeltä, niin haluan kuitenkin ensin korostaa yhteisön merkitystä niin arkipäivän työviihtyvyyden kuin laajemminkin menestyksellisen akateemisen tutkimuksen mahdollistajana. Minulla on ollut aina ilo saada työskennellä paikoissa, joissa työntekijät ovat voineet luottaa toisiinsa ja tuntea, huonoista hetkistä huolimatta, olevansa arvostettuja. Toisistaan irrallisina pidettyjen yksilöiden arvottamisen yksinomaan heidän tuottamiensa mitattavien ja vertailukelpoisten suoritteiden perusteella ei tulisi saada nykyistä vahvempaa jalansijaa akateemisessa maailmassa. Tunnetta keskinäisestä luottamuksesta ja arvostuksesta on vaikea rakentaa uudelleen, mikäli se menetetään. Helsingin yliopistossa yleisen valtio-opin laitos ja Eurooppa-tutkimuksen verkosto ovat tarjonneet minulle hyvän yhteisön ja puitteet tehdä tutkimustyötä.

Olen vakuuttunut siitä, että kaikilla työyhteisöjeni jäsenillä on ollut jonkinlainen ansio työni sujumisessa ja nyt tämän väitöskirjan valmistumisessa. Haluan tässä kiittää kaikkia niitä, joita minulla on kunnia kutsua nykyisiksi tai entisiksi työkavereiksi. On ollut aivan uskomaton onni saada työskennellä ja keskustella miltei päivittäin briljanttien ihmisten kanssa, jotka ovat vieläpä sattuneet olemaan mukavia. Näiden ihmisten yhteistyö, läsnäolo, monimuotoinen tuki sekä intellektuaaliset syötteet ovat mahdollistaneet tämän väitöskirjan syntymisen.

Mainitsen seuraavassa joitakin henkilöitä, jotka ovat olleet akateemisen urani kannalta erityisen tärkeitä. Vaikka saan kiittää useampia vanhempia tieteentekijöitä akateemisen taipaleeni sysäämisestä alkuunsa, on erityinen maininta varattava professoreille Henri Vogt ja Heikki Patomäki, jotka maisteriksi valmistumiseni jälkeen palkkasivat minut tutkimusavustajakseen, kannustivat jatko-opiskelujen aloittamiseen ja ovat tukeneet työni edistymistä vuosien saatossa monin eri tavoin. Molemmat ovat toimineet minulle myös jonkinlaisina esikuvina, Heikki erityisesti rohkeudellaan argumentoida vastoin yleisesti hyväksyttyjä truismeja, Henri taas tieteellisellä avarakatseisuudellaan ja myönteisyydellään. Erityisesti Henrin järkähtämätön usko kykyihini, monesti vankempi kuin omani, on epäilemättä suuri syy siihen, ettei työni ole jäänyt kesken. Tämän työn kannalta erityisen tärkeää roolia on tietenkin näytellyt apulaisprofessori Tero Erkkilä, jonka kanssa olen tehnyt tutkimuksellista yhteistyötä useita vuosia: kolme tämän väitöskirjan sisältämästä artikkelista on kirjoitettu Teron kanssa. Läheinen yhteistyö ja siihen liittyvä miltei välitön palaute on yksiselitteisesti nostanut työni laatua. Tero on ja tulee olemaan minulle kollega, johon ensimmäiseksi otan yhteyttä, jos tarvitsen rakentavan ja useimmiten varsin oikeansuuntaisen mielipiteen itselleni ongelmallisessa tutkimukseen ja kirjoittamiseen liittyvässä tilanteessa. Monet muut, kuten Michael Kull, Jemima Repo ja Salla Huikuri ovat kommenteillaan, neuvoillaan ja ystävyydellään ovat olleet suureksi avuksi väitöskirjaprosessin eri vaiheissa. Kiitän myös Juri Mykkästä kaikesta avusta työni loppuunsaattamiseksi sekä erityisesti väitöskirjani esitarkastajia akatemiaprofessori Pertti Alasuutaria ja yliopistonlehtori Anni Kangasta työtäni koskevasta asiantuntevasta ja rakentavasta arvioinnista.

Näiden lisäksi haluan vielä kiittää omia vanhempiani, Lailaa ja Askoa, joiden vaikutus on epäilemättä ollut suuri siinä, että ylipäätään päädyin yhteiskuntatieteelliselle alalle. He sekä puolisoni vanhemmat, Kirsti ja Matti Saari, ovat myös monin tavoin tukeneet joskus hankalaa työn ja perhe-elämän yhteensovittamista. Suurin kiitos kuuluu kuitenkin vaimolleni Reetalle sekä tyttärilleni Lilliannalle ja Tuulialle, jotka muistuttavat pelkällä läsnäolollaan, mikä elämässä todella merkitsee. Rakkaimmat kiitokset teille, kaikkein lähimmät.

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Ossi Piironen
11. tammikuuta 2016
Helsinki

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2. Erkkilä, T. & Piironen, O. 2009. Politics and Numbers: The Iron Cage of Governance Indicators. In Cox III, R. W. (ed.) *Ethics and Integrity in Public Administration: Concepts and Cases*. M.E. Sharpe, 125-145.

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4. Piironen, O. 2013. The Transnational Idea of University Autonomy and the Reform of the Finnish Universities Act. *Higher Education Policy* 26:1, 127-146.

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INTRODUCTION: SOMETHING ABOUT NUMBERS

The main aim of this dissertation is to identify various ways by which socio-political quantification – numbers, measurements, and rankings – plays a role in public governance and governmentality. The five articles listed above examine the production, methodology and outcomes of international governance indexes and university rankings as mechanisms of governing. This empirically oriented work argues that the contemporary trend for quantification – manifest in the proliferation of demands for evidence-based policy making, managerial reforms in national public administration and supranational efforts to produce accessible knowledge for various purposes – is premised on an atomistic social ontology that reinforces the ideology of competition, and supports economistic[1] problem setting and policy solutions.

Numbers are increasingly being produced in the transnational context for supranational governance or for enacting a governance function, albeit not explicitly intended. This is the case with data produced for purely scientific purposes. Supranational actors such as the World Bank, the World Economic Forum or Transparency International may not pursue state-like sovereign power, but their activities and their use of calculative technologies in defining issues of concern bears a remarkable resemblance to historical attempts at making the modern state calculable (cf. Sheehan 2006, 9). These organizations have resources, international staff and contacts together with privileged access to information produced within national bureaucracies. Although the articles comprising this study engage with this transnational facet of quantification, their central argument concerning governing functions is applicable more broadly.

My approach to governance is specific. In dealing with numbers, this work focuses more on the subtle mechanisms of governance and government, and less on the structures and processes of formal decision-making and regulation that are backed up by legal sanctions. The governing functions associated with numbers are related to the objectification of knowledge, legitimation of authority and subjectification of individuals and collectives. They are premised on the view that ideas are intrinsically relevant and do not merely mirror material imperatives (Béland and Cox, 2011; Hay 2011; Campbell 2002). How we collectively understand freedom or transparency, for example, affects what we are and what we do (identities and

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[1] By economism I am not referring to the academic discipline of economics but to the socio-political view that privileges economic evaluations possibly downplaying alternative considerations. Largely synonymously but from a more dynamic perspective, Kangas and Moisio (2012, 201) analyze the process of *economization as* "the invasion of the logic of the market into spheres which were previously relatively immune to it".

policies) in many ways. Indicators and scorecards of various types and the social practice of measurement are deeply intertwined with structures of meaning, ideas and representations. Numbers are a means for attaching objectivity, credibility, factuality, legitimacy and authority to our ideas. But they are more than ideational carriers or mediators: they "add" into the ideas that made us produce the numbers in the first place: "Those technical means are a condition of governing and often impose limits over what it is possible to do, e.g. in order to attempt to manage national economies..." (Dean 2010, 42). Numbers, in other words, feed back to our existing ideas such as welfare. They may make an abstract idea an objective fact, reduce a multidimensional or contested concept into a crude simplification, and create representations of reality that we interpret as knowledge. Thus, indicators matter even when not directly and formally linked to legislative or allocative functions (Miller and Rose 1990, Douglas 1992, Hopwood and Miller 1994, Power 1997, Kelley and Simmons 2015). These more subtle possibilities of governing make numbers an interesting subject of research. This is especially so in the contemporary world where political authority is dispersed beyond direct state control and where a variety of informal influences seems to have acquired a more intensive and extensive role in governing and government.

There is now a growing body of literature that has taken this logic out of the nation-state confines and interpreted *governance by numbers* in a transnational framework looking at the various aspects of transnational numeric governance. The literature nowadays deals with issues of public policies and management, economic competitiveness, environmental sustainability, equality, health and social services, education, safety and justice, human rights, and all possible domains of social action that are subsumed under the objectifying practice of measurement (see e.g. Kelley and Simmons 2015; Davis et al. 2012a; Davis et al. 2012b; *Journal of International Relations and Development* Special Issue Vol 15:4 2012; *Culture Unbound* 2012 Vol 4:4; Hansen and Porter 2012; *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law* Vol 3:2 2011; Andreas and Greenhill 2010; *International Public Management Journal* Vol 11:3 2008; Fougner 2008, Löwenheim 2008; Larner and Le Heron 2004; Larner and Walters 2004). In Finnish, Anni Kangas (2014) has analyzed Global Cities as (Foucauldian) *disposif*, concerning which quantification forms a central element.

Moreover, the increased politico-administrative significance of numbers features in studies on transnational soft law and the cross-border diffusion of policy ideas that have come to acknowledge the role of experts and expert knowledge more generally. New institutionalism inspired by John W. Meyer's analysis of world society acknowledges the role of international comparisons – often but not always quantitative ones – in the diffusion and domestication of global models and scripts (Krücken & Drori 2009; Alasuutari and Qadir 2014). But as in the articles that comprise this dissertation, the roles that different scholars have reserved for quantification have been limited by the particularities of their empirical cases,

theories and research questions: one study examines numbers as a means for social discipline ("naming-and-shaming"), another looks at them as a means for conferring legitimacy on expert authority, and so on. The field of numeric governance analysis still lacks coherence as scholars try to come to terms with the empirical phenomena via various theoretical perspectives.[2]

The five articles of the present dissertation examine two empirical cases – the shift in the concept of university autonomy and the depoliticization of the idea of good governance. Together, they provide a more comprehensive picture of numeric governance than any single case study in the compilation does. As the importance of numbers is more a premise than a conclusion, the primary contribution of this dissertation is in identifying the multiple ways by which numbers acquire a governing function. Just as Jal Mehta (2011, 25) asserts that today "the key questions for scholars interested in ideas are less whether ideas matter and more how they matter", and the same applies to quantification (cf. Dean 2010 39-40). Numbers are significant in many ways. They take many forms as mechanisms of governance, and the evaluation of the importance of these mechanisms vary from one case to another. To be able to paint a more extensive picture of numeric governance in action, we should look at several empirical cases, each of which clearly manifests only a limited number of possible governance functions.

Overall, I examine the ways quantification exhibits three kinds of governing functions.[3] The framework for analyzing these functions of numerical governance in this introduction (Ch.3, Fig. 1) draws together the arguments and findings of the research reported in the five articles. It is not intended as a classificatory scheme of mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive categories, but more as a means of mapping potential points of entry to examining acts of quantification more generally from the perspectives of governance and governmentality. The empirical cases (democracy and good governance, and higher education policies and university autonomy) demonstrate how quantification constitutes (1) *knowledge* in setting the parameters within the limits of which a concept, idea, domain, empirical fact or a policy prescription comes to be understood collectively; (2) *identities* in individualizing social units, making them appear as separate, self-sufficient, responsible and competitive; (3) *authority* in transferring legitimacy to the

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[2] Davis et al. (2012a, 99-100), nevertheless, sketch a loose framework about the "ways in which indicators could affect global governance" including "...effects on the topology of global governance (who are the governors and the governed, and in what ways), effects on process of standard setting and decision making..." Although the schema by Davis et al. is a welcome step towards more thorough analysis, I consider the one I present in chapter 3 more comprehensive and theoretically refined for the identification and analysis of multiple governing functions that quantification can acquire.

[3] By functions I am not referring to (contested) models of functional explanation but simply to the various ways numbers can be seen as meaningful in shaping the conduct of individuals and institutions.

participants of the numbers industry, bestowing on them an aura of expertise or to those who numbers present in a favorable light. I therefore argue that numbers are a powerful means of objectification (knowledge), subjectification (identities) and legitimation (authority).[4] Comparative rankings tell us what the world is like, who we are, what we should accomplish, how we can reach our objectives, and who we should look up to.

All of these processes, albeit in different ways, can be seen as manifestations of *depoliticization* as a "movement towards closing a horizon [for politicking]" to draw from thinking of Kari Palonen (2007, 41). I also concur with Flinders and Buller (2006, 296) who argue that as an effective form of governance, depoliticization is "something of a misnomer", since "[in] reality the politics remains but the arena or process through which decisions are taken is altered" (Flinders and Buller 2006, 296). Nevertheless, depoliticization is an appropriate description of the process, since the alternative arenas of politicking are often outside public vision and democratic control.

Numbers and the practice of producing numbers – statistics, indicators, datasets, indexes, scorecards, benchmark, and rankings – create specific realities (representations, imaginaries, identities) that exclude others and, indirectly, have a concrete impact on policies and modes of conduct at all levels of social action. Depoliticization by numbers is more subtle than, for example, by overt political decisions to enact restrictive rules or out-source governmental functions to quasi-autonomous parastatals, although numeric framing can pave the way for such decisions (cf. Flinders 2006). This is exactly how university rankings have played their governing function in constructing or reinforcing an imaginary of the higher education field occupied with institutions competing against each other. It has helped – in conjunction with complementing ideas, ideologies and discourses – to subjectify universities as autonomous units responsible for their own success or failure, which ultimately leads to "institutional depoliticization", i.e. the setting up of a formalized principal-agent relationship (Flinders and Buller 298-303).

This introduction has three interlinked goals. As the dissertation compiles articles from an almost ten-year timespan and deals with two sets of empirical objects, I believe the reader may benefit from a summary of the arguments I advance so as to be better able to grasp their coherent whole. Thus, in chapter 2, I will briefly go through the five articles so as to revisit and reconstruct their main premises, themes and arguments. My second objective is to reconstruct the vocabularies used and arguments presented in the articles to enable them better interact with each

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[4] This more or less corresponds to Miller and Rose's (2008, 6) characterization of their analytical framework: "In trying to anatomize this activity of governing, we came to focus increasingly on the three axes that had interested us from the outset – systems for the production of truth, regimes of authority and practices of subjectification." See also Dean 2010 42-43.

other and with the literature published after the articles on this dissertation. In chapter 3, I will provide a theoretical re-evaluation of the main findings by organizing the various governing functions of numbers in terms of knowledge (truth), identity (subjects) and authority (legitimacy). My third objective is to overcome certain limitations that mostly spring from the article format. These include the obvious lack of positioning of the work in relation to corresponding literature and the theoretical field. Thus, in chapter 1 below I will position the dissertation in terms of existing literature on (neoinstitutionalist and global) governance and governmentality research. I will also show that the articles draw from both traditions and that this is done with no substantial theoretical contradiction.

1 GOVERNANCE AND GOVERNMENTALITY

If the above summarizes the main rationale of the argument this thesis seeks to defend, how do these articles relate to the existing research literature? In viewing numbers as mechanisms of governance that through objectification, subjectification and legitimation may either intentionally or unintentionally influence individual and institutional practices and public policies, the natural starting point for locating the present study is the concept of governance. To be able to make my case more convincingly I begin this introduction by distinguishing between two approaches to governing. The first is based on observations concerning the apparent inability of government-oriented theories in describing policy-processes and explaining their outcomes, the second emanates from an alternative understanding of social power and ways to analyze its workings, the so-called governmentality tradition.

The articles in this dissertation draw lessons from both the traditions of governance and governmentality. Such a reduction in theoretical dogmatism can be observed more generally, as the gap between the two traditions seems to be closing, perhaps as a sign of a more general "period of rapprochement" within political science Goodin and Klingemann (1996, 11-12) identified almost twenty years ago in the "new institutionalist revolution" (Lowndes 2010). In fact, in the following I explicitly place the "new governance theorization" within the broader confines of the new institutionalist framework.

1.1 GOVERNANCE: INTERACTION AND IDEAS

The first of the traditions this study draws on represents the mainstream of governance theorizing. It builds on, but attempts to surpass, the traditional institutional approach in political science, actor-oriented international relations theorizing, and actor-oriented theory of power *over*. It looks upon *governance* as a means of making better sense of the contemporary, ever complex reality that old state-centric institutional theories, fixated on formal and hierarchical regulation and intergovernmental interaction, can no longer sufficiently make sense of (see e.g. Pierre 2000). To supplant the formal-legalistic "government" tied to the hierarchical organization of the state as the leading analytical category with the more generic term "governance" – referring to the structures and processes of collective decision making, steering and coordination in general (Peters and Pierre 2006, 209) – signals a push for enlarging the descriptive and explanatory scope of political analysis. But more often than not, a turn to governance implies more than a negation or rejection of formal government as the key concept. It has produced a

number of more refined descriptions of institutions, structures and processes of governing (Pierre and Peters 2005; Kooiman 2003; Börzel 1997; Scharpf 1997; Rhodes 1996; Marsh and Rhodes 1992; Rosenau and Czempiel 1992).

For analysts of world politics, the reason to turn to "governance" has not been to displace "national government" but rather the dominant view of the anarchic state-system, which is ordered either by balance of power, distribution of capabilities, international regimes or interdependence. *Global governance* literature draws an alternative picture of world order embedded with multiple and networked authorities, overlapping and limited competencies and authority relationships, and a wider variety of mechanisms and sources of power (e.g. Cerny 1993 and 2010; Rosenau 2006; Scholte 2005; Krasner 1999; cf. Bull 1977).[5] While sovereign states have developed semi-regulatory frameworks (international law and organizations) to work out their external relations, most supranational governance works through more indirect mechanisms in shaping regional, national and institutional decision-making processes (Mahon and McBride 2009). An amalgamation of national and transnational visions can be seen in the so-called multi-level governance approach primarily developed for the analysis of the European experiences of post-World War II economic and political integration (Marks 1993; Peterson 1995, Hix 1998, Hooghe and Marks 2003, Bache and Flinders 2005, Kull 2008). Multi-level governance is thus an analytical device for helping understand the evermore-varied policy processes by which governmental authority is transferred/delegated vertically and horizontally. While the European Union would offer ample cases of governance through semiformal networks and knowledge and in which numbers play a key role, this dissertation engages with these only partially.

New institutionalists have challenged the often postpositivist undertones of global governance research from explicitly constructivist premises. John W. Meyer's theory of world society, for example, focuses on the sociocultural constitution of actors and actorhood in a process of rationalization, thus problematizing the importance of "direct social contact, physical interaction and spatial proximity, which are so heavily emphasized in network analyses of globalization" (Krücken and Drori 2009, 18). Analysis of governance increasingly concerns metagovernance, as is the case with the analysis of international rankings in the articles of this dissertation.

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[5] There is another strand of global governance literature, more normative in probing for (future) possibilities for creation of global (cosmopolitan) order principled on justice, equality and democracy (Held 1995, 2010; Archibugi 2008; Patomäki and Teivainen 2004; Dryzek 2002).

From governance to metagovernance

What exactly does governance refer to in scholarly literature? Rhodes (1996) differentiates between six uses of the term. His analysis is informative, as it reminds us that while adapted to academic use, the terminology of governance has often been utilized as a specific administrative technique or a normative program for governing better:

(1) *The minimal state* as "a blanket term redefining the extent and form of public intervention and the use of markets and quasi-markets to deliver 'public services'".
(2) *Corporate Governance,* referring to the strategic level of directing both private as well as public organizations
(3) *The New Public Management* (NPM) as a normative program for "introducing private sector management methods to the public sector" and "incentive structures (such as market competition) into public service provision".[6]
(4) *Good Governance* as a World Bank's management recipe that "marries the new public management to the advocacy of liberal democracy".
(5) *Socio-cybernetic Systems* referring to a differentiated political system, a "polycentric state" in which the "task of government is to enable socio-political interactions" and "to encourage many and varied arrangements for coping with problems and to distribute services among several actors".[7]
(6) *Self-organizing Networks*: Rhodes (1996, 660) suggest that this approach to governance, set against shifts prompted by governmental deregulation in the United Kingdom, is capable of incorporating the most plausible elements of the other approaches. He characterizes "the new governance" by (a) interdependence between public, private and voluntary organizations", (b) continued interaction and interdependence between network members, (c) game-like interactions, and (d) networks' independency from the state.

Pierre and Peters' (2005, 11) analysis of five models of governance is typical of the mainstream of new institutionalist theorizing as the analytical focus is on the role of the state in controlling and steering society and economy: "[C]onstituting a

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[6] Advocates of the NPM paradigm sought efficiency by attempting to streamline the public sector by methods of deregulation and marketization. The emphasis was to be shifted from governing by inputs to outputs and performance, from preceding regulation to *ex post* evaluation, and from universal administrative directives to individualized contracts between the government and new arm-length's organizations (cf. Hughes 2003). As a result, governmental functions and agencies were individualized, made players in their own right, with their own goals and resources that had to be used at maximum efficiency for them to earn their right to exist.

[7] Concerning the international sphere, Rhodes himself attaches Rosenau's and Czempiel's (1992) "governance without government" to this socio-cybernetic systems category. I would like to add Scholte's (2005, 185-223) account of globalizing governance as "the emergence of polycentric (multi-sited and networked) regulation" including "growth of public governance with transborder relations between substate authorities and a proliferation of macro-regional and global institutions", "expansion of private regulation arrangements", and the increased influence of transnational civil society activity.

continuum ranging from the most dominated by the state and those in which the state plays the least role and indeed one in which there is argued to be governance without government" scholars differentiate between (a) étatiste, (b) liberal-democratic, (c) state-centric, (d) the Dutch governance school, and (e) governance without government. The first three approximate the traditional statist, pluralist and neopluralist theories of the state. For Pierre and Peters the Dutch governance school represents basically the same as the category of Socio-cybernetic Systems for Rhodes. Kooiman's (1993) work, which mirrors the developments in the Netherlands, informs this theorizing. This form of governance assumes a state that is highly dependent on and constantly penetrated by networks and partnerships, each having their own interests and agendas. Such a networked state, while less of a monolith, nevertheless remains positioned at the apex of political hierarchy. The last, resembling Rhodes' (1996) Self-organizing Networks model, most emphatically downplays the significance of the state in governing modern societies. Relatively cohesive networks, whose acceptance and cooperation are needed for any policy to become successfully implemented, dominate different policy sectors.

Being skeptical of the capability of the network models of governance to realistically deal with questions of conflict and conflict resolution in decision making, Pierre and Peters (2005) propose a "garbage can model of governance" that they say can shed better light on processes of decision making in societies relying "less on formal authority and more on the interaction of state and societal actors" (ibid., 51). The model, drawing from theories of bounded rationality as applied in the research by Cohen et al. (1972), assumes a proto-anarchic situation in which decisions are the result of a contingent mix of opportunities, actors and ideas rather than predictable products of rational calculation and bargaining. As a result, the model places more emphasis on the phase of agenda-setting and problem formulation than the other models. The role of individual and organizational entrepreneurs is heightened as the relative absence of formal rules makes policy making more a matter of skill and informal status than formally sanctioned authority. Paradoxically, such a situation may in many cases benefit highly institutionalized bureaucracies at the expense of looser networks of societal actors, as the former usually possess clearer preferences and tends to control flows of information (Pierre and Peters 2005, 51-62).

More recently, Pierre and Peters, in collaboration with Torfing and Sørensen, have focused on a specific aspect of governance, the forms of "interactive governance" meaning "*the complex process through which a plurality of social and political actors with diverging interests interact in order to formulate, promote, and achieve common objectives by means of mobilizing, exchanging, and deploying a range of ideas, rules, and resources*" (Torfing et al 2012, 2-3; original italics). This approximates to the Dutch understanding of governance (Kooimans 1993), but aims to conserve a broader definition of governance, including the formal, state-centric style of

government. The writers have opted to analyze non-traditional, informal and multi-actor governance without government as a supplementary style of governing that does not rely on command and control but on interactive processes and bottom-up participation by stakeholder networks. Interactive governance is manifest in an array of forms of governing: (a) attempts to create quasi-markets for service delivery have been introduced as a part of NPM reforms from the end of 1970s onwards; (b) various types of public-private partnerships (PPPs) for problem-solving, policy innovation and strategic planning have been experimented with in which both risks and benefits, competencies and responsibilities, are shared between the partners; (c) governance networks of interdependent but operationally autonomous actors have been facilitated for the purposes of sharing knowledge and increasing commitment by stakeholders for implementation and policy planning.

The fact that most international rankings are products of non-governmental actors supports the theory of interactive governance (cf. Piironen 2005; Erkkilä and Piironen 2009, 2014a, 2014b). Rankings may be products of NGO's and think tank's, such as the World Economic Forum, Transparency International, or Freedom House; for-profit companies such as the Economist Intelligence Unit or the Times Higher Education; or academic (cooperative) ventures such as the one that produced the Polity IV democracy measurement. Sometimes datasets and rankings are produced by inter-governmental organizations like the OECD, or their affiliates like the World Bank Institute, but even they may adopt indicators and data from non-governmental third-parties. The point is that the numbers we look at in this thesis are rarely products of formal authorities nor designed by state-controlled agencies for the direct administrative usage. More often than not they are products of varying partnerships, loose networks of societal actors. Usually their authority is indirect, informal and sometimes unintended. Nevertheless, they still have important governing functions.

The points raised by Torfing et al. (2012; see also Peters 2010) are important for the way in which they bring to the analysis processes of "metagovernance" working "by means of shaping its structural and institutional conditions and by designing, managing, and directing the interactive governance arenas" in indirect ways (ibid. 4; 63). This focus on metagovernance indicates that governing by the state government or other centers of legitimate authority does not end in formal deregulation, contracting out of service production or autonomization of public agencies, quite the contrary. The state has a vast array of tools for controlling structures of governance, starting from the establishment of legal frameworks and financial incentives for creating differentiated conditions for wanted and unwanted stakeholders to take part in negotiated interaction in different domains of governance. Governments can also exercise control by creating or closing policy arenas altogether. Most importantly, the policies of autonomization – devolution of

operational, financial and organizational powers to arm-length's agencies – and the recruitment of existing actors to participate in interactive governance processes is not just an attempt to empower societal actors to govern themselves, to produce public value through self-governance, but a more profound process of identity formation or construction of particular kinds of subjects, autonomous, capable and responsible (ibid., 63-64; the idea is to some extent anticipated by Kooiman 1993, 249-262). This surely is one point where governance tradition meets the governmentality tradition (cf. Sørensen and Peter Triantafillou 2009; see also below). This is also one of the points made in our analysis of higher education governance (Piironen 2013; Piironen & Erkkilä 2014a).

Interactive governance and its concern with mechanisms of metagovernance resonate also with discussions of depoliticization. Flinders and Boulder (2006, 295-6, italics original) has defined depoliticization as "*the range of tools, mechanisms and institutions through which politicians can attempt to move to an indirect governing relationship and/or seek to persuade the demos that they can no longer be reasonably held responsible for a certain issue, policy field or specific decision*". The politics of depoliticization, for the authors, thus covers a wide variety of practical means to delimit the responsibilities of formal public government. They provide a classification of depoliticization tactics that include *institutional* ones like the autonomization of public agencies, *rule-based* tactics like fixed indexes for resource allocation, and *preference-shaping* methods like promotion of determinist rhetoric to limit governmental responsibility (globalization, austerity, etc.). This would suggest that depoliticization is at the very core of interactive governance in general. Flinders and Boulder (2006) also offer another definition for the process, calling it "arena-shifting". This is where politics remain, but the structures of decision-making (arena, procedures, and actors) are altered, taking a policy issue or domain beyond formal political control, out of the immediate reach of general publics and the legislature.

In many respects quantification can be seen as a specific technique by which preference-shaping takes place "through recourse to ideological, discursive or rhetorical claims in order to justify a political position that a certain issue or function does, or should, lie beyond the scope of politics or the capacity for state control" (ibid., 307). The research carried out for this dissertation shows how rankings work to neutralize issues – political ideas – removing them from the political agenda by creating representations of technical neutrality. The articles show how numbers are used to justify political positions towards democracy (Piironen 2005), good governance (Erkkilä and Piironen 2009, 2014b) and academic performance (Erkkilä and Piironen 2014a), and how ranking contributes to the formation of autonomous subjectivities that pave the way for institutional depoliticization. Lastly, even in constituting expert authority, the practice of measurement can be seen as a depoliticizing instance of preference formation

insofar that the authority constructed comes at the expense of formal structures of political decision-making (fundamentally) not dependent on demonstrations of expertise.

Ideas in governance: Lessons of new institutionalism

The discussion on interactive and meta-governance suggests that instead of focusing only (or primarily) on direct persuasion, formal rules, voting power, material sanctions, rewards and resources, an analyst of governance may find it perfectly legitimate to concentrate on shared ideas, representations, social constructions and discourses. This, of course, is the premise of the research reported here.

But what about the governance literature more generally: how does the body of existing literature engage with ideational factors (policy ideas and scripts, shared knowledge, ideologies, values and so on)? The categories used by Rhodes (1996) and Pierre and Peters (2005) suggest that the analytical outlook on governance have been tuned to material realities, identification of actors, relationships, structures and policy instruments. Nevertheless, if we broaden our vision beyond the theories of governance – for example, Pierre's and Peters' (2005) continuum from étatist theories to "governance without government" – to developments in institutional theorizing more generally, we can expect more variation in background philosophies and analytical orientation that guide research on governing, including a more prominent position for ideas (see Béland and Cox 2011, 6-7).[8] According to Lowndes (2010), institutional theory and analysis have shifted their focus from the structures, procedures and activities of formal political organizations to operating on a dynamic and differentiated conception of institutions as sets of formal and informal rules that exist within and around organizations. New institutionalism, a reaction to the domination of behavioral approaches in social science, incorporates a variety of approaches differentiated by methodological premises, methods of analysis and empirical focus. Schmidt (2011, 49) distinguishes between four strains of new institutionalism – rational choice, historical, sociological and discursive institutionalism – that differ in their definition of institutions, objects and logics of explanation and treatment of change and continuity. In so doing, they give ideational elements of governance a different treatment.

For rational choice institutionalists (like Ostrom 1990, 1999), ideas come into use as given preferences resulting in choice situations conditioned by institutional incentive structures. Preferences reflecting actors' strategic interests precede

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[8] In my understanding, the "new governance" literature is most naturally seen as belonging to the broader confines of the new institutionalist research.

institutions whose existence and continuation depend on actors' decision (Lowndes 2012). Historical institutionalism (for example, Steinmo et al. 1992; Hall and Taylor 1996) understands institutions as "regularized practices and rule-like qualities" that structure action. While the main body of this literature assumes that historical structures (functioning as ideational gatekeeper) precede specific policy ideas, some have taken the leap towards discursive institutionalist thinking by perceiving ideas as constitutive of institutions (Schmidt 2011, 50, 53). Sociological institutionalism (Meyer and Rowan 1977, 1991), including Lowndes' category of (2010) normative institutionalism (March and Olsen 1984), regards institutions – "seemingly neutral rules and structures" (Lowndes 2010, 65) – as embodiments of norms, values, cognitive frames and meaning systems guiding action and preference formation. As a culturally and historically contingent construction, rationality itself does not serve as a universal standard from which explanations for individual and collective behavior could be deduced. Explanations are ideational in the culturalist sense of the "logic of appropriateness", rule-following induced by experienced social expectations (March and Olsen 1989, 2009).[9] Nevertheless, Schmidt (2011, 51 and 56) finds even this variant – a proto-constructivist framework – inadequate when it comes to understanding ideas and their communication through discourse, which is the "exchange of ideas".

Schmidt (2011, 47) argues that while all four strains incorporate ideational considerations – be in the form of individual preferences, organizational rules, cultural norms or causal ideas and discourses – only discursive institutionalism "considers the discourse in which actors engage in the process of generating, deliberating, and/or legitimizing ideas about political action in institutional context according to a 'logic of communication'". Moreover, she believes that discursive institutionalism differs from the three older versions through its willingness to grant ideas independent explanatory power in the constitution of institutions, policies and practices. Discursive institutionalists do not see institutions merely as static, external constraints of thinking and as acting but as dynamic, enabling constructs that are open to transformation. Of course, the question of ideational change remains problematic for this form of institutionalism: why and how does it happen? Another difficulty, in Schmidt's view, concerns the exact dynamic of institutional change by ideas. Nevertheless, "[h]ow ideas are generated among

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[9] "The logic of appropriateness is a perspective on how human action is to be interpreted. Action, policy making included, is seen as driven by rules of appropriate or exemplary behavior, organized into institutions. The appropriateness of rules includes both cognitive and normative components (March and Olsen 1995, 30–1). Rules are followed because they are seen as natural, rightful, expected, and legitimate. Actors seek to fulfill the obligations encapsulated in a role, an identity, a membership in a political community or group, and the ethos, practices, and expectations of its institutions. Embedded in a social collectivity, they do what they see as appropriate for themselves in a specific type of situation." (March and Olsen 2009, 689)

policy actors and diffused to the public by policy actors through discourse is key to explaining institutional change (and continuity)" (ibid, 55).

For Schmidt (ibid., 56), it is not enough to delimit analysis solely to ideas – to engage in a purely semantic analysis devoid of actors and causal considerations – but to do this in connection with an empirical analysis of ideational generation, diffusion, and legitimation: "who said what to whom, where, when, and why". This is where the causal influence of discursive constructs on public policies may kick in (e.g. Hay and Marsh 2000); where studies in cross-border learning, policy transfer and diffusion of policy ideas and global scripts can contribute (Hall 1989; Dolowitz & Marsh 2000; Krücken and Drori 2009); where identification of ideational entrepreneurs, forums, mediators, salespersons, and authorities come valuable (cf. Marcussen 2002; Mintrom, 1997); and where studies on construction of expertise – knowledge, authority and a social position – in international *epistemic communities* and advocacy coalitions may prove beneficial (Haas 1992; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993). It is exactly this type of thinking that has inspired the present work.

Hay (2011, 67), who prefers the term constructive institutionalism, concurs with Schmidt on many counts but more decidedly stresses the ontological distinctiveness of the newest forms of institutionalism: actors' "desires, preferences, and motivations are not a contextually given fact – a reflection of material or even social circumstances – but irredeemably ideational, reflecting a normative (indeed, moral, ethical, and political) orientation toward the context in which they will have to be realized".[10] Instead of being determined by material and social "realities", the fabrics we associate with the "self", our values, tastes, desires, preferences, and interests, are products of subjective and intersubjective interplay. This is important for Hay (2011; cf. Hay and Marsh 2000; and Furlong and Marsh 2010), not only because he believes that our "humanity" is at stake, but also because it enables him to locate the causal power of discourses over policies to agents. Hay's contention is in line with the premises of this study as it is also, in broad terms, with governmentality theorizing (see note 17).

Nevertheless, irrespective of what we think about the role of agency, the discussion so far underlines that even without a shared grand theory linking ideas with governance, the significance of ideas for politics and governance is now commonly recognized. Most students of politics, even those engaged with rationalist analysis out of parsimony or those involved in statistical studies out of generality, would likely concur with Béland and Cox (2011, 3) for whom "ideas shape how we understand political problems, give definition to our goals and strategies, and are

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[10] Despite possible real differences between the institutionalisms of Schmidt and Hay, I will treat discursive institutionalism and constructive institutionalism interchangeably, nevertheless privileging the former term as it seems to be the more usual formulation of the two.

the currency we use to communicate about politics". For Béland and Cox (2011) ideas are "causal beliefs". This implies not only (1) that ideas are important (and independent) in affecting the action and outcomes of political processes, but (2) that they *construct* causal narratives or mental associations between people, events and objects. It is easier (but not easy) to trace "causality" in both meanings, if the analysis deals with relatively well bounded ideas – "austerity" (Blyth 2013),"Keynesianism" (Hall 1989) or "regulatory autonomy" (Enders et al. 2013) – where idea formulations are relatively clear-cut and idea entrepreneurs (individuals, organizations, and networks) identifiable. But since ideas are sometimes conceived as broader sets of values or worldviews – shaping actions in a more oblique and less instrumental way, possibly through more detailed ideas – it may be harder to track causal processes or claim their relevance for particular outcomes. The causality of beliefs is implied in both senses in the present research.

Mehta (2011), in the spirit of Cambell's (2004) differentiation between higher-level and lower-level ideas, conceptualizes three types of ideas, ideas as *policy solutions*, *as problem definitions* and as *public philosophies*, forming a continuum from concrete and narrow to abstract and broad. To engage with ideas in the first sense, with ideas as solutions to problems, resembles the Dahlian empiricist power analysis in casting politics as an overt struggle between policy solutions in scenarios where the political agenda is taken for granted and actors' preferences fixed (Dahl 1957). Nevertheless, the struggle over policy solutions may not take place within formal political institutions although success is eventually best evidenced in the formal implementation. Even the first step of analyzing policy ideas allows us to engage with a wide variety of *how*-questions, the most important ones, according to Mehta, being related to conditions of success.

Analyzing ideas as problem definitions, the fixing of political agendas (Kingdon 1995) and specifications of problem fields, is a step towards acknowledging the importance of Lukes' (2005) second and third faces of power, the (often covert) struggles preceding the so-called decision making stage. Trying to trace the processes of problem definition and explain success and failure should be dynamic, as the focus is on processes of preference construction, deliberation and compromising. Mehta (2011, 35-36) identifies six sets of determinants that can help to explain why some problem definitions prevail and others do not: "(1) the power and resources of the claimants, (2) how claimants portray the issues (framing), (3) the venue or context in which the problem is heard, (4) which claimants establish ownership over the problem, (5) whether there is a policy solution for a given problem definition, and (6) the fit between the problem definition and the broader environment." In other words, and stretching the argument to cover analysis of ideas as solutions, Mehta traces conditions for success to ideas themselves, and the overarching principles that frame them, but also to the social position, reputation, skills, tactics, resources, personality of the

"competitors", as well as to exogenous factors such as timing, culture and procedures of decision making. Hence, it seems that Mehta's analytical intent is in line with Schmidt's (2011) argument for combining the analysis of ideas and interaction (but less so with Hay's constructivist notion of interest). Based on Mehta's conditions of success, it is also possible to argue that the strategy of quantification improves the chances of success because numbers are a way of rendering "anonymous objectivity", and thus legitimacy, to the ideas they help to express (see chapter 3).

The third approach to ideas, according to Mehta (2011), comprises two sets of "metaideas": political philosophies and zeitgeist. Political philosophies refer to views "about the appropriate role of government given certain assumptions about the market and society, whereas the zeitgeist is a disparate set of cultural, social, or economic assumptions that are overwhelmingly dominant in public discourse at a given moment in time" (ibid., 40). An alternative vocabulary could, perhaps, include cultural models and categories, or dominant values, discourses and worldviews. In this work, for example, we trace specific metaideas that we term as "economism" (2009) or alternatively "ideology of competition" (Erkkilä and Piironen 2014a). The analytics of metaideas relate to two kinds of problem sets. One attempts to map and explain shifts in political philosophies and zeitgeist – including genealogies, identification of intellectual conditions of possibility, exogenous triggers, and instances of agential creativity. Perhaps works describing de-democratization of good governance (Erkkilä and Piironen 2009) or shift in the notion of university autonomy (Piironen 2013) could serve as examples here. The other seeks to pinpoint the working and influence of these ideational frames on policy outcomes and institutions, like the analysis of the atomization of the institutional field of European higher education (Erkkilä and Piironen 2014a).

As we saw, it is likely that operating on such a high level of abstraction can lead to indeterminate conclusions as there is no way to definitively ascertain the exact impact of metaideas on particular practices and policies. Nevertheless, while narratives on idea–idea and idea–policy linkages are inherently interpretative, we need not think that such linkages do not exist or that narratives based on rigorous research would not be able to advance our understanding concerning politics and governance generally and with respect to particular cases. In general terms, the credibility of this contention is concretized by Mehta (2011, 42) in discussing three ways in which public philosophies and zeitgeists may affect policy processes: (1) by influencing the (s)election of decision makers, for example, through voter preferences; (2) through general cognitive-normative framing of political agendas and debates; and (3) as cultural symbols and mythologies – i.e. familiar terrain – policy advocates may appeal to in seeking to justify and legitimate more specific

and less familiar ideas and policies. These mechanisms seem generally plausible and so further serve to legitimate analysis of ideas and representations.[11]

Transnational soft governance

Having discussed the way *ideas* are conceptualized and used in the analysis of governance, I want to take a step back, continue to focus on political influence but this time in a less narrow sense by examining how ideas are just a single facet of the broader category of *transnational soft regulation* (Djelic and Sahlin-Andersson 2006). Firstly, globalization, transnationalization and the shift from government to governance have neither signified the disappearance of the state nor of control. Many agree that the role of the modern state has been transformed, and not simply diminished or hollowed-out, both with respect to domestic and supranational governing and order (Cerny 2010; Sørensen 2006; Peters and Pierre 2006; Scholte 2005). If the imaginary of international anarchy filled with sovereign state entities have ever been anything more than a theoretical construct, it seems that this construct has become ever more implausible. Transnational order has become increasingly polycentric, diffused with multiple layers of public (international) and private (non-statutory) actors, institutions and processes of transnational regulation (Cerny 2010; Scholte 2005).

We have already seen how new, interactive forms of networked governance including forms of "metagovernance" have come to supplement the legally sanctioned formal regulation of domestic societies and economies. Moreover, I have shown how ideational considerations have entered the analysis of domestic and transnational governance in various forms. In the following we will look at the role of non-binding forms of transnational regulation. Even today, legally binding rules and regulations enforced by the threat of formal sanctions remain a prerogative of sovereign states. Legally binding transnational regulation does occur, but its existence, effectiveness, and legitimacy usually – the European Union and perhaps the WTO, with its dispute settlement procedures, being significant exceptions – derives from governmental authority as in the case of international treaties, or less directly with the establishment and functioning of international organizations. As a result, transnational regulation often takes the form of non-binding "soft law" or "soft regulation" originating from various assemblages of interconnected public and

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[11] Nevertheless, Mehta's framework does not help us untangle the ways in which ideas as governmental and political rationalities shape the way human conduct is governed by others and by us through subjectification. My work thus builds also on Foucauldian analytics of governance (and on the concept of metagovernance, that itself presumably is much influenced by ideas of governmentality).

private centers of authority (Mörth 2004 and 2006; within the European Union, see Senden 2004).[12]

Jacobsson (2006) and Jacobsson and Sahlin-Andersson (2006) differentiate between three *modes* of soft regulation: (1) rule-setting, (2) inquisitive activities or monitoring, and (3) mediative activities or agenda setting. Rules include agreed-upon goals, standards, procedures for action and follow-up involving some self- and co-regulation enabling a degree of interpretative freedom in the application of the rules. As an example Jacobsson (2006) mentions the open method of coordination, while the goals of the Bologna declaration serve as an alternative example pertaining to the transnational soft regulation of higher education. As soft rules often come to replace or supplant binding forms of regulation, they tend to "transcend the regulation–deregulation divide" (Jacobsson and Sahlin-Andersson 2006, 253). The observation corresponds with the conclusions drawn by Torfing et al (2012) concerning metagovernance: regulation does not end with formal deregulation. Nevertheless, to say that to comply is "voluntary" appears somewhat limiting as it implies an acknowledged and active decision on whether or not to act according to expectations. Such a view excludes analysis of governing influence in which rules, while influential, are not clearly explicated and thus not consciously recognized as rules by the affected actors. Of course, to stretch the notion of soft regulation would eventually make it more or less synonymous with the notion of ideas as causal beliefs, discussed above.[13]

Inquisitive activities or monitoring include audits, benchmarks, and rankings. Numeric assessments as techniques of governance and as methods for asserting compliance are inescapably related to ideas, such as standards, goals or more explicit rules pointing to particular ends. "Sometimes the inquisitors evaluate according to rules that they themselves have previously produced (thereby connecting inquisition with rule-making); sometimes they evaluate according to rules produced by some other organization, and sometimes inquisitor activities themselves produce the rules/standards that are used by the scrutinizers" (Jacobsson 2006, 207). Sometimes "[m]onitoring activities also begin in cases in which no rules have been issued beforehand" but which lead to setting of new rules (Jacobsson and Sahlin-Andersson 2006, 254) These are crucial points, as they expose the possibility of actors not intending to regulate are being tied into a

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[12] I follow Mörth (2006) and Snyder (1993) in assuming that soft law consists of "rules of conduct which, in principle, have no legally binding force but which nevertheless may have practical effects" (Snyder 1993, 198). I also follow Mörth (2006, 120) in assuming soft law is largely synonymous with the notion of soft regulation, "a form of authoritative rule-making" resting upon both public and private authorities.

[13] This would probably be resisted by judicially oriented scholars who, with respect to soft law, refer to cases in which non-binding statements have, nevertheless, the potential of being cited in court decisions in a way or another (cf. Senden 2004).

governing exercise. An academic venture to produce variables on countries' levels of democracy for explanatory purposes may turn into a governing exercise, if the ranking – and the prescriptive thought it carries – takes on a life of its own, for example, through worldwide media coverage or as an element of a resource allocation formula (see chapter 2.1, and Piironen 2005).

For instance, both rule-making and monitoring are present in a recent study by Kelley and Simmons (2015) who engage the question of international indicators' influence on state behavior. The authors quantitatively analyze the extent to which states come to criminalize human trafficking as a response to being monitored and evaluated by the US government's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report.* The publication of the report assessing governments' efforts to combat trafficking and protect its victims was prompted by the adoption of the Human Trafficking Protocol to the Transnational Organized Crime Convention in 2000, now ratified by more than 150 countries. The statistical analysis of Kelley and Simmons supports their hypothesis that "countries included in the US reporting regime will strengthen their laws on human trafficking to a greater extent than countries not included in the monitoring regime" (ibid., 61). Whether understood as soft power or soft regulation, international monitoring seems to carry the potential of affecting legislation in national contexts. This is an example where a non-binding norm at the international level turns into hard law at national level.

As with Schmidt's "logic of communication" (see the discussion above), mediative activities, or activities of agenda setting, take the form of interaction among experts for framing political problems and solutions (Jacobsson 2006; Jacobsson and Sahlin-Andersson 2006). Cross-referencing between data producers, the generation of composite indexes with the help of borrowed indicators, and the validation of one's methodology by counting correlations with competing indexes are all examples of meditative activities related to the ranking industry (Erkkilä and Piironen 2009). Clearly, the analysis of soft regulation can go deeper than examination of the explicated goals and procedural rules and their appliance in formal – political, administrative and judicial – decision making. It can look at the more general ideas informing political statements and assessment reports. It can also look at the intellectual and interactive processes that make a particular soft law possible (cf. Schmidt 2011): Why did a particular idea prevail? Who were involved, and with what motivations, resources and tactics?

World society theory provides a distinctively strong view on soft regulation (Krücken and Drori 2009). It envisages a cultural order with Western origins governed by shared understandings, global scripts and policy recipes enacted by embedded entities – individuals, groups, organizations and nation-states. It is an order of highly diffuse and normative authority based on volition and carried by international organizations. It is a holistic vision of a cultural constitution of actors, actorhood and scripted action, with many respects resembling Foucauldian

thinking (ibid.). Directing the focus on global models, it claims to provide an explanation to the perceived cultural, social and political similarity of present-day nation-states and societies: "No place now escapes education, rational organization, science, social science, and symbolic recognition of the rights and powers of the expanded human individual" (Meyer 2009a, 49). Researchers sympathetic to the world society theory have emphasized both the constitutive and homogenizing effects of cross-national comparative data (Alasuutari and Qadir 2014; Meyer 2009b, 177-178; Hwang 2006; Krücken and Meier 2006; see also chapter 3).

If connected to a new institutionalist framework and theorization on new governance, research on quantification – the politics of numbers – belongs to the mainstream of political science. The overview has shown that rankings, benchmarks, and statistical knowledge are now widely regarded as relevant in terms of national and transnational governance as important means for making interactive governance effective. Furthermore, it is clear that new institutionalist theorizing is increasingly seeking inspiration from ideas outside the familiar post-positivist paradigm.

1.2 Governmentality and Government

The other approach on governing, which offers valuable insights for any student of numeric governance, is inspired by Michel Foucault (1978, 1995, and 2007). Unlike the governance approach above, the *analytics of government* is not primarily interested in identifying powerful actors and their interrelations, the sources, amount and legitimacy of their power, nor does it assume that sovereign power vested in formal organizations such as the state are a dominant form of power (although a particular empirical inquiry may expose its significance in relation to a specific matter under scrutiny). An analytics of government, in the broadest sense, attempts to illuminate the conditions under which institutional practices – ways of doing things in particular situations – come into being, are upheld and changed, and the "ways in which these institutional practices can be thought, made into objects of knowledge and made subject to problematization" (Dean 2010).

The noun "government" in Foucauldian parlance does not refer to any ensemble of formal public authority (usually vested in the state) but to the activity of governing taking place "whenever individuals and groups seek to shape their own conduct or the conduct of others" (Walters 2012, 11). Government as the "conduct of conduct" is "…any more or less calculated or rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through the desires,

aspirations, interests and beliefs of various actors, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes" (Dean 2010, 18). The definition points to the fact that governing is not something reserved only to the formal authorities claiming the right to legally binding regulation backed by a monopoly of violence. Government is effected through shared forms of thinking (rationalities) about government; about the constitution of particular entities, domains and objects; and through shaping of the ways in which individuals and collectives think they are and what they should be (cf. Dean 2010; Bröckling et al 2011, 2). Government, thus, covers a much broader social domain than formal policies and regulation, both hard and soft.

The notion of 'governmentality' transforms the way in which we normally think about governing. Foucault's own writings on governmentality are relatively few. His use of the term "governmentality" surfaces in the Collège de France lectures of 1977 and 1978 as an attempt to enlarge his analysis of the "micro-physics" of localized power relations to a more comprehensive analysis of "macro-physics" of power – effectively bringing also the state into play in his conceptualization of social power and analysis of government (Foucault 2007; Bröckling et al. 2011). The new approach was intended to make it possible to study the varying interlinkages between political government and practices of the self – the inducement, formation and acquisition of individual and collective identities through which governing works – and the organic relationship "between techniques of power and forms of knowledge, since governmental practices make use of specific types of rationality, regimes of representation, and interpretive models" (Bröckling et al. 2011, 2). Foucault's (2007) primary interest was in identifying the specific rationalities attached to the historical forms of government, understood not as social philosophies or ideologies: reason of state, the police, liberalism and neoliberalism.

Empirical analytics of government seek to "discern the web of relations and practices that result in particular ways of governing, particular ways of seeking to shape the conduct of individuals and groups" (Miller and Rose 2008, 7) taking place at all levels of social life. These studies of governmentality try to identify the taken-for-granted rationalities and technologies that guide the "conduct of conduct" in particular instances. The rationalities can include "the forms of representations for the field to be governed, the agencies to be considered and enrolled in governing, the techniques to be employed, and the ends to be achieved" (Dean 2010, 268). As such, studies of governmentality look for interrelations between knowledge, ideas and vocabularies, on the one hand, and technical means – material conditions – to actually achieve the ends of government, to render thought actionable, on the other. In other words, they look at "the systematic ties between forms of rationality and technologies of government" (Bröckling et al 2011, 12; also Walters 2012, 61). Scholars indebted to Foucault analyze the mutually reinforcing interconnectedness

of modes and parameters of making sense of reality ("governmental rationalities") and mechanisms and practices ("technologies") (Miller and Rose 1990; Dean 2010; Walters 2012; Torfing et al. 2012, 65-68).

As an empirical endeavor, "analytics of government" or "studies of governmentality" first took root in the English speaking world with the publication of *The Foucault Effect* (Burchell et al. 1991), which prompted a loose network of researchers representing a variety of humanist and social scientific fields to utilize Foucauldian insights and terminology in their studies (Jessop 2011). Nevertheless, while this so-called 'Anglo-Foucauldian school – associated especially with Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller but also with Graham Burchell and Colin Gordon – have been influential, it has not remained the sole center of governmentality research. All around the world, the most divergent issues and themes have been studied with reference to Foucault's ideas.[14] While these bodies of research highlight the multiplicity of knowledge, authorities and techniques of governing specific domains of social practice, they do not form a unifying theory of government. Inda (2005) has, nonetheless, suggested that they are organized around three shared analytical themes: the *reasons* or rationalities of government, *technics* or technologies of government and *subjects* – forms of selves and identities – that arise and inform governmental activity. Other writers have proposed more or less corresponding frameworks. Miller and Rose (2008, 6) have noted that while they have studied varied histories of lowly forms of expertise (in contrast to sovereign authority vested in the higher echelons of the state) as variedly as in the fields of management, psycho sciences, social work and education, they nevertheless found that they shared commonalties in the three axes of "systems for production of truth, regimes of authority and practices of subjectification".

Dean (2010) explains that to provide answers to how-questions – how do we govern and are governed? – we must analyze how *thought* on governing is reflected in particular practices, structures and institutions of governing at any given time and place. The analyst of governance tries to understand "how different locales are constituted as authoritative and powerful, how different agents are assembled with specific powers, and how different domains are constituted as governable and

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14 They have treated themes concerning, among other things, the European Union (Walters 2004; Dale 2004), psychiatry and psychology (Ong 1995; Rose 1989, 1996, 1998) urban politics and planning (Rabinow 1989; Robins 2002), organizations and management (Krieken 1996; Miller and O'Leary 1987), reproduction (Weir 1996; Greenhalgh 2003) refugee policies (Lui 2004; Lippert 1999), civil society action (Rutland and Aylet 2008; Lipschutz 2004), education (Hunter 1994; Besley 2002; Nadesan 2006; Masschelein et al. 2007; Peters et al. 2008), corporate social responsibility (Prieto-Carrón and Larner 2010; Gibbon and Ponte 2008; Blowfield and Dolan 2008), criminology and criminal justice policy (Smandych 1999; Dubber and Valverde 2006; Simon 2007; Bosworth 2011), ecology (Rutherford 1999; Luke 1999), agrifood business (Higgins et al. 2010), colonialism (Kalpagam 2002; Inda 2005), poverty and poverty reduction (Fraser and Gordon 1994; Dean 1991; Cruikshank 1994 and 1999).

administrable" (ibid., 40). According to Dean (2010, 41-44), analysts of government should take account of the interplay between four dimensions of governing in trying to make sense of their research material:

"fields of visibility" as visual or schematic representations of reality – drawings, charts, maps – that operate through framing, covering and exposing fields to be governed;

(a) mechanisms, procedures, tactics, technologies and vocabularies that make it (materially) possible to realize (and condition the realization of) governmental ends inscribed in discourses, ideas, values and worldviews but which simultaneously set conditions of their own;

(b) governmental rationalities concerning "the forms of knowledge that arise from and inform the activity of governing" (ibid., 42) comprised of "relatively systematic discursive matrices in which government is articulated, the languages that construe the object and the objectives of government, the grammar of analyses and prescriptions, the vocabularies of programmes, the terms in which legitimacy of government is established" (Miller and Rose 1990, 167);

(c) formation of individual and collective identities "through which governing operates": "What forms of person, self, and identity are presupposed by different practices of government" (Dean 2012, 43); how does it construct, with what kind of capacities and expectations it attaches to those who govern and those who are governed? In effect, this aspect of analyzing governmentality focuses on governing as an *attempt* to "elicit, promote, facilitate, foster and attribute various capacities, qualities and statutes to particular agents" (ibid., 43-44).

It is especially the second dimension, the *techne* of government, that is important for the purposes of the present dissertation. The focus on technologies and apparatuses of government implies that ideas – to be effective – are less meaningful if delinked from the mediating technologies of government: "The events and phenomena to which governing is to be applied must be rendered into information – written reports, drawings, pictures, numbers, charts, graphs, statistics" (Miller and Rose 1990, 168). Quantification is a powerful technique of objectification, in constructing particular representations of reality, taken-for-granted truths that make domains visible, bounded, particular and thus governable. For instance, Miller and Rose (1990) discuss the linkages between vocabulary and technical devices that had to be invented before the "national economy" could be articulated as an object "to be known, recorded, calculated and operated upon" so as to enable economic planning for optimizing citizens' welfare to become the dominant rationale in post-war European thinking. The thinking and vocabulary of Miller and Rose have greatly influenced the research reported in the articles that comprise the present study.

Among other things, Dean's framework directs the focus on the process of subjectification as indispensable for the analysis of government, but also suggests it as a useful perspective for the examination of quantification as a mechanism of governance more broadly (see chapter 3). Subjectification, the sociocultural production of subject categories and the processes by which individuals and groups construct themselves in relation to these, is both individualizing and collectivizing as the identities we acquire are cast in collective categories helping us to differentiate them from the alternative kinds (Rose 2004, 46). As the Foucauldian stance is to renounce universal subjectivity, the analytical focus is on the processes of subjectification and "technologies of self": "the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made into subjects" (Foucault 1982 cited in Taylor 2011, 6). Or as Miller and Rose put it (2008, 8): "There are no universal subjects of government: those to be governed can be conceived of as children to be educated, members of a flock to be led, souls to be saved, or, we can now add, social subjects to be accorded their rights and obligations, autonomous individuals to be assisted in realizing their potential through their own free choice, or potential threats to be analysed in logics of risk and security" (Miller and Rose 2008, 8). In the following I will examine, how calculative techniques have become important means for the construction of empowered subjects capable of the responsible self-government of advanced liberal societies.

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault (1995) describes how before the seventeenth century individuals were subjected to the sovereign power of feudal authorities. The power in these societies was based on coercive technologies: laws, prohibitions and physical punishment. With the emergence of modern liberal societies power was more and more exercised through disciplinary techniques that aimed to create "docile bodies", (economically) productive individuals incapable of (political) resistance. Discipline forms order and individuality by creating physical and social (hierarchical) divisions between people with the aim to control their bodily activities in space and time; by training and examination; by combining individual activities for reaching optimal ends (Hoffmann 2011, 30). Success of disciplinary power rests, according to Hoffmann's (ibid., 31) reading of Foucault (1995), on techniques of "hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and the examination".

Hierarchical observation, such as a benchmark, produces a networked division between supervisors and supervised. Normalizing judgment adds evaluative activity in setting the standards of behavior subjects are expected to adhere to. The examination, quoting Hoffmann (ibid. 32),

> "binds the exercise of disciplinary power to the formation of a disciplinary knowledge. It does so in several ways. First of all, the examination facilitates the exercise of disciplinary power by objectifying subjects through observation. [- -]   Second, the examination constitutes

individuality through an administrative form of writing that leaves behind a dense layer of documents, as in the examples of medical records and student records. This writing makes it possible to describe individuals as objects and track their development, or lack thereof, as well as to monitor through comparison phenomena within the larger aggregate of population (*ibid*.: 189-91 [Foucault 1995, 189-91]). Finally, the accumulation of documents through the examination forges the individual as a case defined in terms of a status bound up with all of the "measurements", "gaps" and '"marks"' characteristic of disciplinary power (*ibid*.: 192 [Foucault 1995, 192])."

In Foucault's (1995) narrative the disciplinary mode of power was adjusted more to individual optimization than the older modes concerned with negative activities, such as the prevention of crime and elimination of activity deemed harmful to society and authority. Disciplinary practices, first encountered in the marginal confines of religious, military, and educational institutions, began to cover broader social arenas at the outset of eighteenth century with the effect of a "tightening of relations between power and knowledge to the point of their mutual constitution by the eighteenth century. The objectification of individuals became the means for their subjection and the subjection of individuals became the means for their objectification (ibid.: 224 [Foucault 1995, 224])." (Hoffmann 2011, 34).

If discipline was aimed at controlling individual bodies, another, though highly overlapping mode of power – biopower – emerged in the late eighteen century to target the population. For Foucault the notion of biopower emerges with the shift of his analytical focus from microphysics – concerned with analyzing discipline in lower-level institutions like schools, prisons and hospitals – to macrophysical analysis of government where state and other centers of authority play a decisive role. Biopower operates through knowledge and administration of norms regulating population, hygiene, birthrate, health – in other words questions of life and death for the general welfare of the population (Taylor 2011). According to Dean (2010) the emergence of liberalism as a governmental rationality – born out from the critique of excessive government and manifest in its attempt to shape the capacities of free subjects for achievement of its ends – was made possible by biopolitical means for administering populations or, rather, by the promotion of practices, knowledge and subjectivities for empowering people to govern themselves according to external moral standards (cf. Rose 2004).

Classical liberal rationality never abandoned the state but merely "governmentalized" it with modes of disciplinary and biopolitical techniques. More recently, however, neoliberal rationalities and the use of advanced liberal strategies have functioned to "governmentalize the government" by extending the scope of market rationality – choice and competition – in all domains of social activity. According to Rose (2004, 84), individual autonomy – "the capacity to realize one's

desires in one's secular life, to fulfil one's potential through one's own endeavours, to determine the course of one's own existence through acts of choice" – have come to define contemporary government. Everybody, individuals and collectivities, are expected, facilitated and pushed to think and act as enterprises and partners in governing activity. With respect to developments (manifest in NPM reforms and theorized in "governance without government"), the techniques of quantification have played an important role in multiple ways.

Quantitative practices and knowledge do not only have the capacity to support neoliberal thinking as mechanisms of depoliticization by functioning to exclude particular domains out of political agenda. They are not only utilized as means of disciplinary control, as methods of surveillance, evaluation, self-government and subjection under norm/standard. They do not only play a role as techniques of *ex post* accountability, legitimizing formal deregulation and subsequent privatization of governance. They do not only feature as demonstrations of expert authority from which transnational organizations can draw legitimacy for their existence and ideas. With respect to governmentality, quantification in the form of comparative rankings more than anything serves as a "technology of self", a way of enjoining autonomous, responsible, entrepreneurial subjectivity on various social entities, such as universities (Piironen 2013, Erkkilä and Piironen 2014a).

This last function is related to the logic of measurement that proceeds by characterizing the units of measurement (individuals, organizations, countries) in terms of numeric values. Quantification thus disconnects social units from each other and objectifies the atomized imagery in datasheets and indexes. The measurement constructs a social atomistic representation by projecting an explicitly autonomous (and implicitly responsible) social subjectivity – ready to self-govern and participate in co-governing. Furthermore, the comparative element of a ranking adds into the atomist ontology a competitive edge that is very much in line with the neoliberal project of optimization through market rationality. Thus, entities are not only autonomous and responsible; rankings promote competition and entrepreneurial subjectivities. Universities must compete to thrive (Piironen 2013, Erkkilä and Piironen 2014a).

1.3   To diagnose and explain

Both traditions described in the previous section expose multiple ways by which socio-political quantification, numbers and rankings, function as mechanisms of governing. Taking into consideration developments in the field of new institutionalism, such as the proliferation of realist ontology and constructivist

epistemology, we can say that the gap between mainstream theorizing and the Foucauldian analytics of government is waning. The mainstreaming of the discursive institutionalist approach; emphasis on interactive modes of governance, the breaking of the hegemony of state-centric IR realist paradigm of anarchic world order, the more or less universal acceptance that ideas, representations and language matter, the focus on *how*-questions and historical conditions of possibility instead of prioritizing generic answers to *why*-questions, and the increased willingness to cross-reference between the two traditions, all point to dissolution of fundamental controversy between mainstream political science and the governmentality tradition. Separation between those striving for sociopolitical diagnosis and those aiming for explanation[15] seem to be diminishing.

Ten years ago, Nikolas Rose (2004, 17-8) pointed out commonalities springing from developments in mainstream thinking. In his view, both traditions had come to question the analytical utility of stable categories and dichotomies of old political sociology (and, I would add, traditional institutionalism). Governance was no longer only about the state, and the neat separation between the public and the private was no longer the starting point of political analysis but one of its primary objects. Political scientists, in general, had become more sympathetic to looking at (micro)relations of power at everyday practices of situated individuals and the connections with broader categories of social power. Neither tradition denied the relevance of the state nor the potency of sovereignty, legality and legitimacy vested in it, but both recognized the importance of other modes of power and subtler means of governance.

Nevertheless, Rose (2004, 18) still felt at the time of writing that the "new sociology of governance" retorted to an outdated, legalistically biased vocabulary conferring the state with "a quite illusory necessity, functionality and territorialization" incapable of capturing the tenuous, reversible and heterogeneous links between the political apparatuses and distant activities of governing that are "dependent upon a range of 'relatively autonomous' knowledges, knowledgeable persons and technical possibilities" (ibid.). While this no doubt was the case ten-twenty years ago, the difference between the two strains of research is hardly categorical anymore. Foucauldian perspectives and insights are escaping form the margins and increasingly finding their way into "mainstream" research of governance (e.g. Torfing et al. 2011; Cerny 2010; Sørensen and Triantafillou 2009).

Other differences may remain, however. For Walters (2012) studies of governmentality differ from the "new governance" approach with respect to the

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[15] While explanation in the social sciences entails an attempt to provide antecedent reasons (or conditions) for a certain phenomenon to occur (or to be possible), the precise causal logic, for me, is not tied to the Humean notion of causality but to a realist understanding pointing to non-empiricist and contextualized explanations that allow accounting for subjective and intersubjective factors in modeling of causal descriptions.

pre-research political ontology. If a new governance political scientist bases her research on firm theoretical perceptions about political reality (about the kinds of actors and their dispositions) before commencing empirical work, students of governmentality engage, so the argument goes, with empirical inquiry with no preconceptions about the phenomena they are about to uncover. In other words, they proceed "in a way that makes at best only the most minimal assumptions about the ontology of that which they are investigating" (ibid., 2012, 57). Walters may be correct here as studies of governmentality typically do begin with questioning a practice or a problem field that is taken for granted allowing henceforth empirics to guide the research.

Walters (2012) also points out that unlike the new governance approach, studies of governmentality do not aim to test causal hypotheses, but account for particular practices, rationalities and techniques with the aim of exposing their historical specificity (ibid. 58). By examining specific practices of governing (for example, with the help of the heuristics described in chapter 1.2), the analyst can find routes to questioning and relativizing practices, knowledge and subjectivities that are taken for granted but which the analyst assumes to be historically formed, neither stable nor inevitable, and thus disposed to transformation (Walters 2012, 58; Dean 2010, 48). The study of governmentality is thus, at best, an empowering exercise, even a potentially politicizing activity, as it carries the capacity to open up space for reconstructing truths and practices. It is neither realist in the sense that it would suggest the taken-for-granted truths be incorrect with respect to some objective material reference, nor normative in the sense of providing explicit guidance for improving things according to such external standards as equality or efficiency.

Rose (2004) paints a rather similar picture in which studies in governmentality are empirical but not realist (cf. Bröckling et al 2011, 12). They are empirical not because they would attempt to ascertain sociological "facts" of reality – practices, processes and relationships – but are more immediately concerned with "the conditions of possibility and intelligibility for certain ways of seeking to act upon the conduct of others, or oneself, to achieve certain ends" (ibid., 19). Such a diagnostic inquiry is less interested in the outcomes of attempts to influence than the possibilities – made visible in analysis of vocabularies, technologies and practices – for being able to attempt influencing in the first place. Instead of asking questions like "who governs?", "how do policy ideas influence decision making?" and "are institutions prior to preferences or the other way around?" an analyst of government is concerned with *the ways* in which the political world is produced: "how did it become possible to make truths about persons, their conduct, the means of action upon this and the reasons for such action?" (Rose 2004, 19). As such, the analytics of government cannot focus solely on vocabularies that define the domains to be governed but on "a complex of practical processes, instruments, programs, calculations, measures, and apparatuses making it possible to form and

control forms of action, structures of preference, and premises for decisions by societal agents in view of certain goals" (Bröckling et al. 2011, 13).

The depictions by Walters and Rose appear fairly plausible with respect to the difference between the two traditions. It is true that most new institutionalist variants – but not, for example, John W. Meyer's approach – proceed from fixed premises concerning the world they are studying. It is also true, as the examination of the governance tradition in the chapter 1.1 should have made clear, that most new institutionalists are concerned with questions of causality, ideational influences on policies, and even the discrepancy between reality and discourses. Only rarely does mainstream research limit its concerns to the "ways the political world is made up". If it is, it is more likely that such an analysis is only a starting point for a study that ends up with (semi)causal explanations or hypotheses (see Schmidt 2011). Even when the exact causal relationship between material or social structures and political ideas and policies is left open, new institutionalists assume that such relationships exist (even if impossible to definitively account for).[16]

As I see it, scholars of governmentality seem to dodge the question of ontology by retorting to indifference. For them, it is a choice of perspective that makes them study the conditions of possibility, the different ways of thinking about governance, and the interplay between thought and practice, instead of concerning themselves with questions of causal efficacy or properties of material reality. In other words, because of their choice of perspective, they do not need to take part in the philosophical dispute between ontological foundationalism and anti-foundationalism. This is not a stance reserved for Foucauldian scholars, but a common argument by many who are oriented towards social constructivist type of research. Indeed, instead of seeing the difference between the two traditions in terms of ontology, I would – and Rose would probably agree – suggest viewing the difference between the governmentality approach and the variants of new institutionalist theorizing rather as a difference of perspective and interest than of ontology.

But even if the two can tolerate each other as perspectives on the social world, is it possible to bring them into one and the same analytical framework as Torfing et al. (2011) have done in their theorization of interactive governance? I believe it is. Irrespective of Foucault's ontological position and the analytical restrictions scholars inspired by his work put on their own work, many *insights* that his

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[16] According to Hay (2011), constructivist institutionalism "seeks to identify, detail, and interrogate the extent to which—through processes of normalization and institutional embedding—established ideas become codified, serving as cognitive filters through which actors come to interpret environmental signals and, in so doing, to conceive of their own interests" (Hay 2011, 69). Nevertheless, as Schmidt (2011, 61) reminds us, Hay (2001) as well as certain others operating with ideas (Blyth 2003; Parsons 2003) "see their main explanatory task as that of demonstrating the causal significance of ideas and discourses".

theorizing have inspired do not seriously conflict with the strain of realist metatheory that combines with "epistemic relativity", a view "that all beliefs are socially produced, so that all knowledge is transient, and neither truth-values nor criteria of rationality exist outside historical time" (Bhaskar 1998, 62-63). For a realist then, it is fully possible, sometimes even analytically beneficial, to engage in genealogical inquiries, to track the processes of identity formation, and if appropriate – depending on the research problem at hand – bracket material considerations out from a particular study. Of course, if the realist proceeds to claim better correspondence between "objective reality" and the scientific knowledge she has produced (than some alternative body of knowledge), then there would be evident discrepancy with her aims and the analytical scope of governmentality research. But even here, I see no problem in borrowing theoretical ideas and analytical insights from the governmentality literature.

In practical terms, and despite the differences explicated, I think that scholars are increasingly willing to transgress strict theoretical dogmas to be able to better understand the phenomena under scrutiny. There may be many reasons for such an ecumenical development – for example, the mainstreaming of constructivist thinking in general – but the one that I suspect has contributed much is the rise of scientific realism and its criticism of the empiricist understanding of causality aiming at general explanations and elimination of the causal efficacy of thought. More practical considerations have given birth to a variety of new institutionalist approaches to challenge the once dominating behavioralist and rationalist bastions within the discipline (Lowndes 2010). The significance of ideas, values, norms and structures of meaning is nowadays acknowledged commonly. We have seen that there is a growing body of literature analyzing the construction, diffusion and influence of ideas (Hall 1993; Goldstein and Keohane 1993; Blyth 2002; Weyland 2005, Stone 2008, Simmons et al. 2008, Krücken and Drori 2009; Abdelal et al. 2010; Alasuutari 2014) knowledge and expertise as a source of authority (Gieryn 1999, Haas 1992, Herbst 2003; Boswell 2009); contextual and institutional analysis of discourses and the use of discursive tactics by elites (Hay and Marsh 2000; Hay and Rosamund 2002; Schmidt and Radaelli 2004).

Moreover, while many consider Foucault's texts theoretically ambiguous and even incoherent, the *Foucauldian perspective* is no longer simply dismissed as obscure post-structuralist theorizing that cannot contribute to the received canon of political theory. There are now active attempts to bring Foucauldian insights into the very core of theorizing about power. One only needs to consider, for example, Goverde et al. (2000), or articles by Mark Haugaard (2012) and Andrew Sayer (2012) who seem to find it natural to place Foucault in the power debate alongside familiar figures such as the power-over theorist Max Weber, the empiricist Robert A. Dahl, the structural-functionalist Talcott Parsons, the Enlightenment theorist Hannah Arendt, and the critical realist Roy Bhaskar. The same seems to be the case

between the theory and analysis of identity where sociological mainstream and Foucauldian thinking seem to be now closely aligned (see Lawler 2014; and chapter 3.2.2). As I already mentioned, the same holds true with ideas concerning empirical analysis: Torfing et al (2011, 129-131) have no problem in pointing out similarities with their "metagovernance" (Peters 2010) and Foucauldian governmentality. It thus seems to me that Foucault's insights as opposed to his terminology are increasingly visible within mainstream analysis. Diagnosis and explanation are hardly mutually exclusive.

1.4   THE TWO TRADITIONS IN THE PRESENT THESIS

The research presented in this dissertation is indebted to both traditions. It could be anchored into discursive institutionalism, read as a supplementary to global governance literature, tied to the themes of interactive governance, and seen as a product of active an use of analytical tools taken from the governmentality "tool box"[17] Perhaps the most important governmentality tool is the perspective on governing: "to understand governance not as a set of institutions, nor in terms of certain ideologies, but as an eminently practical activity that can be studied, historicized and specified at the level of the rationalities, programmes, techniques and subjectivities which underpin it and give it form and effect" (Walters 2012, 2). This perspective also informs the research of this dissertation.

I present the problem field of this study in terms of both the definition of "interactive governance" (Torfing et al. 2011) and government as the "conduct of conduct" (Dean 2010). My attempt is to trace the multiple ways by which quantification plays a role in the processes in which various actors attempt "to formulate, promote, and achieve common objectives by means of mobilizing, exchanging, and deploying a range of ideas, rules, and resources" (Torfing et al. 2011, 2-3) and by "employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through the desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs of various actors..." (Dean 2010, 18). There is no disparity here, especially if the latter is taken to be a special case of the former.

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[17] Miller and Rose (2008, 8) describe the beginning of their analytical collaboration: "It was from this perspective that we adopted some of the terminology and concepts sketched out – no more – by Michel Foucault in his brief writings on 'governmentality'. In the development of our approach, we preferred not to be Foucault scholars. We picked and chose, added ideas and concepts from elsewhere, made up a few of our own..." I approach their work from a similar angle, by picking and choosing, and not seeking to establish a dogma out of governmentality.

This dissertation mostly deals with issues of thought – ideas, representations and concepts – and particularly with substantive ideas inscribed within concepts of democracy, good governance and university autonomy. These ideas are means to "reconceptualize interests, to chart new institutional paths, and to reframe cultural norms" (Schmidt 2011, 62). I am not indifferent to the question of causality: the analysis of democracy indexes (Piironen 2005) is motivated and built on an assumption that the idea of democracy, as it is represented in influential rankings, does have causal potential with respect to associated ideas and policies. The approach to causality is perhaps even more explicit in the article on the idea of university autonomy: here the influence of a transformed idea is traced to legal institutionalization, although the practical and structural consequences of the new law are, however, left for coming studies (Piironen 2013). This is in line with the understanding of Béland and Cox (2011, 4) who assert "causal beliefs, or ideas, provide guides for action. Ideas help us to think about ways to address problems and challenges that we face and therefore are the cause of our actions." Thus while the research in this dissertation is primarily focused on explicating the numeric techniques for either fixing the parameters of abstract constructions or the parameters of representations of reality, it is assumed that the meaning structures together with quantitative technologies affect human behavior and its material and social realities.

What is left somewhat unspecified is the answer to the question "where do our ideas spring from?" Although I hold that there is an external reality that is to some extent independent of human perceptions, it rarely determines social phenomena as these are generated in intersubjective processes. Here I again point to "epistemic relativity" (see above) and agree with Béland and Cox (2011) that while our ideas may be derived from sensory perception – thus connected to material reality – they *may* have no connection to external reality whatsoever and still be meaningful as such. What about the other way around? Shared ideas, as hard as we stick to a certain conviction, can change material realities only through a change in practices. While we cannot undo the reality of higher standards of living in Sweden than in Sudan just by collectively denying the existence of disparity, we have the capacity to consciously change our practices so as to alleviate the poverty gap in the long run. Nevertheless, as ideas, beliefs and meaning structures shape the way we encounter material realities, the experience of reality – how exactly we understand "standards of living", Sudan or Sweden – is nothing but contingent. And if perceptions are contingent, so must be the policies they inspire.[18]

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[18] Concerning the relation between social (intersubjective) determinants and human agency, I suggest the interpretative approach of Bevir and Rhodes (2006, 4) is supportive to the research at hand: "Even if a linguistic context forms the background to people's statements, and a social context forms the background to their actions and practices, the content of their statements and actions does not come directly from these contexts. It comes instead from the

So despite flirting with real causal processes – hinting at realist ontology – the main thrust here is on the construction of shared knowledge through the interplay between discourses and technologies of governance, that is, on forms of socio-political quantification. The articles examine numbers as mechanisms of governance and claim that as such they can be given multiple functions. While the objectives of the dissertation share much with new governance literature and discursive institutionalism, many ideas and concepts for analyzing numbers as mechanisms of governance are explicitly drawn from the governmentality toolbox. As an analytical corpus this has contributed greatly to how quantification is approached in the articles.

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ways in which they replicate, use or respond to these contexts in accord with their intentions." Furthermore, I would argue that this understanding of "situated agency" is not, in practice, too far from the motivation behind analytics of government: individuals possess the capability to reflect the taken-for-granted (Walters 2012: 42-43; Dean 2010, 49; Rose 2004, 57-60). It does not assume pure autonomy – freedom from all preconceptions – but a leverage to expose particular structures of domination and thus possibility to "think otherwise" (Taylor 2011, 4-7).

2 THE RESEARCH REVISITED

This dissertation brings together five published articles, three of which are co-authored with Dr. Tero Erkkilä with whom I have collaborated for several years:

(1) Piironen, O. 2005. Minimidemokratiaa ilman sisältöä?: valtavirran demokratiamittareiden arviointia. [Minimalist democracy without substance? An evaluation of the mainstream measures of democracy]. *Politiikka* 47(3).

(2) Erkkilä, T. & Piironen, O. 2009. Politics and Numbers: The Iron Cage of Governance Indicators. In Cox III, R. W. (ed.) *Ethics and Integrity in Public Administration: Concepts and Cases*. M.E. Sharpe.

(3) Erkkilä, T. & Piironen, O. 2014b. (De)politicizing Good Governance: the World Bank Institute, the OECD and the politics of governance indicators. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research* 27(4).

(4) Piironen, O. 2013. The Transnational Idea of University Autonomy and the Reform of the Finnish Universities Act. *Higher Education Policy* 26(1).

(5) Erkkila, T. & Piironen, O. 2014a. Shifting fundaments of European higher education governance: competition, ranking, autonomy and accountability. *Comparative Education* 50(2).

In this chapter, I will go through all the articles in an attempt to summarize, clarify, and update them. As my empirical focus was first on the measurement of democracy and good governance, I will first pursue this thread in the articles. In this body of research the analytical emphasis lays heavily on the relation between conceptualization and operationalization. The premise is that the "true nature" of a measurement, the ideas that a measurement carries, can be revealed by descending at the level of attributes and indicators rather than trusting the conceptual clarifications of the measurer. Only in the last article of this thread, *(De)politicizing good governance* (2014b), has the analytical focus clearly moved from objectification – construction of knowledge, representations of reality and discursive imaginaries – to the legitimation of the epistemic authority of international organizations using and producing numbers.

The empirical focus of the second thread in the publications is on the field of higher education (HE) policy. I entered this field of research together with Dr. Erkkilä in 2011 already possessing the analytical tools and concepts with which to examine recent developments in higher education. While Erkkilä (2013; Erkkilä and Kauppi 2013, 2011, 2010) first concentrated more on operational aspects of university rankings, I began my work from conceptual analysis in *The transnational idea of University autonomy* (2013). By seriously examining the concept of university

autonomy before linking it to the rankings practice itself, the work marked a return to the idea of the *Minimalist democracy* (2005) in putting conceptual analysis on a par with the empirics of discourse and measurement. To find the dominant notion of university autonomy so strongly enmeshed with the ideology of competition – being itself a manifestation of competitive logic – in turn pushed us to take the analysis further and to connect it with the practice of ranking in the way we describe in the *Shifting fundaments of European higher education governance* (2014a).

The following is not simply a summary of separate pieces of research. My intention is to provide a modest reformulation of the premises, concepts and arguments to show that the articles form an evolving process, and that there is a sequential coherence to them. The articles share themes – concern with political and governmental aspects of measurement, with economist and competitive ideologies, with transnational governance – methods – linking conceptual analysis with analysis of measurement methodologies and semiotic analysis of policy documentation – and, certainly, concern with the various ways quantification may affect the processes and outcomes of governing and government. I also take the opportunity to clarify a few ideas that could have been formulated more carefully.

The main emphases of this chapter are on (1) the specific ideas and representations whose objectification is traced into techniques of quantification and (2) on the interactions between producers of knowledge. I will discuss models of democracy, attributes of good governance, and conceptions of university autonomy, and look at the producers of rankings, ideational authorities and epistemic communities, their interests and motivations. This is because the approach in the articles is empirically oriented. While the objective is to learn about numbers as mechanisms of governance more generally, the research proceeds by looking at particular domains of governance and instances of measurement. As such, I am not only interested in the main plot – functions of governance – but also in the supplementary plots that tell the tale of specifics about governing in the social fields examined. The focus shifts to the functions of quantification in the next chapter, where I intend to push the theoretical argument further by introducing a triadic typology of functions as a way of theoretically commensurate between the different but connected functions that the analysis of numeric governance has made explicit but left theoretically scattered.

2.1 MINIMALIST DEMOCRACY WITHOUT SUBSTANCE? AN EVALUATION OF THE MAINSTREAM MEASURES OF DEMOCRACY (2005)

This article – the only one in Finnish – examines two of the mainstream measures of democracy, Freedom House's (FH) Freedom in the World Survey and the more academic Polity IV Project's measurement of "institutional democracy" and tries to pinpoint the theoretical foundations they, as operational tools, subscribe to. What motivated my research, at the time, was the realization that while democracy had become an international normative standard against which nations, regimes, societies and institutions were judged, there was no definitive agreement in political theory on what democracy was about. I also noted that measurements of democracy, some of which were constructed by extra-academic organizations other than for research purposes, were utilized in policy making, in the media and in research. If measurement had political uses and implications, what guaranteed that the results produced were "sound" or "agreeable" to me or the wider public? It was rarely the case that the conceptual premises of the measurement was opened up by the producers, let alone criticized by the users of democracy scores. I wanted to expose the possible "hidden" assumptions behind cold numbers by looking at the indicators and aggregation rules of the two most popular datasets and by relating them to the theories of democracy.

The research strategy was rather straightforward but also efficient. I took David Held's (1996) classification of the models of democracy as the starting point to construct an analytical framework consisting of a three-dimensional continuum whose polarities were defined in terms of "legal democracy" and "participatory democracy". The choice of the dimensions for analyzing the measurements was based on my interpretation of Held's differentiation, but also on my own normative preconceptions. The first dimension differentiated models of democracy according to their requirements for participation, whether "free and fair" general elections is enough (legal democracy) or whether the actualization of democracy would need to entail more extensive forms of participation, for example, by means of referenda, democratization of political parties and positive actions by the government to increase real possibilities to participate even for society's marginalized groups (participatory democracy). The second dimension for assessing the measures focused on the boundaries of the political (or public) domain that theories of democracy espoused. If the participatory model advocated enlarging the space for public decision-making even at the cost of individual freedoms, the legal model seeks to delimit the domain of public governance by fixed rights and rules. The last dimension helped to analyze indexes in terms of the relationship of models of democracy to the free market economy – whether they give strong support for the

free market (low taxation, property rights, and freedom of trade) or assert political control on the market to promote societal values and preferences.

Having specified the theoretical dimensions that formed the analytical framework, I then took account of the composition of each of the measurements. This involved a degree of interpretation on my part and my conclusions were openly described in the text. I found that the mainstream measures reduced democracy to a minimalist compilation of regulative institutions, and as such approximated more closely to the model of legal than the model of participative democracy. Concerning Polity IV, its minimalist criteria for democracy did not exclude extremely participatory settings to earn high scores but it did not require them either. I did not suggest that the measurements were incapable of exposing any "democratic" and "undemocratic" traits, rather that they incorporated features of certain theoretical models while excluding aspects from others. It is not evident that the Freedom in the World can identify elements in the US institutions deemed undemocratic by other measures, or that Polity can help in identifying shortages in British or Indian democracy. In other words, measurements objectified democracy into a single score derived from a limited set of attributes not many users would bother to familiarize themselves with.

I recommended the construction of more varied, multidimensional, and disaggregated democracy assessments and suggested – and this observation was not motivated by my analytical framework – that all numerical measurements suffered from one common but important failure: that none of the measurements paid attention to the varying levels of external autonomy between countries that conditioned the possibilities of national decision making. In other words, the producers of cross-national indexes took for granted that internal democratic governance was comparable, that the state entities were so similar and equally conditioned that comparing their achievement was meaningful. The main focus of the research was on the process of constructing knowledge by numbers. As such, it can be read as a description of a method or technique of governance, although such vocabulary is not present in the article itself. The political significance as well as causal effects of numeric representation was more premised than demonstrated. The motives of and interlinkages between data producers were discussed only in passing.

There are a few retrospective observations I want to make. Firstly, while the analysis is methodologically crude, and while it springs from normative considerations, it still succeeds in exposing the reductionist and political nature of measuring democracy. Even more importantly, at the time the research was undertaken – when the hype for international comparisons was building up – it was a rather original idea to pursue. At the time, measurements were mostly assessed by other measurers, according to technical standards of validity and reliability and the field lacked a systematic, conceptual analysis of measurements. The analysis of

"political bias" in measurement proceeds often by statistical means, but as the point of reference is usually set in terms of competing measurements, the capacity for uncovering biases is limited (cf. Steiner 2012).

Concerning the recommendations that I made, we can now observe that all of these have come to reality: (1) After the boom for aggregate measures of various social attributes, a tendency towards the disaggregation, specialization and customization of international comparison has taken root. In the later articles one can find support for this observation concerning the measurement of governance (2014b) and universities' performance (2014a). (2) In 2011 a new ambitious project for measuring democracy was launched at the Varieties of Democracy Institute at the University of Gothenburg (https://v-dem.net/). The research project aims to build comparative and disaggregated data around seven "principles of democracy": electoral, liberal, participatory, majoritarian, consensual, deliberative, and egalitarian. As democracy is now given multiple legitimate facets, it makes the global standard of democracy more open to variation. Importantly, this dataset includes assessments of levels of political autonomy – the real capacity of societies to govern without unwanted external intervention. It does not fundamentally challenge the state-centric construction of world politics, but it is sensitive to the *de facto* inequalities between states' capacities.

Following the 2005 publication, I gave a presentation at the annual conference of the Finnish Political Science Association in early 2007 titled *Observations on the development and use of democracy and governance indices* (Piironen 2007). In the paper I traced the development of democracy indexes from the 1950s to present and argued that important shifts had taken place in the field of the comparative measurement of governance attributes. Most importantly, I argued that measurements of democracy were not only filtering outside academia, but new measurements produced by international organizations such as the World Bank Institute were taking up the initiative to produce measurements that did not give priority to democratic aspects of governance. In this paper, my focus turned to the producers, their motives for producing measurements and certain kinds of data, and to the direct and indirect political relevance of measurements. For the first time I employed the concept of "depoliticisation" as a way of communicating the idea that international organizations were neutralizing inherently normative concepts – such as the highly policy relevant notion of good governance – by the means of numeric techniques.

At the time, I felt a need to justify my interest in analyzing the measurements, and so put considerable effort into spelling out the direct political uses of governance indicators as means of resource allocation in various international arrangements for financing developing countries. I could provide evidence that measurements of governance, including Freedom House's and the World Bank's, were used to allocate conditional loans and development funding worth of billions of US dollars

through the International Development Agency (IDA) and the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), the latter being supervised and financed by the US government. A specific idea of democracy had been rendered causally efficient by the technical means of measurement.

I also tried to validate the claim that measurements played an indirect political role in constructing and upholding particular representations of reality. Using archive searches of three newspapers (The Guardian, UK; New York Times, US, and Helsingin Sanomat, Finland) I traced and identified references to various democracy and governance measurements from the beginning of 1990s to the end of 2006. The limited analysis confirmed that index scores, especially those of Freedom House, were regularly utilized in news coverage to support depictions of foreign events with hard evidence. Their validity, reliability or neutrality was hardly questioned; numeric knowledge was taken as hard fact.[19] In other words, not only did Freedom House succeed in objectifying the domain of democracy in a single number by the attributes it had chosen, it had created a representation of the world – visualized in figures and maps – in which countries stood differentiated according to the standard the "think tank" had set. There was no question that ideas mattered in multiple ways and that their significance was much enhanced by quantification.

2.2 POLITICS AND NUMBERS: THE IRON CAGE OF GOVERNANCE INDICES (2009)

In this coauthored article we set out to untangle the way in which numbers helped to objectify and depoliticize the popular notion of good governance that was introduced by the World Bank in the late 1980s. A short analysis of existing literature convinced us that the concept was a new tool for entering normative ideas into public administration. Although I stood behind my previous arguments concerning measurements of democracy, that they concealed meaningful theoretical choices, we now argued that measurements of good governance were different in their emphasis of alternative administrative virtues, performance and effectiveness. Linking the notion of depoliticization (we drew on Kari Palonen's [2007] insights) to Max Weber's description of the bureaucratic Iron Cage of instrumental rationalization, we intended to take this type of theorizing out of

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[19] Davis et al. (2012a) report a rather similar exercise and results with respect to stories published in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Economist* related to UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI), Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI), Freedom House's Freedom in the World indicator and the World Bank's Doing Business indicators.

national confines. Measurement of governance virtues had become international in terms of product, producers, and – presumably – effects.

It was evident that Foucauldian thinking, especially Miller and Rose's (1990) work on governmentality, was an apt framework for analysis of global governance (cf. Walters 2011; Dean 2010; Zanotti 2005; Larner and Walters 2004). We saw that numeric objectification was a forceful mechanism for establishing a particular idea of good governance. This form of governance is not delimited to national governors and legal sanctions but is dispersed and indirect, interactive and discursive. While we can identify – and in fact we must, if we pursue empirical analysis – ideational entrepreneurs, disseminators and authorities, the power of this form of governance derives from wider structures of meaning and social positioning (Schmidt 2012; Torfing et al 2011). Even if there is a justification for analyzing a specific measurement it must be linked with its surroundings. In our research, the analytical focus was on the World-wide Governance Indicators (WGI) by the World Bank Institute (WBI), which we took as an important mediator between a set of normative and causal ideas, on the one hand, and practices and policies, on the other. WGI is a mechanism of global governance or a governmental technique of ordering things through the economist rationality of good governance. We made observations by looking at the measurement alone.[20] But, importantly, we also examined the vocabulary of good governance, the WGI in relation to the older practices of measuring democracy, and related it to other important measurements of governance rectitude. Using these means we intended to show not only *what* kind of representations the WGI produced – what were the ideas it objectified in numeric (re)presentation – but more importantly *how* they produced them.[21]

Our primary method of exposing interrelations between various measurements of governance attributes by the World Bank Institute (WBI), Freedom House (FH), World Economic Forum (WEF) and Transparency International (TI) deviated from the strategy that I had used in analyzing democracy indexes. Instead of merely looking at the input side (conceptions, parameters, attributes and indicators) we now wanted to supplement it with an examination of the scores that were

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[20] Unfortunately, the endnotes of the article were lost in the print version. These included concrete examples intended to highlight the political nature of the measurements. The WGI, for example, presumes that high taxation, defined by the business executive, harms competition (see question 6.03: 'The level of taxes in your country (1=significantly limits the incentives to work or invest, 7=has little impact on the incentives to work or invest)' (Lopez-Claros ed., 2006). Rather telling is also the indicator (6.26) constructed by asking the respondents to assess their country's 'regulatory standards' referring to 'product/service quality, energy and other regulations outside environmental regulations' (ibid.). This question, labeled as "Environmental regulations hurt competitiveness", serves as one of the indicators measuring Regulatory Quality in the WGI. In this way good (competition) is set against bad (environmental protection).

[21] This is precisely the question Mehta (2011) and Dean (2010) stress as being most important in the analysis of governance and governmentality.

produced, the output. In other words, we sought to find a confirmation that the conclusions drawn from the input side analysis (or hypothesis) were observable also in the products of measurement.

The input-side hypothesis suggested to us that the WBI, WEF and TI stressed economistic values in evaluating institutions of governance. We had a good reason to believe that Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) was tuned to see corruption from the perspective of business interest (Erkkilä 2007; Erkkilä 2012). [22] In the case of World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index (GCI), it was fairly obvious that economic motivations, in the spirit of 1990s institutional economics, were the driving force. Policy recommendations inherent in the GCI came at the expense of other values, like ecological sustainability (cf. Fougner 2008, 320).[23]

As a method for analyzing output, we simply counted correlations between the datasets. For us, a high correlation between the measures would indicate economistic tendencies (putting economic ideas of performance, efficiency and market-friendliness before democracy) in the WGI, and not concept validity.[24] We expected to find a strong correlation between at least the WGI, the GCI and the CPI, which our statistical analysis confirmed to be accurate. The correlation between the WGIs and the GCI was .85 overall and higher with all other dimensions except "Voice and Accountability" (.67), which drew the overall correlation downwards. Although the FH democracy score also correlated strongly with the WGI aggregate (.83) we did not think it weakened our argument because the democracy FH espouses is implicitly market-friendly as evidenced in my 2005 article. Moreover, the fact that the correlation between good governance (WGI) and national competitiveness (CGI) supersedes that of liberal democracy (FH) is, we believe, something that should not be left unquestioned. That this result, nevertheless, is easy to accept tells much about the contemporary ideological climate where economistic ideas – working as normative premises for all sociopolitical thinking – go without the need to justify themselves.

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[22] More recently, journalists have begun to question the validity of the CPI on somewhat same grounds (see Cobham 2013; Provost 2013).

[23] In the 'institutions' section of the Executive Opinion Survey respondents are asked to assess, for example, the enactment of property (including financial assets) rights, "wastefulness" of government spending, "burden" of government regulation, reliability of police services to protect businesses from criminals, business costs of corruption, etc (Lopez-Claros ed., 2006); See also the previous footnote.

[24] Our rationale is similar to van de Walle (2006, 445-6) who finds high correlations between four international datasets of administrative performance by the European Central Bank (ECB), the WBI, the WEF and the International Institute for Management Development (IMD) but interprets the strong resemblance due to their common origins rather than seeing it "as proof of the conceptual validity of bureaucratic quality indicators".

The analysis of international measurements informs us about the ways that make the public domain globally governable (cf. Larner and Walters 2006), and it makes us conscious of the power impelling us to act in accordance with international economistic standards effecting the "conduct of conduct". But it also gives us something concrete that allows us to analyze individuals and organizations that take part in the numeric objictification as a loose network of experts who play a key role in tying economistic rationalities into calculative technologies. Ideas, discourses and technologies are not simply in free flow but are adopted, constructed, shaped and applied by social agents (Torfing et al 2012, 58). Peter Haas' (1992) conception of epistemic community seemed to substantiate our own observations on the intellectual and social linkages between organizations measuring governance attributes.

An epistemic community, according to Haas, is bound together by shared normative beliefs, shared causal beliefs, shared notions of validity and a common policy enterprise (ibid., 3). In terms of normative beliefs, experts at the WEF, the WBI and TI all seemed to share the same notions of efficiency, cost-effectiveness and economic growth either as outspoken norms or underlying assumptions of "good" public governance. Shared causal beliefs point to shared views on policy actions and their outcomes. The trio did, according to our analysis, share the same ideas about the beneficial consequences of low taxation, strictly enforced property rights and minimization of various transaction costs to efficiency of public administration – and national competitiveness. These ideas were, with varying intensity, inserted in the indexes with the help of a set of indicators. The third criterion, of shared notions of validity, refers to internally defined criteria for validating the knowledge, which among the data producers of governance indicators include "valid methods", "reliable data" and the ability to contribute in technical debates (see also St. Clair, 2006). This point, which we did not really elaborate in the article, nevertheless paved the way for our following contribution (2014b), in which we wished to look at measurements as technical devices lending credibility, legitimacy and authority to expertise and experts.

It is more difficult to analyze the meaning of the fourth criterion of common policy enterprise when it comes to index producers. No doubt, the "direction" to which the efforts of the professionals contribute would be something like the "common good" or "human welfare", if one were to ask the professionals themselves (cf. Zanotti, 2005, 463). There are, however, credible alternatives, some of which are governmental, others strategic. Löwenheim (2008) provides an example of the former type: measurements of good governance are – and thus the epistemic community of measurers provides – devices for shifting the responsibility for the failures of societal development onto the poor countries themselves as the datasets make it explicit that the poor countries have failed to model their institutions in accordance with the (Western) standards of good governance. A strategic option –

numbers as devices for organizational authority and survival – is evoked in the following article.

In a partial contradiction with Foucauldian analytics of government, the epistemic community approach is focused on actors, their motives, connections, and influence on (national) policies. In this respect it resembles the more conventional governance and network literature (see e.g. Pierre and Peters 2005, Kooiman 2003, Rhodes 1996). The framework has been criticized for providing an over-simplified, linear account of international expert influence vis-à-vis policy formulation. It is almost an antithesis of the Gramscian concept that emphasizes the role of political forces and views international experts as mere vehicles for promoting interests of the political and economic elite (cf. Robinson, 1996). Marcussen (2000) has taken the middle path in hypothesizing that experts are influential, but able to feed their ideas to policy-makers only occasionally, at times of ideational uncertainty. Also those writing on *knowledge regimes* – "sets of actors, organizations, and institutions that produce and disseminate policy ideas" by contributing "data, research, theories, policy recommendations, and other ideas that influence public policy" (Campbell and Pedersen 2012, 167) – align with Haas' framework, even though the scope of their analysis is national. Nevertheless, these writers not only stress the importance of including agency in the analysis of ideas and ideational influence, but also the contingent nature of the relations between expert communities (knowledge regimes) and their political, economic and social surroundings (production and policy-making regimes) (Campbell and Pedersen 2011; cf. Schmidt 2011). As the relationship between expertise and politics (Béland and Cox 2011), ideas and interests (Hay 2011) as well as ideas and institutions (Schmidt 2011), is complex and nothing but static – just as the governmentality approach presupposes – it remains an empirical question that is open to many perspectives and analyses. This is the starting point for our next article.

2.3 (DE)POLITICIZING GOOD GOVERNANCE: THE WORLD BANK INSTITUTE, THE OECD AND THE POLITICS OF GOVERNANCE INDICATORS (2014B)

This article streamlines and, by introducing new data, empirically bolsters the previous argument about numeric objectification. Our description concerns how measurements objectify, institutionalize, and depoliticize the idea of good governance; and how the index scores objectify particular representations of reality, i.e. the way in which we think about public governance in and between different countries. A new analysis was also motivated and justified by a specific development in the field of socio-political measurement, a move away from composite indexes and rankings towards aggregated and "actionable" data better

suited to the needs of management and policy making at the national level. By the end of 2010, a new wave of measurements, databases and scorecards had come to challenge the old established composite rankings. In the field of governance, this shift in attitudes towards measurement has been evident in the OECD's efforts to increase the availability, quantity and quality, of policy relevant benchmark data better suited for the development of politico-administrative processes and institutions. Even within the World Bank itself the focus had been shifted to the production of a new set of actionable indicators (AGIs) to the detriment of the WGI. There were signs that the vocabulary of good governance as a neutral category had reached its limits, as some countries had begun to express their discontent with the WGI ranking scores and the prescriptions it presupposed (2014b, 345).

In general terms, observed developments in the field correspond with the proliferation of "advanced liberalist" strategies of governing, marked by entanglement of expertise directly into local level self-government (Rose 2004). Transnational experts, or epistemic authorities, no longer announce their imperatives in the form of aggregate scores, but provide the technical means for autonomous individuals and corporations to become experts in themselves and to participate in the production of knowledge about themselves. From this perspective, participatory approaches to measurement and development of "actionable" indicators are a means for incentivizing and empowering actors to increase their efficiency and capacity to fulfill their potential and reach their individual objectives by free choice. As hard-core metagovernance, it is concerned "with the changing ways in which people relate to themselves, the kinds of people we take ourselves to be at particular times, in particular places and contexts, and the ways in which varying presuppositions about the nature of human beings are embodied in technologies that will enable people to be governed, and to govern themselves" (Rose 2004, 84; cf. Torfing et al 2011).

Nevertheless, we hypothesized that the shift might be relevant for lesser reasons too. Would the emergence of new disaggregate datasets that allowed more customized and narrow comparisons mark the (re)politicization of good governance in directing discussions from abstractions to the level of actions and implications, and in challenging the previous objectifications? Based on our analysis of the OECD's "Governance at a Glance" (GG) documentation, our answer was somewhat negative for two reasons. Firstly, although the database allowed much more variability and precision in designing comparisons between countries than, say, the WGI, the choice of attributes included still betrayed economistic premises aligned with (post-)NPM consensus and institutional economics. Between the lines it was possible to read a concern for budget deficits and structures, for government debt, for the size and efficiency of the public sector, for the foundations of knowledge society even though the indicators itself were, on the whole, more neutral than the often decidedly prescriptive WGIs. Nevertheless, the OECD

indicators did not only create and maintain a specific representation of public governance as a domain defined by economic calculations and the optimization of efficiency. By providing comparative information of countries and about the "average", they also played out a disciplinary function through techniques of hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment and the examination (Foucault 1979; Hoffmann 2011; see also Chapter 1.2) although the exact conclusions to be drawn and "punishment" undertaken (e.g. austerity measures) were now left for agential discretion.

While normative, the OECD's dataset (GG) provided much looser parameters for the criteria of good governance than the WGI, thus allowing more room for interpretation. This is what we meant when we said that the GG may still carry limited potential for repoliticization. For example, a comparative statistic on central government middle managers' average salaries (USD PPP) may be used to argue for pay raises when defending the importance of recruiting committed and professional work force, or reductions when arguing for public sector budget cuts. But even if such a number does not suggest anything "objectively" good or bad (although a dominating discourse may certainly press heavy influence on interpretations), even if it does not outright point to a policy problem or suggest a policy solution, it may affect agenda setting (why not look at the salaries of health workers?) and it does provide a point of reference (the OECD average or the score of a peer country) that sets the limits of "meaningful" discussion.

The second reason for our skeptical view of the capacity of second-generation measurements to fundamentally challenge the economistic assumptions of good governance became the dominating theme for us only during the research process. As we had already written about numeric objectification related to knowledge, we wanted to enlarge, even refocus, our analysis on numbers' function in the legitimation of expertise. We ended up examining the production of numbers as a mechanism for expert organizations in claiming and maintaining some kind of epistemic authority. This is another important governance function related to numbers and the practice of measurement. This is the idea we anticipated in the previous article's reference to epistemic communities and the internally defined and shared criteria for validating knowledge. It is the verified competence in the art of measurement and the mutual recognition by other number producers that creates a boundary between the epistemic community and the rest. Theodore Porter (1995, 214) has contended that trust in expertise is enhanced if other experts subsume numbers under scrutiny, and possible refutation. A measurement, or dedicated engagement in methodological discussions, or even a manifest application of numeric knowledge, is a road to epistemic authority that springs from collective acknowledgements of expertise.

We believed that there was an international epistemic community that was engaged in the measurement of governance values. Our empirical analysis

supported Haas' hypothesis. Not only did the producers of databases share certain normative and causal ideas, they also validated each other's positions as leading experts in the field. Capacity to operate with numbers provides the organizations with authority and, at the same time, legitimizes the knowledge they are able to produce. It is no surprise then that it was a natural decision for the OECD to create a database of its own as a means of reinforcing its role as an authority in administration and governance. It validated its expertise, especially its objectivity, by entering into a debate with those already in the field, and by challenging its peers – contenders and partners – the Word Bank Institute and Transparency International conceptually and methodologically in laying out the benefits of the GG in comparison to the WGI and the CPI.

There is a branch of literature that looks upon the role of experts and expertise in legitimizing political authorities, governmental agencies and policy positions (Boswell 2012; Jasanoff 1994; Ezrahi 1990; Sabatier 1978). Fewer have examined the way that experts endeavor to uphold their own status and epistemic authority (Gieryn 1983; Brunsson 2002). We drew especially on Gieryn (1983, 1999) who had analyzed the culturally shaped construction of scientific authority and the ways of enforcing that authority through strategic "boundary" work demarcating science from non-science. Boundaries of scientific knowledge, scientific communities, scientific methods or scientific disciplines are not simply rational derivations from universal principles or objective truths but are best understood "as ideologies: incomplete and ambiguous images of science nevertheless useful for scientists' pursuit of authority and material resources" (Gieryn 1983, 793). We argue, that measurement as social practice works analogously in terms of demarcating the domain of expertise. In the global context, the gatekeeping function – decisions about inclusions and exclusions – of quantification is materially reinforced, as collecting and disseminating internationally representative, high-class data can be exceedingly expensive. Even in the globalized e-society where a YouTube hit can elevate a nobody to a superstar in one night, the advantage provided by resources and history has not disappeared altogether.

I do not want to stretch the argumentation by claiming that numbers are a shortcut to authority. They are not. Qualifications are warranted. Numeric methods are only a single and limited instrument for attaining credibility, legitimacy and authority. The production of a dataset guarantees nothing even if it is constructed with great methodological sophistication. Firstly, as a strategy of credibility the effectiveness of measurement is culturally and contextually conditioned (Gieryn 1999; Porter 1995). Quantification is not a universal strategy for privileged position, although it presently enjoys a high status in Western policy discourses. There may be social domains in which other forms of strategy have privileged potential for legitimation. Secondly, it is much harder for a new and less established organization to break

into the epistemic community than for a well-known organization whose status does not depend only on the magic of numbers.

The OECD is backed by state authority, it has a long history of fostering administrative reform, its authority is well established in other policy domains and it may well spill-over to the governance field also. Thirdly, it is not only the method that counts. It is also the values and ideas that an organization advances as Haas (1992) observed. A newcomer may challenge the prevailing ideas to some extent – indeed, it has to do so to prove it can bring in an alternative – but only as far as the argumentation does not fundamentally question the credibility of the others on whose recognition a newcomer's status depends on. All in all, the extent to which the practice of measurement can generate epistemic authority is contingent and limited. Nevertheless, in the field of (good) governance this function can be observed, as we explained in the article.

2.4 THE TRANSNATIONAL IDEA OF UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY AND THE REFORM OF THE FINNISH UNIVERSITIES ACT (2013)

This article deals with the conceptual and interactive sides of making quantification matter. While important in its own right, it also reinforces the argumentation of the following article the *Shifting fundaments of European higher education governance* (2014a), in which the discourse of autonomy is tied to the logic of competition, the practice of ranking and the concept of accountability. While the article provides a description of numeric governance as a technique comprising of ideas and practices, the present article (2013) takes account of the central idea of university autonomy and the process in which a novel representation got elevated into a dominating position. It provides evidence for arguing that a highly specific idea of autonomy helped to reorient agenda-setting and affected policy-solutions in the field of education in Europe. In arguing causal efficacy for ideas, it also ties the argumentation to new institutionalist tradition (discussed in chapter 1.2). As such, the article offers empirical backing to the more ambitious argument about the unified ideological premises of the post-2000 European higher education fundaments presented in the *Shifting fundaments* (2014a).

What motivated the research was a simple observation: a single idea – concern with university autonomy – seemed to be heavily represented in higher education reform agendas throughout Europe. From an academic perspective, this should have been a good thing, or who would not be an advocate of academic and scientific self-determination? Nevertheless, disagreements in relation to the reforms planned in Finland and other countries seemed to be associated with the so-called autonomy initiatives (de Boer et al. 2010; Paradeise 2009a; Paradeise 2009b). The

vocabulary of autonomy could be used to back a reform as well as to criticize it. I felt it was beneficial to examine the dominating representations of autonomy that were advanced in the higher education policy discourse: What kind of autonomy dominated? What kind of reform agenda did it justify? In Finland, parliament had recently approved new legislation to strengthen the autonomy of universities for enhancing their international competitiveness. It was thus natural for me to examine more carefully the ideational framing of the Finnish policy agenda and legislative process: how and why did autonomy come to set the parameters of domestic university reform?

My research strategy borrowed from the 2005 analysis of democracy measurements. I began by delving into the relevant literature: what were the most important dimensions according to which different conceptualizations of autonomy varied? I attempted to provide an analytical framework or conceptual map that would help me to make sense of the representations of university autonomy found in key European and Finnish policy documents. My starting point was that while the terminology basically remains over time, the conceptions attached to this this terminology are less static. An abstract – and ambiguous – normative concept such as autonomy can have many meanings depending on the context and conditionals attached. In Western liberal culture, connotations of autonomy, nevertheless, are generally positive, almost independent of the use reserved for the term. In academic tradition, the positive connotation is even more pronounced. No wonder then that autonomy has played a significant role in political struggles within the field of higher education. Analysis of representations of autonomy to uncover the nature of the dominating idea is thus important and can shed light upon processes and outcomes of recent higher education reforms in Europe, as the Finnish case illustrates.

As with my analysis of measuring democracy, the framework here created does not presuppose neo-Kantian universal morals nor a "scientific" definition.[25] Autonomy is what people think it is, the use the term is put into, and the social practices it is supposed to describe and evaluate. Ideas are still not redundant or meaningless, and neither are the vocabularies we employ to communicate them. All this should be very well in line with Foucauldian thinking as well as with Quentin Skinner's analysis of conceptual change.[26] According to Skinner (2002, 178), "[n]ot only is our moral and social world held in place by the manner in which we choose to

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[25] This does not mean that the researcher did not have his personal reasons for advocating a certain definition of autonomy or certain moral grounds for preferring some particular conceptualization over others. It rather implies an acceptance that others might think differently. It also suggests that the main thrust of the analysis is more diagnostic – to borrow from Rose (2004) – than politically activist.

[26] On the similarities and differences between Foucauldian history of governmentality and Skinnerian history of political ideas more generally, see Saar 2011)

apply our inherited normative vocabularies, but one of the ways in which we are capable of reappraising and changing our world is by changing the ways in which these vocabularies are applied." To account for the social and political struggles taking place in and through our concepts, we must look beyond words. Although the term "autonomy" connotes something desirable (even morally commendable) at the current historical juncture, it is by no means certain or even probable, that everybody would agree upon the extension of the concept. In principle my analysis is in agreement with Skinner's thinking as I made explicit a change in uses of university autonomy by accounting for the social practices various stakeholders reserved for the notion.

I was also influenced by the new institutionalist work of Martin Marcussen (2000, 15-20), in echoing his understanding that ideas (1) matter, (2) change over time, (3) can be transferred, (4) can be institutionalized, (5) and can be used tactically. In the article, I presented these as premises. I now think it would have been better to call them hypotheses, as my analysis actually corroborates, albeit unevenly, each of the arguments. The case of the Finnish Universities Act clearly shows how ideas both frame problem setting and provide policy solutions. It proves rather easy to read a narrative out from policy documentation. By 2009, a specific understanding of autonomy dominated the reform agenda in Finland. Autonomy was *institutional.* Universities were to acquire legal personhood and financial freedoms and responsibilities. It was *procedural* as strategic decisions would still be under governmental control – backed up by financial means of performance management. It was *collective,* but in the *top-down* sense of locating autonomy in the *managerial* hands of university Boards, and not seeing universities as communities of scholars organized around democratic values and collegial practices. It was *autonomy vis-à-vis governmental regulation* but indifferent to market pressures. It marked an ideational change that had taken place from the humanistic values of academic freedom to the managerialist spirit of institutional autonomy.

In the meantime, analysts have drawn very similar conclusions concerning other European countries, and even Japan. Recent reforms to strengthen institutional autonomy of universities have marked a shift in the mode of regulation, but hardly lessened it in any substantial way (Magalhães et al. 2013; Enders et al. 2013; Christensen 2011; Ørberg and Wright 2009). Enders et al. (2013 20), examining the Dutch case, concluded "the dominant narrative of political reform moves away from traditional beliefs in university autonomy that are built on institutional trust and linked to professional autonomy. [- -] In the emerging narrative of political change, autonomy becomes re-defined as the 'new organizational autonomy' of universities as both strategic actors and as an addressee of governmental control. [- -] Dutch universities have gained in managerial autonomy while they have lost in institutional autonomy". Also Christensen (2011 510), drawing on existing literature and the Norwegian and Japanese experiences, argues that while

universities have gained in formal freedom over certain organizational and financial functions, they have lost in real autonomy what became of the tightened scrutiny and asymmetric relationship in the ministry-university relationship, incorporation of external actors into internal decision making structures, and increased dependence on diversified funding sources making "universities more vulnerable and more dependent on the environment".

In addition to addressing the idea of university autonomy, my research traced the dynamics of the interactive process that saw the concept established as a dominant policy idea in the supranational (European) and national (Finnish) fields of higher education politics and the consequent institutionalization in the national legislation. More specifically, the research did not confirm that the novel idea of autonomy was simply downloaded from the international policy agenda onto the domestic agenda. It showed, rather, that Finnish university rectors had been active in negotiating the conceptual bases of the notion of autonomy and in promoting it domestically. To describe the rectors as "ideational entrepreneurs" would hardly be an injustice. It is harder to assess the direction of ideational flows that took place between governmental actors and the international arenas: the concern for institutional autonomy crept into the policy discourse of international organizations – the OECD and the European Commission – in the first half of the 2000s, not much earlier than evidenced in the Finnish policy papers.

If we were to draw a line of causation from the international ideasphere to the domestic agenda, it would be better to shift the focus to the broader discursive landscape that made the new conception of autonomy so important. In the previous articles (2009, 2014b) this form of thinking was discussed as "economism"; in the next article (2014a), it is identified with the "ideology of competition". But no doubt some would wish to refer to neoliberalism. In order for an idea to become institutionalized – as in the Finnish case, to become inscribed in law – it needs to be aligned with a broader value base and its ideational surroundings. This is especially true, if the causal argumentation justifying a reform is unconvincing. For, example, the Finnish reform was explicitly justified in terms of national competitiveness (Governmental bill, HE 7/2009; see also Erkkilä and Piironen 2013). It was suggested that the planned reforms would reinforce Finnish universities' competitive capabilities. It would be easier to lure talented students, hire productive researchers (and discharge unproductive), attract money and steer research into areas of competitive edge. No convincing evidence was provided to support the causal ideas from reforms to success. Why did the argument survive, why did it win? Because it shared premises with ideas that had already taken root in wider policy discourses and that had been institutionalized in other policies.

The close connection to a broader ideational atmosphere also explains why the proponents of the reform were able to employ the terminology of autonomy more efficiently than their opponents. The notion was used tactically, but its success was

more dependent on the ideational terrain than on persuasive skills or the validity of arguments. The Finnish Universities Act (558/2009) was much more than simply an autonomy law. It certainly gave universities legal personhood, full employer status, and freedoms for various market operations but at the same time internal managerial organization, mandatory external board members and an amplified dependency on indirect and uncertain financing. Considering that the law comprised a controversial mixture of policy measures that transformed universities into strategically managed market operators, it might appear strange that the reform was consistently presented as a law to increase university autonomy if one held a different representation of autonomy or did not look beyond the discourse of autonomy.

Lastly, examination of the idea and institutionalization of university autonomy connects directly with the Foucauldian analysis of neoliberal governmentality (Dean 2010). Government, according to this tradition, is the corpus of activities that attempts, by evoking *some* governmental rationality, to *shape* the conduct of individuals and organizations (ibid.). It is separate from domination, which is linked with direct regulation and formal sanctions, and involves subtler ways of reaching its goals "through the desires, aspirations, interests, and beliefs of various actors" (Dean 2010, 18). As such, to govern is to require or presuppose a degree of freedom in the elementary sense that humans are assumed to be capable of acting and choosing. Government proceeds through "subjectification", it entails an *attempt* to shape the identities of individuals and collectivities of what we are, could be, and should become (Torfing et al 2012, 66). Modern forms of government i.e. liberal and neoliberal ways of thinking about government, attempt to utilize the capacities of free subjects in achieving certain objectives. They work "through and attempts to construct a world of autonomous individuals, of 'free subjects'" but "in order to act freely, the subject must first be shaped, guided and molded into one capable of responsibly exercising that freedom through systems of domination" (Dean 2010, 193). This type of freedom is analogous to the institutional autonomy conferred on universities and it approximates well with the more general perception about networked governance all the more reliant on various forms of conditioned self-governance (Sørensen and Triantafillou 2009).[27]

 In concurrence, my analysis shows that the kind of higher education governance based on the construction of collective selves, as responsible autonomous

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[27] Ørberg and Wright (2009, 118) summarize Danish experiments in the following way: "In sum, the 2003 University Law contained a two-way movement: it both reorganized the universities with a stronger and more unified management capable of strategic planning and increased independence from direct ministerial control; and it used other steering instruments to tie the universities' activities more closely to government and ministerial policies. The Danish university reform can be seen as a case of empowering universities to govern themselves according to government ambition."

universities, is no less interventionist than the forms that preceded it. Nevertheless, it is the following article that closes the circle in describing how calculative techniques – university rankings – serve to shape identity formation and practices of regenerated autonomous university units identified in neoliberal governmentality (cf. Sørensen and Triantafillou 2009).

2.5 SHIFTING FUNDAMENTS OF EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE: COMPETITION, RANKING, AUTONOMY AND ACCOUNTABILITY (2014A)

While the previous article connected the dominant idea of institutional autonomy to managerialist thinking – the concept of autonomy *simpliciter* being at the center of a struggle over the direction of higher education policies – this article links it with the idea of accountability, ideology of competition and the practice of measurement. In analyzing ideas, problematizations, theories, values, institutionalized practices and calculative technologies of government this article comes to depict the field of higher education in terms of neoliberal rationality or what Rose (2004) and Dean (2010) have called advanced liberalism. Once again we are dealing with numbers as a mechanism of governance. But here yet another governing function is presented. Whereas the primary governing function in the two first articles (2005, 2009) was about construction of knowledge, depoliticization of democracy and good governance, the third (2014b) added in construction of legitimate authority in the form of expertise. The last article does not examine measurements of autonomy – although we now have a database for comparison of university autonomy between European higher education systems (see http:// www.university-autonomy.eu/) – but more generally rankings' way of dissecting social wholes into self-sufficient and competing units. Thus the focus of this article is neither on the substance of a particular measurement (definitions, attributes, indicators, weighing, etc.) nor on the credibility of quantitative knowledge and the mutual validation of expertise, but on the reproduction of an atomist social reality, autonomization and the subsequent the subsequent conferring of responsibilities on social entities – universities in our analysis – which seem to be an inherent property of socio-political measurement more generally (cf. Torfing et al. 2012; Dean 2010; Sørensen and Triantafillou 2009; Rose 2004). We show how measurement as a social practice is tied to atomistic premises, how it has the potential to uphold and strengthen an imagery of inevitable academic competition in which only the most "flexible" and entrepreneurially oriented institutions can succeed.

I am convinced – and I think that our analysis increases this confidence – that it is fruitful to look at the elements of higher education policies and politics in unison

rather than separately. It allows us to assert the argument that as the ideology of competition creates demand for ranking knowledge, the practices of ranking in turn reinforce the ideology of competition. University rankings – ARWU, THES and the rest – represent academic domain as an aggregation of separate institutions. The comparative setting strongly endorses – but does not enforce – competition between "like units". In describing the performance of universities according to their individual characteristics (teacher/student ratios, amount of peer-reviewed publications, etc.) it strongly endorses – but does not necessarily enforce – a vision of self-sufficiency, autonomy and, consequently, responsibility. In short, rankings carry a self-disciplining message to the institutions: "this is your standing in relation to others, you can take action to maintain and even improve your position – if you fail to do this you might lose ground to others". Of course, it would be misconceived to identify rankings' power in mere self-discipline. Rankings may induce material consequences, rewards or sanctions: ranking scores, the reputation and anticipation of reputational consequences, may affect allocations of public funds, and attract or scare away potential students, staff and donors.

But how are rankings connected to the autonomy reforms depicted in the previous article? A bad ranking result, say, because of a disappointing research output, is not an open suggestion for a managerial reform, or is it? And yet, it is exactly the conclusion drawn by the European policy establishment looking to justify the so-called "modernization agenda". The autonomization of universities – liberation from governmental micromanagement – was intended to make the institutions more responsive to external fluctuations by enhancing employer status, empowering strategic leadership, and variation of funding sources by decreasing the share of public funding (Paradeise 2009a; Paradeise 2009b). While rankings cannot be blamed for the selection of the means to increase their autonomy, they certainly reinforce an imaginary where success and failure in academic competition are to a great extent an institutional responsibility. To fulfill the new expectations, unity, in the form of strategic leadership, was required. It was widely assumed that such measures would enhance the competitiveness of European universities and that this would in due time be reflected in the index positions.

As direct regulation was lessened, governmental control of higher education had to be secured by other means. Once again the methods of New Public Management were adopted. Control was to be maintained by performance management including *ex post* accountability measures such as university rankings. Thus the circle had closed as the solution (autonomy) for the initial problem (competition) exposed by rankings had led to formalization of rankings as a method of accountability – and thus governance. There seems to be no way out from conceptualizing the field of higher education and academic research other than in zero-sum terms as long as the ranking practice holds a prominent position in the minds of policy-makers, institutional actors and the general public.

We did not employ Foucauldian vocabulary, although our analysis and observations could be couched in governmentality theorization (see also the discussion in 2.4). To construct agency of participants of "interactive governance arrangements" is not primarily a means of state-organized metagovernance, as Torfing et al. (2012) seem to think, although no doubt this is correct if referring to particular cases of functional out-sourcing and autonomization of public agencies. More fundamentally than being just instruments for governing authority, the practice (or culture) of ranking can be seen as an element in a historically specific, but at present highly influential, rationality of government that attempts to shape the conduct of individuals and collectivities in a more general sense. Decreeing more competencies for Finnish universities is an act of (meta)governance but it is informed, motivated and pushes by a specific governmentality, elements of which the rankings practice in general as well as the totality of political decisions to outsource and autonomize are. So the discourse of institutional autonomy, the subsequent managerial reforms, and the rankings that uphold and motivate these are manifestations of advanced liberal modes of government, which are "distinguished by trying to work through the freedom or capacities of the governed" (Dean 2010, 23).

The governmentality framework helps in showing that while our analysis takes the form of looking at particular processes, ideas, utterances and actors, our understanding of governing by numbers is not necessarily, or solely, about strategic, goal-oriented action by some specific individuals and organizations. While specific actors can utilize numbers to further their interests and disseminate their ideas, their governing functions can be given even broader interpretations.

3 RULE BY NUMBERS: THE THREE GOVERNING FUNCTIONS

By now we know that numbers play an important role in modern governance and government. We know that although numbers hold the potential for making rule impersonal by introducing procedural neutrality in decision-making, this does not imply immunity from political struggles, particular outcomes or freedom from shaping of conduct by ourselves and others upon ourselves and others. Each of the five articles in this dissertation raise these points by examining concrete empirical instances from a variety of perspectives, reconstruct numbers and the practice of measurement as a mechanism of inherently political rule. As a mechanism of governance, or a technology of government, quantification does not work in just one way but takes various shapes – plays out a variety of governing functions – whose significance is dependent on the occasion and interpretation. In this section, I propose an analytical framework (Figure 1) that can help to systematize our understanding and communication about the governing functions quantification may take. The suggested framework draws on the traditions of new governance (especially interactive governance) and governmentality. It identifies the governing functions in relation to the processes of objectification of knowledge, subjectification of the self and legitimation of authority. While some uses of numbers, or instances of quantification, are more fruitfully analyzed in terms of a certain function than some other – e.g. democracy rankings objectifying truths about legitimate rule – the framework is sensitive to the fact that specific acts of invoking numbers often exhibit more than one governing function.

3.1 TERMINOLOGY OF QUANTIFICATION

In discussing numeric governance and governance functions of numbers I have referred to measurement, quantification, numbers, rankings and the practice of ranking interchangeably. For most purposes this is sufficient as the empirical focus of the articles is clearly on socio-political indexes and rankings to which all the mentioned terms apply. Nevertheless, as we look closer at the various governing functions possible to identify in governance and university indexes, it is helpful to be more precise with the terminology.

For my purposes, *quantification* works best as a thematic overall concept describing a process or outcomes of a process whereby characteristics of various kinds of phenomena – in our case related to qualities pertaining to processes, events, institutions, organizations, and individuals that have a sociopolitical

relevancy – are described in (or translated into) a numeric format. Quantification is a process of producing meaningful *numbers* referring to quantities of *something*. We are dealing with the question of how socio-political quantification functions as a mechanism of governance and government, "steering and control of society and the economy" (Torfing et al. 2012) and attempt "to shape human conduct" (Dean 2010). Interchangeably with quantification, Rose (2004, 200, 202, 209, 212) opts to write about "numericized spaces of public discourse", "numericization of politics", "numericization of disciplines", "numericization of population", "objects of government as numericized inscriptions", "numericization of the activities of schools, hospitals and universities".

Quantification suggests a shift away from multidimensional classification to statistical commensuration. While not guaranteeing an absence of arbitrariness – in the form of validity and reliability, for example – quantification implies a sort of exactitude absent in "qualitative" representations of reality. The capability to express a complex phenomenon in the format of a set of numbers or a single number implies authority merely because it simplifies contemplation, deliberation, and allows technical manipulation (Hansen and Porter 2012). Moreover, the production of numbers makes it possible to apply mathematical tools and statistical methods of elaboration and manipulation and reveal patterns – "social facts" – otherwise left unaccounted for. (In such a way, quantification may enlarge our horizons.) Once again, quantification is a technology without which it would be much harder to translate ideas into practices.

As a scientific (and quasi-scientific) process, quantification takes the shape of *measurement,* implying theory-guided empirical observation and a degree of non-arbitrariness in assigning values to the units of observation; elimination of arbitrariness, for example, coming in the form of using standard yardsticks for assessing separate but like units. The articles deal with this type of quantification, and it is especially this kind of quantification that we associate with authority and expertise.

The exercise of measurement is undertaken to generate numeric *scores, values for variables*. A number becomes meaningful only in relation to an external point of reference, which can be a physical (such as the boiling point of water), theoretical (like a minimum threshold for democracy or an idealization of perfect democracy) or comparative, whereby a number becomes meaningful in relation to values assigned to comparable cases or statistical figures derived from such values (maximum/minimum, mean/median, etc.). These kinds of data, which provide a basis for "hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment and the examination", are important as they are a source of disciplinary power (individuals) and the related biopower (population) that Foucault saw as important for modern forms of governing (Lynch 2011; Hoffmann 2011; see Chapter 1.2). *Benchmarks, indexes and rankings* are especially manifest and powerful instruments of relativizing, because

they tend to reduce a wealth of information into a single variable according to which cases are evaluated, individuals and collectives objectified and subjected under (self-)government.

A governing function may be manifest in outcomes of a measurement exercise, but it can also be embedded in a particular *measurement setting* or, more generally, into the *logic of measurement*. The governing function identified in these cases is more probably unintentional than intentional, the objectifying activity more likely reinforcing than constitutive. The ways in which the measurement setting acquires a governing function are varied and, by definition, contextually defined. Hence, the discussion here is more anecdotal than systematic. We can still indicate some common examples. For example, the production of international data remains usually methodologically nationalist in character, reinforcing the imagery where the "national community [serves] as the terminal unit and boundary condition for the demarcation of problems and phenomena for social science" (Martins 1974: 276, quoted in Chernilo 2006). More generally, unit-based measurement typically redraws a picture of social reality composed of individualized externally related separate entities. Socio-political measurement seems to point towards social atomist ontology, competitive thinking – as the analysis of good governance and higher education politics show – and, consequently, facilitate advanced liberal "government through freedom" (Rose 2004, Dean 2010).

Lastly, quantification and ranking have become so commonplace, so important to science and expertise, so visible in the media, so attached to processes of policymaking, that it is possible to analyze them as a *social practice*. If this *perspective* is chosen, the analytical focus shifts from meanings mediated by the logic of measurement, methodology and results of a measurement to the recurring performative acts of using and producing numbers. This type of analysis (e.g. Robson 1992, Hopwood 1998, Porter 1995, Power 2003) has pointed to the role of quantification in conferring credibility, trust and legitimacy on experts and expertise, and to processes of policy making – whether or not expert knowledge actually influenced the outcomes of decision making (cf. Boswell 2009). Our own research (2009, 2014b) suggests that measurement, the activity of producing comparative numbers, is crucial for international expert organizations, for the credibility of the knowledge they produce and for the mutual recognition of their epistemic authority.

High trust in numbers seems to be strongly linked to an increasing lack of trust in other types of knowledge and expertise. From a historical perspective, Kula 1986 (cited in Porter 1995) has shown how the practice of measurement has substituted local discretion (preindustrial) for indiscriminate objectivity (modern). This shift in the mode of rational judgment – from qualitative to quantitative – did not go without consequences for social hierarchies and structures of governance. The standardization of measurements – like the meter for measuring distance or the

square grid for charting land surface – empowered the governing of localities from distant centers "with a bare minimum of judgment or local knowledge", for example, concerning the quality of the land (Porter 1995, 22). At the same time, quantification has helped to standardize the "subject of measurement" in the sense that the measurement is now the same for everybody and "no longer dependent on the personalities or statutes" of those holding a stake in the process of measurement (Rose 2004, 207).

According to Moran (2002), general distrust in policy makers, political processes and judgmental expertise is evidenced also in the more recent demand for constant monitoring, evaluation and auditing – accountability through numbers. This, of course, goes hand in hand with the expanding application of new governance instruments. Also, the rapid diffusion of evidence-based policy making in European countries, crystallized in quantitative indicators for monitoring the gap between output and policy-goals, is a useful example. Power (2003) has, however, pointed out that the generation of accountability through norms of transparency and standardization not only indicates societal distrust, but can further serve to undermine alternative bases of trust. As Rose (2004, 154) puts it, "[a]udits of various sorts have come to replace the trust that social government invested in professional wisdom and the decisions and actions of specialists". Consequently, where there is uncertainty, an acknowledged lack of trust, numbers are conjured up. Resorting to techniques of anonymous objectivity is "an adaptation to the suspicions of the powerful outsiders" (Porter 1995, 89).

In conclusion, socio-political quantification takes many shades and shapes. In my use, quantification serves as the broadest possible category referring to numbers, variables, datasets and indexes, but also to the logic, process and practice of measurement. The articles pertain to all of these. Nevertheless, not all the governing functions I identify and discuss in the next section apply to all instances of quantification.

3.2 KNOWLEDGE, IDENTITY AND AUTHORITY

Interactive governance and government by numbers proceed by playing out functions identified according to the interlinked processes of objectification, subjectification and legitimation. Figure 1 spells out the various governing functions I have identified, by drawing on the existing literature and on the cases analyzed in the five articles of this dissertation. The framework is a result of a combination of ideas springing from the empirical analysis in my own research (as reported in the articles) and theoretical insights by others, many of which I have

touched upon in this introduction. The framework did not initially guide my work as such, but it expresses and organizes ideas that did. Since the research articles are extensively reviewed in the previous chapter, references to these will remain concise.

Knowledge:objectification   Identity: subjectification

Ideas and   Representations   Classification   Atomization
concepts   of reality

                    Success   Expert
                    authority   authority
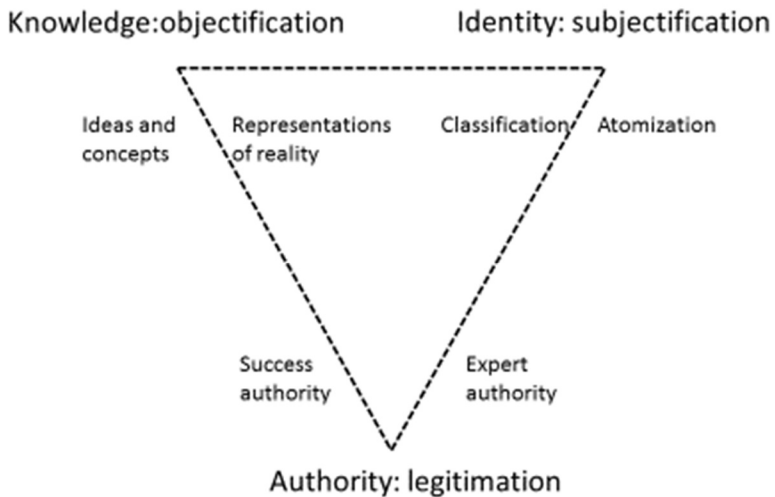
Authority: legitimation

Figure 1 Governing functions of sociopolitical quantification

Of all the theoretical input I have received, it is fair to highlight Miller and Rose. Not only have they provided me with the overall conceptual toolkit for engaging numbers as a technology of governing, but their reflection on their own work on governmentality is also in line with my theoretical sketch concerning functions of quantification. They (Miller and Rose 2008) characterize their focus on governing to concentrate on systems for the production of truth, regimes of authority and practices of subjectification. Although these categories cover a much broader domain of governance (mine dealing only with quantification), it does give backing to the conceptual map that springs from our original research.

3.2.1 KNOWLEDGE

Numbers, measurements and rankings participate in the constitution of *knowledge* in remarkably varied ways. Firstly, the knowledge constructed is related to both abstract ideas (ideals, theories, concepts) and ideas about empirical reality (perceptions, experiences), and, in fact, they are connected in operational decisions of quantification. Secondly, while numeric knowledge can be primarily descriptive, it is also prescriptive in the sense that knowledge – ideas about the true, the existing, the possible, and the desirable – is essentially related to governance, to the "conduct of conduct". Even if it did not always point to moral or instrumental (means-ends) solutions, knowledge constructs serve as a (perceptional or cognitive) background against which problems and solutions are reflected upon.

Perhaps the most fundamental way to assert the significance of socio-political quantification is to understand it as an instrument of objectification: numbers and measurements function to fix the parameters of ideas, ideals and realities thus creating specific representations that may (or may not) influence practices and policies, and the formation of subject categories and identities. The observation can clearly be construed from the article concerning democracy indexes (Piironen 2005), the way they set the parameters of democracy, the way they force nation-states to be comparable according to the normative standard of democracy, only to be differentiated again into categories defined by their democratic achievement.

Measurements set parameters for abstract ideas and normative conceptions. The significance of measurement as a technology of truth may be due to its capacity to simplify otherwise complicated matters, to conceal subjective, interested, partisan, perspectival choices, and create an impression of objectivity, neutrality, credibility and universality (Porter 1995; Powers 2003). Measurements "fix" the parameters of normative and abstract constructions that may affect policies directly or indirectly. As the articles on the measurement of democracy (Ch. 2.1; Piironen 2005) and good governance (Ch. 2.2; Erkkilä and Piironen 2009) show, measurements and indices acquire a political function in promoting a certain conceptualization of policy-relevant ideas over alternatives, legal over participatory democracy, and economic values over democratic values. This is a straightforward and plausible argument as evidenced not only by analysis of measurement methodology (conceptualization and operationalization) but also by observed instances of political struggle over particular measurement exercises, for example, within the World Bank (Ch. 2.3; Erkkilä and Piironen 2014b). Although struggles over numbers are relatively common and signify the real potential for opening new political horizons, the opposite is sometimes the case. New numbers challenge dominant ones only to the extent that they come to reinforce each other's

legitimacy as we discovered through the analysis of OECD's *Governance at a glance* (2014b).

Numbers produce specific representations of reality. Socio-political measurement connects abstract construction with empirical observations, like theories of democracy with levels of democracy in various countries (Piironen 2005). As a result, numbers – variable values and index scores – make a claim about empirical reality in providing comparative knowledge about social entities and their relationships. Thus a measurement is not only a technique of objectification in relation to conceptual knowledge – "good governance is x, y, z" – but also in relation to experienced reality – "country A is governed better that country B". They may tell us that our national economy is more innovative now than ten years ago, that Oxford is on par with Harvard, or that the Danish are happiest people in Europe. This is the kind of banal information we expect, and it is the sort of information we wish to use to guide administrative and political decision making and individual conduct. But there are of course many reasons why such representations are not innocent mirrors of reality. The visions they provide are specific products of antecedent knowledge, operational decisions and practical possibility. They are the result of intersubjective meaning structures, of beliefs about the relevant and the important, of operational decisions concerning selection and weighing of indicators, and of material limits for collecting data.

Measurements render domains of reality visible and calculable, and thus governable (Robson 1992; Miller and Rose 1990). Generally, numbers work as technologies that make objects visible and tangible, bordered and governable. Exercises of measurement take part in the (re)creation of social imageries by portraying certain objects (attributes, cases and properties) as elements of the domain thus constructed, and, by excluding others from the measurement exercise altogether, render them outside the domain. The selected objects are thus rendered comparable, presented as "like units", while the "unfitting" attributes, cases and their properties are ignored (Cline-Cohen 1982; cf. Alasuutari and Qadir 2014). In objectifying domains of reality, numbers make them open for politico-administrative management. The invention and operationalization of the notion of good governance at the World Bank has given supranational governors unprecedented leverage in affairs previously considered as internal to nation-states (2009 and 2014b). As a policy domain is made calculable and inscribed into the practices of experts, as data is collected, stored, manipulated and retrieved at will, the status of numeric knowledge is even further solidified. It is more likely that a database once collected will be refined and updated – for the sake of spatial and chronological comparability – than a new standard developed and a new dataset collected: even with the increased competition, Freedom House's dataset (with only minor changes) has remained the most prominent index on democracy from 1980s to this day (Piironen 2005). Numbers increase the "stickiness" of thought.

Numbers are distinctive technologies – even more than words and vocabularies – that allow us to deal with problems that take place at locales distant from governing centers (Hansen and Porter 2012; Miller and Rose 2008; Robson 1992). Robson (1992) explains the potential of numeric knowledge for "action at distance" by qualities of *mobility, stability and combinability*. As numbers reduce objects into specific qualities and variables, they are easier than the objects themselves or verbal descriptions to be transported in space, time and through language barriers. They are relatively stable in comparison to specific linguistic vocabularies that are in constant flux and bedridden with nuances. Moreover, they "can generate uniformity among different objects counted (three apples and two oranges makes five fruits), compare and thereby associate and link unlike words (Copenhagen and Toronto have measurable temperatures that can be compared). They can also sort out the combined effects of several components (decomposing velocity into time and space)" (Hansen and Porter 2012, 413). It is this kind of information that makes direct or indirect rational governance of distant places possible. It is remarkable how university rankings have succeeded in inculcating uniformity into academic institutions professing such an astonishingly different objectives and resources, and which are embedded in varying sets of local structures (education, culture, jurisprudence, and financing). By rendering institutions uniformly comparable, rankings have helped to bring higher education institutions all-over Europe within the reach of transnational governance (Piironen 2013, Erkkilä and Piironen 2014a).

Miller and Rose (2008) take a slightly different approach. Their notion of "government at a distance" is especially linked to the liberal forms of indirect rule in which technologies and vocabularies are used to assemble agents into self-governing networks of affiliation. If successful, actors are convinced that "their problems and goals are intrinsically linked, that their interests are consonant, that each can solve their difficulties or achieve their ends by joining forces or working along the same lines" (Miller and Rose 2008, 34). Numbers – armed with qualities of mobility, stability and combinability – not only create a common sphere of interaction and an imagery of unity in comparability, they contribute to subjectifying individuals and collectivities as free agents capable of governing themselves in a pursuit for desired results in an optimal way (see 3.2.2). Our empirical cases support this analysis: standardized comparisons of democracy, good governance and academic performance all propose common interests and objectives that should guide the actions of nation-states and academic institutions, with the responsibility for success and failure on their own shoulders alone. The development towards "actionable" indicators have not changed this, as we show in *Depoliticizing good governance* (Erkkilä and Piironen 2014b). More probably, it has only served to bolster "government at a distance" in binding local experts more tightly into transnational networks of self-governing.

Ranking provides prescriptions for action. The production of comparative numbers is not only a descriptive but an evaluative and often normative exercise. Measurement does not only make things visible, but provides a technique for judgment, as well as punishment and gratification (cf. Hoffmann 2011). Depending on the particular case, judgmental evaluation takes place in relation to the *normal* or the *optimal* (the best, the leader, top-performer, world-class). Evaluation against a norm, what Foucault (1995) calls "normalizing judgement", is a relevant technique of disciplinary power. Statistical distribution – and the idea of normal distribution – exposes outliers, pathological, abnormal and marginal cases without mercy. While the average is sometimes presented as the prescriptive ideal – as with individual attributes such as the number of one's sex partners, or collective attributes like the overall tax rate – I would argue that in the contemporary Western cultural climate, the optimal seems to have become the main benchmark (cf. Boli 2006 on rationalization of virtue and virtuosity). Empirically derived "average" is now rarely the primary standard against which standing/position/behavior is judged. Rankings create an atmosphere where objects of evaluation are induced to optimize their performance in relation to others – peers, challengers and competitors. All this is symptomatic in the "vocabulary of excellence" regularly utilized in connection with ranking knowledge: terms like "world-class", "top performer", "leader" have risen in prominence during the past two decades. The whole present-day discourse on higher education revolves around this thinking. Old concepts have been discredited or repacked to validate the hegemonic ideas often with the help of performance rankings (Piironen 2013; Erkkilä and Piironen 2014a). Excellent is the better normal.

3.2.2 IDENTITY

To discuss identity means discussing the human capacity to "know" who is who (Jenkins 2008). Identities are categories through which individuals and groups try to individuate and position themselves and others. This knowledge about oneself and others, while consequential for people's lives, is nevertheless imagined. Within social theorizing, it is now widely agreed that identities are collectively produced: "the social self is a product of relations with others" (Lawler 2014). Accordingly, identities do not depict some innate qualities of individuals, they are not personal, related to 'soul' or anything like; they do not refer to physical or cultural essences or external material forces; they are neither natural, static nor unequivocally bounded. Identities' have real consequences but they determine nothing (Jenkins 2008).

Identification is the process where categories of people are formulated, persons and groups attached with these classifications, and addressed accordingly. Identification thus represents an ongoing interplay or interaction between a collective signification – social formulation of categories, assignment of people within and addressing them according to these categories – and individual association through, in terms of, and against these categories. Identification affects the way in which people address themselves and expect to be addressed by others. Identification is felt in everyday routines – who can wear a miniskirt, and who should be under surveillance in a supermarket – but it also has substantial sociopolitical consequences when inscribed into statutes and legislations. It determines who is let into the country, who is eligible for welfare provisions and political office, who can take care of herself, or who can donate blood.

In practice, the mainstream constructivist understanding of identification is very much in line with Foucauldian thinking on subjectivity and subjectification.[28] Both deny that identities could be defined in terms of essentialist properties, fixed preferences or practices. Instead, "particular kinds of identity are 'made up' within relations of power/knowledge" – be it "homosexuality" or "motherhood" (Lawler 2014). Both are dealing with contingent properties – informing the ways of addressing gays or mothers, for example – and dynamic processes of bringing into existence particular subjectivities (new categories). Subjectification is the process by which people acquire, or are incentivized, enticed, pressured to acquire, particular identities. At the same time they are subjected to the rules and norms that go with a particular identity (ibid.). As such, identification is linked with power and government.

As a part of their examination of the space-related practices of neoliberal governmental rationality in the Finnish higher education context, Kangas and Moisio (2012, 214-217) have analyzed the rhetoric of Finnish university reform policies as a set of subjectification practices with "the object of optimizing the population so that it matches better with the needs of the global economy and companies which are lacking in skilled labour". In the examples that they draw from a variety of public statements, the Finnish population, their capabilities, weaknesses and mental characteristics are represented so as to enable new policies to groom the population – lacking in entrepreneurial character – into creativity, innovation, and internationally excellent performance: because Finns are incapable in transforming their creativity into business value, international networking should encouraged/enforced; because the egalitarian education system has failed to support individuals in reaching the absolute top, the system should be adjusted to better elevate the top talents. Categories of "Finnishness" are thus created as well as proper ways of being and doing are projected.

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[28] I refer to these interchangeably henceforth.

The Foucauldian framework explicitly links identification with the notion of productive power, which produces truths about social reality and about persons and their relationships. As an invented identity category has been constituted as a truth, it may come to produce what it claims to describe: through these categories we come to make sense of others but, more importantly, of ourselves. According to Ian Hacking (1999, 103) – not a "Foucauldian" but close – the courses of action people, self-conscious agents, choose, "and indeed their ways of being, are by no means independent of the descriptions under which they may act. Likewise, we experience ourselves in the world as beings of various kinds". Moreover, our awareness of the world, others and ourselves is commonly "an awareness, shared and developed within a group of people, embedded in the practices and institutions which they are assigned in virtue of the way on which they are classified" (ibid, 104). Similarly, forms of discipline and biopower work primarily by the means of subjectification: "normalizing judgment" implies not only external surveillance and attribution of identity but also the subject's awareness, "self-surveillance" and assuming of specified subject-positions. Nevertheless, the projection of subject positions is not a totalizing affair. A particular treatment may connect "kinds" with "experienced" but hardly force a one-to-one correspondence. Thus, for Hacking, identities are "interactive kinds", because not only may institutionalized classifications affect the feelings and behavior of those classified, but because the change in behavior – not wholly determined by the initial classification – may loop back so that "the classification itself may be modified or replaced" (ibid. 103).

Sociopolitical quantification in the form of rankings affects identification in two elementary ways, through evaluation and atomization. Firstly, by associating particular agents with categories or identity groups as, for example, "one of the least developed countries", "a semi-democracy", "low in corruption", "highly performing" as described in the first research article (Piironen 2005) of this dissertation. These categories then affect how the categorized entities are being treated, expected to behave and how they actually see themselves and behave. Finland, for example, has regularly held top-5 positions in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). The Finnish media usually reports the publication of the latest results. This resonates with the national myth of Finns as exceptionally honest and responsible people, an imagery that may affect interaction and reinforce social trust.[29] As identification is necessarily interplay between constructed *similarities* and *differences* that are presumably "exposed" in the CPI, the other side of the coin is that the others – those perceived not belonging to the nationality category – are treated with more suspicion. Take another example: it could be argued that the meager results in global university rankings

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[29] The very same myth of an honest Finn may, of course, also reinforce double standards and make it hard to accept evidence pointing to the contrary, as Jussi Pakkasvirta (2008) has succinctly shown in his media analysis of the Fray Bentos pulp mill conflict.

have played a role in policy changes in Europe during the past decade or so as shown in the *Shifting Fundaments* (Erkkilä and Piironen 2014a). This is not only out of external pressures and institutional practices – the rhetoric of the European Commission or performance contracts between governments and institutions – but because of internalized grievance in the face of measured low performance of academic institutions and individuals: "We should do better".

This brings me to the second way in which quantification matters with respect to identity, that is, by inviting the evaluated units to act and think as autonomous, self-fulfilling and responsible agents. In more general terms, this implies an internalization of social atomism that unit-based rankings impose on our imagination. As we have seen, freedom – not a negation of power – is at the heart of analytics of government. For Rose (2004), it is a long-term trajectory – beginning with the rise of liberal governmentality – that governing increasingly proceeds through the conduct of "free actors" instead of law and coercion. Of course, to be free in this sense does not imply an absence of government, an absence of being subjected to power. Techniques such as numeric assessment, while celebrating the autonomy of the agents under evaluation, simultaneously subject them to government. In connection with tangible instruments of interactive governance – deregulation, delegation of public policy functions to arm-lengths agencies, creation of quasi-markets for service delivery, and establishment of public-private partnerships and governance networks – individuals and collectivities are enjoined to work their capacities to autonomous and responsible choice and action. As such they are brought in as partners, co-governors and self-governors (cf. Torfing et. al 2011; Sørensen and Triantafillou 2009).

The ways Finnish universities came to be projected – how the policy establishment came to project universities and how the university leadership came to project their own institutions – as autonomous, self-owning, service-providing market operators form the narrative contained in the two articles on higher education (Piironen 2013, Erkkilä and Piironen 2014a). Rankings and ranking techniques are a part of the story of subjectification but only in association with ideologies (competition) and vocabularies (managerial autonomy), policies (deregulation, autonomization, contractualization), and legislative institutionalization (the new Universities Act). Nevertheless, as described in the articles and the previous chapter, comparative ranking and auditing feature as a necessary element of the process of subjectification in *helping to individualize institutions*: (1) in representing them as separate but commensurate wholes, (2) by differentiating them according to their performance instead of homogenizing them in terms of statutory equality (Neave 2009), and (3) by *providing the tools* for micro-governing through unit-specific knowledge that form the basis of performance management and budget allocation, strategic decision-making and social pressure.

Finally, considerations concerning the functions of quantification in terms of knowledge and identity point to a final important, closely interlinked function, which I nevertheless want to present as an analytically separate category – the function to legitimize authority in expertise and excellence.

3.2.3 AUTHORITY

Max Weber differentiated between authority [*Herrschaft*] and power [*Macht*] as "the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons" (Weber 1978, 53). The common use of the term authority approximates to Weber's definition and tends to denote a largely voluntary but hierarchical relationship between the ruler and the ruled, in which obedience is based more on legitimation than coercion. As a relation, authority (status) is not possessed by the dominant party but constructed in interaction between two or more parties. According to Weber (1978, 36-38), the legitimacy of a resilient hierarchical order (implying an amount of obedience) can rest either on charisma/personal affection, tradition or legality and is, in principle, independent from the approval of particular directives.[30]

Contemporary sources of legitimacy are now identified in the practices and reputation of rationality, objectivity and impartiality, the very principles of modern science (cf. Scholte 2005; Drori et al. 2002; Gieryn 1999; Porter 1995): "New modes of governance are largely expert-based; they are often legitimized by references to science and expressed in terms of measurements" (Djelic and Sahlin-Andersson 2006, 13). In the modern society marked by a lack of trust in personal judgment and subjective discretion, numbers (and the standards numbers help to establish and monitor) have been taken as a basis of trust and legitimation in the form of "anonymous objectivity" (Porter 1995).

Legitimacy and credibility are clearly important reasons for statistics, rankings, indicators and scorecards becoming highly appreciated and preferred (Erkkilä and Piironen 2014b). Scholte (2005), for example, has argued that globalization, the most important contemporary, multi-dimensional and open-ended process of social transformation, is premised on, driven by and implicated in rationalist epistemology manifest in scientific knowledge and in the "scientific method" (cf. Drori et al. 2002) Capability to attach one's knowledge to such a powerful socio-cultural base of legitimation lends them an extent of credibility otherwise absent: to talk about expert knowledge or expertise (in a non-ironic fashion) is to lend some

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[30] Others have pointed to an alternative basis of legitimation – mutual benefit (Lake 2003).

credibility to the argument. Consequently, being *recognized* as an individual or organization possessing or having the capability of producing such knowledge lends an element of authority to those actors.[31] Authority based on (proto-)scientific bases of legitimation can, following Gieryn (1999), be termed as "epistemic authority". This is essentially what Boswell (2009, 7) calls the *legitimizing function* of expert knowledge: "By being seen to draw on expert knowledge, an organization can enhance its legitimacy and potentially bolster its claim to resources or jurisdiction over particular policy areas".

Individuals' epistemic authority is highly correlated with the institutional positions they hold – a professor in a university, a leading economist in the IMF (ibid., 22). Institutional epistemic authority is correlated with an organization's legal standing, capability to produce symbolic artifacts (like publications and conferences), and recognition by epistemic and political authorities. It is no accident that the World Bank and the OECD have such an eminent role in debates on governance (cf. Erkkilä and Piironen 2009, 2014b). Nevertheless, the credibility of a specific argument or piece of knowledge is not only connected to the personal or institutional status of the presenter, but is also dependent on (1) the argument in question and (2) on the method the knowledge was produced with and the form it was presented. An argument that runs totally against cultural, political or intellectual norms – received wisdom – get discredited with greater probability than an argument anchored in some set of taken-for-granted knowledge. It has become increasingly difficult to argue for the notion of academic autonomy that does not point to increases on short-term performance (Piironen 2013). An argument applying to rational principles of science – exact terminology, formal research methods, analytical objectivity and pursuit for general knowledge – is, in the Western world, considered more valuable than "softer" forms of knowledge.[32]

Both sources of legitimation (related to the speaker and the argument) play a role in how Fougner (2008, 321) considers the World Economic Forum having succeeded in increasing the prominence of its measurement: "If prominent

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[31] "Indeed, people who construct knowledge in secular, anthropocentric, techno-scientific, instrumental terms have generally exercised the greatest power in global spaces. Rationalist epistemology has reigned supreme in global enterprises, global governance agencies and the more influential parts of global civil society like think tanks and professional NGOs. People who espouse Hindu revivalism, deep ecology or an ultra-relativist postmodernism have not tended to work for British Petroleum (BP), the Bank for International Settlements, or Amnesty International." (Scholte 2005, 259)

[32] "In order to be classified as such, expert knowledge will usually need to meet certain substantive and procedural requirements. In terms of substance, it must meet standards of theoretical and conceptual coherence; it must conform to certain stylistic criteria (for example, be dispassionate in tone); and it must concern itself with the production, synthesis or evaluation of knowledge claims. In terms of procedure, expert knowledge must be seen to employ methodologies that are accepted to be sound, at least by a sufficiently influential section of the scientific community." (Boswell 2009, 22)

academic institutions and scholars lend their authority to the competitiveness reports, and if the reports' norms and standards for state conduct are sanctioned by influential economic theories, then so much greater is the inducement for 'responsible' states to take them seriously and act accordingly". My observations point to a similar conclusion: academic linkages – persons, networks, events and research – are keenly displayed by producers of good governance and university rankings.

This is also related to the question of identity and identification. Remember that the main point that we raise in the articles related to the measurement of governance attributes (Erkkilä and Piironen 2009, 2014b) does not deal with the credibility of the quantitative knowledge itself but its role in conjuring certain *actors* – producers of numbers – with (legitimate) authority. While this is not to say that the expert status of the World Bank, for example, was necessarily or wholly dependent on its capability to produce international data on various topics, the fact that it possesses this capability plays a role in the identification process.[33] I suggest that this function that quantification assumes in governance is *symbolic and performative*, and, furthermore, not simply reducible to the quality of the knowledge thus produced (cf. Boswell 2009). If authority, in the end, is a question of identification, and thereby a question of collective beliefs, then the performative act of quantification, the show of muscles, may be more relevant than the "objective" assessment of the quality and impact of the data produced.

Our analysis of the OECD becoming engaged with measuring governance values is a case in point (Erkkilä and Piironen 2014b). As much as motivated by demands for new, more "actionable" data, the decision to enter the field of governance measurement can be seen as a performative act for augmenting the existing institutional identity as an expert authority (cf. Marcussen 2002). When the OECD conflates, with mild criticism, its data with the existing data on the field, it takes part in a process of collective (mutual) identification: "we make a community of legitimate governance expertise". We could argue that expert identity implying an extent of authority – capability to summon conformity – would confer certain privileges, if nothing else, at least a higher probability for organizational survival.[34]

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[33] Nevertheless, we could argue that much of the epistemic authority Transparency International enjoys is to a great extent due to its highly visible Corruption Perceptions Index.

[34] Freistein (2015), in analyzing the production of poverty measuring instruments by the World Bank, also claims that international organizations produce numeric knowledge, not only to promote particular ideas or policies, but also to assert their position and to build up their identities as legitimate authorities on the policy domain in which they are active. In fact, not participating in the social practice of measurement is something they hardly could afford. Consequently, while being important mediators of global governance, they are entangled in a web of governmental rationalities that condition even the most authoritative international actors such as the World Bank.

Indeed, Gieryn (1999), writing about the politics within science, seems to attach epistemic authority with struggles for material resources (cf. Sabatier 1978).

If engagement with the professional community by the means of number production can be seen as the positive side of identification (the emphasis being on similarities), Gieryn's (1999) contribution concerning "boundary work" as the activity of drawing boundaries of the "approved" alerts us to the negative side of identification working through exclusions (see Jenkins 2008). The capability to produce quantitative data and to enter conceptual and technical debates related to measurement methodologies serves as a mechanism of exclusion. Actors incapable of or uninterested in engaging in quantification thus face the danger of being sidelined, discredited or marginalized. Hence, they need to find other ways for building up expert authority.

Lastly, as I have mentioned, Weber (1978) identified the sources of legitimate authority into charisma/personal affection, tradition and legality. Perhaps linked to charisma, an appearance of "success" can promote personal and collective affection by others, thus increasing the chances for being seen and heard. Soft power, as theorized by joseph Nye (2005), serves as an example. Here the capability to get others do what you want does not rest on coercion – nor primarily/necessarily on expertise, institutional position, or religious conviction – but more generally on the feeling of *attraction* the reasons for which can be many and complicated. Nye (2004) discusses shared values and principled politics, cultural admiration, and glorified myths of invincibility and prosperity. What is important is the fact that success, admiration and attraction correlate, although the first (success) can sometimes provoke opposite reactions, resentment.

My argument is that comparative rankings can function to stimulate attraction and thus indirectly and in a limited scale construct authority ("success authority" in figure 1). In producing imageries where some entities are elevated above others, rankings can make them appear exemplary, worth listening to, learning from and imitating. In the language of subjectification, rankings can bring about categories and subjectivities of "successful", "mediocre" and "weak", just as Freedom House classifies countries as "free", "partially free" and "not free" (cf. Piironen 2005). To be ranked "excellent", "world-class", or "number one" is, sometimes, accompanied with a varying amount of authority, which nevertheless is usually limited to the field of expertise that the ranking claims to generate knowledge of. Success in OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has definitely increased international interest in Finnish educational institutions and policies and made the word of Finnish experts and policy-makers weightier abroad.

In functioning to subtly influence authority structures, in creating hierarchies, in regulating the inclusion and exclusion in the interactive governance arenas, the quantitative rankings take the shape of metagovernance even though governmental actors do not always initiate this activity. Quantification both in the form of

knowledge produced and as a performative exercise is clearly an instrument to "steer the interactive governance process, albeit steer it through rather indirect and "soft" means that maintain at least some of the autonomy of the actors involved"(Torfing et. al 2012, 7).

3.3 A COMPLETE FRAMEWORK?

There are two perspectives that seem absent in the conceptual mapping I provide for analyzing numeric governance. The first is that of explanatory analysis seeking to rigorously test hypotheses about rankings' influence on policy decisions by the way of controlled covariation between well-defined independent and dependent variables. The second is quite different, building on a specific new institutionalist theory tradition that emphasizes the function of cross-national (often quantitative) comparison in fostering global isomorphism, whether in terms of structural similarity between units of comparison, construction of nationhood and sovereignty, or the synchronization of policies states enact (Alasuutari and Qadir 2014).

Does my framework neglect an important function by not explaining the mechanisms for rankings having a direct influence on policies? Perhaps it does, but then again my aims lie elsewhere. Firstly, it is true that my framework may not be helpful for tracing causal paths starting with the publication of a new ranking and ending up with well-specified changes in policy behavior on the part of the subjects evaluated. Others have done that. Kelley and Simmons (2015, 38, fig. 1), for example, identify ways in which the standards embedded in indicators (ratings, rankings, watch lists and black lists) might influence legislative change, policy decisions and political reprioritization. The mechanisms that Kelley and Simmons identify can be understood as reactions to the numeric knowledge a measurement exercise produces, including (1) external support for mobilization of domestic demands, (2) social pressure on professional elites, and (3) market pressure by real or anticipated reactions that the monitoring may induce in private economic agents. While these are all plausible mechanisms in which transnational numbers influence domestic policy making, they neither negate with nor encompass the governing functions identified in my own framework.

My goals here are different. I am discussing governance and governing, while Kelley and Simmons are concerned with agential influence and power. My focus is primarily on the premises of decision-making, while Kelley and Simmons deal with empirically observed reactions to numeric knowledge and subsequent policy changes. Mine is not a classificatory scheme of mutually exclusive and collectively

exhaustive categories, but an analytical tool for helping to find points of entry to examining acts of quantification more generally from the perspective of governance. Most fundamentally, my framework is embedded in constructivist thinking, while Kelley and Simmons embrace rationalist premises in which predetermined actors try to balance their political convictions and strategic interests.

A consequence of my choice is that my framework does not privilege the most obvious type of evoking numbers into governance, i.e. the cases in which resource allocation or administrative action is tied to index-based rules and numeric threshold triggers. While these cases are important and often interesting from the standpoint of interactive governance, they are possible to subsume under the coordinates of my framework, as it helps to analyze, for example, the preceding and encompassing questions of how and why did the numbers come to be as they are.

What about the other perspective? Should the tendency of comparative quantification to constitute structural similarity, standardization and synchronization be included in the framework? Although the argumentation of Alasuutari and Qadir (2014) is persuasive when it comes to the role of comparative quantification in producing isomorphism and explaining domestication, I think that their meaning is at least partially captured in my conceptual map. The tendency of international rankings, for example, to impute similarity between units of comparison – a facet of constructing actorhood, nationhood, etc. – is captured in the "knowledge" and especially "identity" dimensions of my framework. In the articles this is implicit in our depiction of university rankings molding the identities – and indirectly also organizational structures and policies – of academic institutions receptive to the "realities" of a competitive environment. This competitive imaginary, a representation of reality pushing for local solutions synchronized with global models (to borrow the terminology of Alasuutari and Qadir), is itself reinforced by the practice of ranking. Moreover, our research concerning democracy and good governance highlights the way measurement functions to universalize particular standards and models that entities constructed alike are expected to conform with.

So while the tendency for isomorphism is clearly an important outcome of cross-national comparison, I would say the framework presented is apt to inform the analysis of the process so as to be especially sensitive to quantification as a special mode of comparison. Nevertheless, the framework – a piece in the puzzle for understanding global governance – is neither a substantive theory of world society nor a specific explanation for global isomorphism, domestication or policy diffusion. It is a systematic heuristic device for analyzing the working of a specific type of technology of government.

4 CONCLUSION

Rankings act in multiple ways to govern individual and collective conduct, even when not directly tied to formal decision making processes. Scorecards and benchmarks of various sorts have the potential to affect the ways we think about governing; the ways domains of governance are constituted, problematized or depoliticized; the ways we think about reality and ideals; the ways we understand ourselves to be and who we wish become; and the ways we differentiate between sources of authority complying some but not others. Transparency International does not produce its Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) just out of curiosity, but because it is an efficient way of "raising awareness", an attempt to define a problem field, to influence political agenda and to offer normative standards according to which mindsets, practices and policies at all levels of conduct should be aligned. Together with all this it not only presents Scandinavian countries – their societies and policies – as models for others to imitate, but – with wide publicity – reinforces the position of the organization itself as an authority in the field of social policy.

In the previous chapter I introduced a framework to systematize analyses and debates on the role of numbers in governance. The framework brings together ideas from two analytical approaches – governance and governmentality – in an attempt to provide a comprehensive and accessible description of the multiple, subtle and interlinked ways in which numbers affect governing within, between and beyond state jurisdiction. The framework suggests that governing by numbers becomes effective through processes of objectification, subjectification and legitimation, empirical instances of quantification often touching them all. I am confident that the framework should prove beneficial for others interested in identifying and analyzing instances of numeric governance irrespective of their theoretical convictions or areas of research.

The focus on the multiple ways in which quantification is connected to governing works as a reminder of the political nature of measurement irrespective of the origin or the particular objectives explicated by the producer and the user. Numbers are always connected to thought, the product being knowledge premised on the ideas about the background and on the technical limitations embedded in the methodologies of measurement and ranking. Rankings such as the CPI are effective insofar as they create an impression of precision and objectivity. But this is not enough; quantification alone does not guarantee viability as a governing technique. The CPI is credible because it taps into the existing and widely shared thoughts of the rule of law and property rights. But even if focus on numbers may not be a philosopher's stone for an analyst of governance, accounting for their role

should be seen important in contemporary analyses of national and transnational governance.

By concentrating on the question of measurement as the leading theme for this introductory article, I have devoted much less attention to alternative themes. I am aware that I could have chosen to approach the research articles of this dissertation by looking more carefully, for example, at the background ideas (worldviews, ideologies and values) that, in addition to quantification, seem to tie together all the empirical cases the individual studies cover. In each case, I have found that sociopolitical measurement is, in one way or another, associated with a very particular set of ideas: market liberalism (2005) economism (2009, 2014b) and the ideology of competition (2014a). In principle, the analyses could have identified connections with other ideas, and others are free to make different interpretations. I expect that analyses of other cases will in the future identify linkages to other types of thinking beyond economism or competition.

I think that it is a general perception shared both by proponents and critics that ideas of individual autonomy and responsibility, ideals of (or the concern for) efficiency, prudence, and competitiveness, as well as policies of managerial reform and financial austerity enjoy a dominant position in international discourse and national policy making in Western industrialized countries. Indeed, it is the proliferation of calculative technologies that point towards such a development. While advanced liberalism as a style of government does not correspond with any particular political program or ideology, it is certainly conducive to policies that assume, demand, incentivize and pressurize agential responsibility for success and failure. As such, quantification can be connected to economistic discursive dominance and the wide-ranging consensus on the necessity to improve competitiveness at various levels of social action. Alternative visions – social holism, democratic regulation of the economy, general welfare and collective responsibility – are on the defense. From this perspective, it is no surprise if powerful numbers reflect these dominant policy ideas.

Whether or not one likes the role quantification plays in governing, there is no doubt that the analysis of sociopolitical quantification forms an important aspect of governance research, the workings of which are described by the articles comprising this study.

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