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CONCEIVING "NETWORK GOVERNANCE": THE
POTENTIAL OF THE CONCEPTS OF
GOVERNMENTALITY AND NORMALIZATION

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Abstract
This paper explores how "network governance" may be addressed through Michel Foucault's notions of governmentality and power on the one hand, and the concepts of norms and normalization on the other. I suggest that "network governance" may be fruitfully analyzed as a set of governmental technologies and forms of expert knowledge revolving around problematizations, and norms such as autonomy, efficiency and accountability. Such an analysis could address the normalizing and dividing effects of the governmental practices and forms of knowledge that are brought into play in the attempt to augment the capacities of networks of individuals and organizations to conduct themselves in accordance with these norms.

Conceiving "Network governance": The potential of the concepts of governmentality and normalization[1]

1 Introduction

The words "networks", "governance" and "network governance" pop up in widely different institutional settings ranging from international organizations, over state institutions to social movements where they refer to a bewildering array of different phenomena and governmental practices. They are also found as conceptual categories in a rapidly increasing volume of scholarly literature. Within the political science literature, the notion of network governance has been associated with consistent attempts to extend the analysis of diverse forms of rule and authority. One may observe a change in analytical focus from narrowly defined policy communities to issue networks, from state and other public agencies to the relations between these and a host of private and voluntary groups and organizations, and from intentions, interests and preferences to concrete practices, mechanisms and devices of steering to name but a few examples.

Despite this expansion of the field of analysis and the conceptual re-working this has implied, I believe that there is a need to carry the conceptualization and analysis of current practices of government even further. Thus, the analytical potential of network governance theories is, in my view, still constrained by certain predominant assumptions and conceptualizations relating to agency and government. First of all, one sees a tendency to retain the actor as the key analytical unit. While there have been sustained efforts to rid political analysis of a conception of the actor as one with given preferences or interests, one finds that the analysis of network governance is almost invariantly conceived in terms of networks of *actors* (e.g. Kickert and Koppenjan 1997: 9; Peter and Pierre 2000: 19-20).[2] This includes the conception of the state as an actor (with specifiable interests and jurisdiction) rather than viewing it as a contingent and more or less stable institutionalization or codification of concrete practices and devices of authority. As a consequence of this, one sees that the attempts to rid political analysis of the rational agent have in many cases been substituted by an interactionist framework (e.g. Kooiman 1993: 2-3). While inspiration from hermeneutic and phenomenological lines of thought has provided an understanding of political actors whose preferences, interests and even identities are shaped by contingent interpretive, cognitive and normative horizons, they nonetheless depend upon individuals with an inherent capacity to act. What inter-acts then are not systems, practices, norms, individuals or organizations, but actors. To the extent that they take the capacity to act for granted, interactionist approaches are not very well fitted to addressing the forms of knowledge, norms and techniques through which we are enabled, urged and at times even forced to act. In short, what I think we need is an approach that is more susceptible to addressing the concrete and mundane devices by which we are constituted and constitute ourselves as actors.

More importantly, I believe there is a certain conceptual danger in what one could perhaps call the ontological foundationalism informing a widespread argument found in scholarly

writings, including the network governance literature. This is the claim that we in the last few decades have been witnessing the proliferation of network governance. Having remained in the shadow of an understanding of government as a more or less well-defined hierarchy of authority encapsulated by the state apparatus, we are now seeing a dispersal of authority to a wide array of mobile networks of actors, resources and institutions that precipitate around rapidly waxing and waning issues of public concern. Whether one points to the grand narratives of network society (Castells 1996) or reflexive modernity (Giddens 1991), or to the more concrete and specific accounts of the formation and functioning of networks of public agencies, private organizations and diverse groups and citizens, one finds the articulation of a need for rearticulating our understanding of government and authority based on an ontological change that has taken place in recent decades.

The concern for the relation between epistemology (our knowledge and theories) and ontology (those forms of being that our knowledge seeks to address) is of course both relevant and pertinent. However, I believe that the concern for our conceptual framework should be taken further than that. Historical sociologist Philip Abrams once argued that the conception of the state as a unitary actor with certain interests and power capabilities was but an artifact of political practice (Abrams 1988). In fact, this conception of the state as that standing behind the orchestration of political action, Abrams argued, tended to prevent us from analyzing practices of government (ibid. 82). I think we need to generalize this insight to all so-called actors, not only the state. An understanding of network governance as essentially one where the state's capacity to undertake political action is if not replaced then at least supplemented by multiple actors is still caught up in sovereignty thinking. True, this would be a dispersed sovereignty, but it would amount to a conception of government in terms of sovereignty nonetheless. Consequently, I think we should try to wrestle free from the understanding that agency springs from various actors be that the state, private corporations, voluntary organizations or what have you. If not, the analysis of network governance risks reproducing some of the problems found in the more state-centered forms of political analysis in which the state is seen as the sovereign actor.

I propose an analytical approach that I find is better able to address how norms of autonomy, self-determination, influence and participation interrelate with concrete governmental technologies. Instead of taking agency as an inherent feature of individuals, organizations or networks, or as something played out along particular symbolic or interpretive horizons, I am proposing a conceptual framework addressing agency as something envisaged, enabled and spurred on by concrete governmental techniques and devices, and by particular norms of conduct. This would be a form of critical analysis that would seek to avoid passing judgments on whether or not the examined governmental practices are efficient or legitimate, but instead try to pay attention to the dividing and excluding effects of these norms and practices. That is, how are the norms and governmental practices that make up network governance reproducing and updating understandings of what we see as autonomous, efficient, or legitimate practices? And what sort of practices, thoughts and groups are being excluded because they are deemed incompatible with prevailing norms of acting and being?

In order to do address these questions, I am suggesting that we turn to the conceptual devices of norms and normalization on the one hand and Michel Foucault's notion of governmentality and power on the other. In the following, I will try to explore the possibilities of analyzing "network governance" as a set of governmental technologies and forms of expert knowledge revolving around problematizations, and norms such as autonomy, efficiency and accountability. After an elaboration of the concept governmentality, I explore the notions of norm and normalization. In the most general terms, I am assuming that these concepts are fruitful in addressing forms of governing that seems increasing to work indirectly or "at a distance". While this paper does not test this assumption, it does go on to provide an illustration of how we could address network governance in terms of technologies and norms of government. I finally draw some tentative conclusions on the potentials and status of such a conceptual framework for the study of government at a distance.

2 Governmentality

Foucault introduced the notion of governmentality in his 1978 lectures at College de France on 'Security, Territory and Population' (Foucault 1978; see also Foucault 1988). While Foucault had explicitly avoided the question of the state in his studies of disciplinary power, his problematization of the exercise of power over territories and populations forced him to deal with the forms of political power evolving around the modern territorial states in Western Europe from the 16th century onwards. However, the key category to address this issue was neither power nor state power, but the notion of *government*. Government referred not to the government (the state apparatus) but to the manifold ways in which the conduct of individuals and groups are directed. Defined as the conduct of conduct, government refers to the attempts to structure and nurture the field of actions of others (Foucault 1982: 221). The notion of conduct thus points not only to the directing of the conduct of others, but also to the ways in which one conducts oneself. With the term government, Foucault sought to dispense with the topological distinction between macro- and micro levels in favor of one surface of manifold and interrelated practices of government. Foucault tentatively distinguished between three distinct but closely interrelated problematizations of modern government: the governing of the state and its territory, the governing of individuals and populations, and the governing of the self by the self (Dean 1994: 176).

The term *governmentality* – Foucault's neologism contracting the terms government and rationality – was coined to denote a set of historically specific constellations of problematizations, forms of knowledge and practices of government (Foucault 1991a: 102; Foucault 1991b: 78-82). Key problematizations would be: how do we govern a territory, how do ensure the wealth of the nation and its inhabitants, how do we ensure the health and well-being of individuals and the populations? The term also points to the forms of secular knowledge, such as Reason of State, Mercantilism, Cameralism, Police, Political Economy, Social Economy, through which the problematizations of government were made visible, translated and enframed. Finally, the term includes a number of governmental practices, notably the individualizing, disciplinary techniques found in the army, the school, the

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factory, and the asylum on the one hand, and the totalizing bio-political regulations targeting the population's health, wealth and well-being that came together from the end of the 18th century on the other. Both the disciplinary techniques and the bio-political regulations came to depend on various of forms of expert knowledge (human and social science) dealing with the bio-medical, sociological, psychological and economic processes that constituted the object of liberal government. Foucault characterized this great upsurge, dissemination and institutionalization of the forms of knowledge and practices of government as the 'governmentalization of the state' (Foucault 1991a: 103). Unlike the dystopic diagnosis encapsulated in the notion of the wholly rationalized and administered society propagated in various ways by Max Weber and the Frankfurt School, Foucault went at great pains to distance himself from this etátization-of-society thesis (the penetration of state action into civil society) that rested on a completely different conception of subjectivity, power and freedom (cf. Dean 1994: 74-95). Moreover, in contrast to the Weberian understanding of rationality as an abstract, ideal-type on the one hand and as something indexed in the conscious intentions of the subject on the other, the Foucauldian conception of rationality is strictly practical in the sense that rationalities are regarded as something always embedded in practices, e.g. technologies of government (Foucault 1991b).

Foucault and analysts like Nikolas Rose have further pinned down the notion of governmentality by distinguishing between rationalities and technologies of government (Rose and Miller 1992). *Technologies of government* denote all those manifold systems, procedures, devices and methods that seek to shape the conduct of individuals and groups, such as types of schooling, systems of income support, methods of audit, devices for the organization of work etc. Now, these technologies are always informed by elements of thoughts, reflections and strategic calculations about how to govern properly, efficiently and effectively, i.e. one or more *governmental rationalities*.

It would be a mistake to equate governmental rationalities with political intentions, goals, ends or programs. Likewise, political technologies cannot be equated with the more or less consistent materialization of such political goals. The analytical distinction between intentions, goals, and policies of government on the one hand, that are then implemented through various concrete schemes, projects and administrative devices on the other, does not encapsulate the distinction between rationalities and technologies of government. As argued by Moreira and Wahlberg, the ongoing activities of politicians, civil servants, businessmen, stakeholders, citizens, welfare clients etc. should be seen neither as attempts to implement political rationalities, nor as utilizing technologies and techniques of government for this aim (Moreira and Wahlberg forthcoming). Instead, it is by addressing the ongoing activities of negotiation, activation or empowerment that a genealogy of practices of government can help discern some of the various rationalities, technologies and techniques that are at play. In sum, the term governmentality refers neither to a theory nor an analytical approach, but refers to the manifold practices, forms of knowledge and institutions that seek to know and act upon the actions of individuals and populations. It refers to a modern form of rule, which operates through both bio-political and liberal rationalities and technologies of government, in the promotion of the health, wealth and

welfare of populations on the one hand, and the improvement of the capacities and capabilities of individuals to act responsibly on the other (Rose 1999).

But does not the notion of governmentality imply that you see power almost everywhere? Yes, but it certainly does not mean that it excludes resistance and/or freedom as a possibility. On the contrary, governmentality embraces a conception of power that sees the latter as existing only to the extent that the individuals and groups over whom it is exercised are free. As a relation, the exercise of power presumes a certain form of liberty on both sides of that relation (Foucault 1994: 12). To Foucault, the situation in which an individual is left with no possibilities to resist would not qualify as a relation of power, but as a state of domination. The exercise of power in Foucault's understanding then presumes freedom and the capacity to resist. Like power, freedom is addressed at the level of practices. Freedom is thus seen to consist in the reflections, decisions, and actions that individuals or groups subject themselves to. It is these practices that Foucault called ethics or ethical work. Like power, ethics as the practical and for Foucault only form of freedom, takes liberty as its ontological condition (Foucault 1994: 5). However, ethical practices never take place in a social vacuum. They are not something invented by an individual, a single group or an organization, but are always in rapport with other social practices, including particular forms of knowledge, norms, techniques, and programs seeking to act upon the conduct of others (Foucault 1994: 11).

This understanding of power has two important consequences. First, by conceiving of power and freedom as practices that are mutually related, it becomes possible to address autonomy as a particular mode of government. Second, it enables us to address power in terms of networks. However, this is not so much because individuals, organizations and networks are interacting, but because the exercise of power since the 19th century has increasingly depended on petty and mundane techniques circulating in a wide range of institutional settings. Or as Foucault would have it: 'Power is exercised through networks, and individuals do not simply circulate in those networks; they are in a position to both submit to and exercise this power' (Foucault 2003: 29). From this perspective, the new thing about network governance is not that the state is loosing out as a fixed point of hierarchical forms of power, an event that arguable started to take place with the ending of the absolutism two centuries ago. The new is rather that we are witnessing the rise of a whole range of norms and governmental technologies that seeks to promote autonomy, efficiency, and accountability by urging us to be active, participate and be responsible for oneself and for organizational goals, cf. section 4 below.[3]

The concept of governmentality then may be used to address network governance at the level of practices, i.e. as particular ways of acting and doing things. This implies analyzing all those devices, procedures, programs and mechanisms of authority through which individuals, organizations and networks are sought governed. Such practices of government may certainly take place in more or less institutionalized clusters or networks of individuals and organizations, but they are far from the only shape that indirect governing may take. Moreover, we may seek to address the rationalities (thoughts, reflections and calculations) informing and inscribed in these governmental technologies. This implies analyzing all

those rationalities, moral reflections, forms of expert knowledge that enframe, translate and thereby render certain issues amenable to planned intervention.

3 Norms, normal, normalization and normativity

If practices of government are increasingly taking place at a distance and depending on the self-steering capacities of individuals, organizations and networks, it may be fruitful to see how various norms are informing these governmental practices. I will try to provide a conception of norms as something embedded in concrete practices. Whereas various phenomenological and rational choice approaches found within for example new institutionalist theory addresses norms (and rules) from the point of view of the actor (seen either as embedded in symbolic systems of meaning and values or as pursuing externally given preferences), I am proposing we analyze how norms, which are inscribed in particular forms of knowledge and governmental technologies, may incite and produce the capacities to reflect, problematize, act and be free in very particular manners.

To get a closer grip of this particular understanding we need to take a quick glance at the historical emergence and functioning of modern norms. The rise of modern, technical norms is associated with the scientific and technological transformations accompanying the rise of modern industrial enterprise from the end of the 19th century. Various forms of engineering of the production processes and products were sought described and analyzed in a common language that would allow standardization, coordination, interchangeability and compatibility of products. These attempts were institutionalized with the establishment of the first official bureaus of norms and standards in Western Europe and the US around the First World War. Yet, norms were not only applied to things, i.e. the non-human aspects of production. As early as the 1830s, Adolphe Quetelet introduced the notion of the homme type, namely that person whose biological characteristics constituted the average of a given population (Hacking 1990: 107ff). This conception informed his later discussion of the normal distribution of the physical characteristics of a population based on concrete measurements. Thus based on the measuring of the height and chest width of 5,000 Scottish soldiers, Quetelet found that the distribution of the frequency of the various measures formed a bell-like curve on a chart. The point here is not so much that normal man, or homme type, of a given society was an entirely virtual artifact in as much as a few if any individuals were actually equipped with average features, but that this statistical-technical artifact allowed one to operate in practical terms (including later political and eugenic programs) with the notion of a normal human type.

A key feature of the term `normal´ is its reference not only to how things are, but also often how they ought to be. To evaluate whether a line is normal (orthogonal) or a person is normal (average) is a purely descriptive act pointing to the facticity of the evaluated object. Yet as pointed out by Ian Hacking, the calculation and making of the normal has also often implied a moral evaluation. One has sought to resolve this ambiguity by introducing the notion of "norm": The normal was supposed to refer strictly to what is, while the norm should refer to what ought to be. Despite heroic attempts to uphold the distinction between

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what is and what ought to be, this ambiguity associated with the term normal seems still to be haunting both academic discourse and political practice (Hacking 1990: 160-169).

This ambiguity is however apparently of a rather recent origin. It is only with the French physiologist Broussais' formulation in 1828 that the normal state is associated with the continuous deviation from organs usual and desirable functioning (cf. Canquilhem 1991: 47). This notion of the normal was taken up by the emerging social sciences during the 19th century. In his writings from the 1840s onwards, Auguste Comte associated the term normal with societal development starting with the theological society over the metaphysical society towards the positive polity, a line of progress that was not only regarded as an inevitable law but also a desirable one too in as much as the positive polity denoted a society governed by reason that would ensure human happiness (Comte 1851). Emile Durkheim's theory of anomie expressed in his treatise on *The Rules of Sociological Method* published in 1894 and Suicide in 1897 was based on linking the normal with function. Thus for Durkheim both crime and suicide were "normal" acts. While clearly deviating from average conduct, Durkheim nonetheless saw them as indispensable to the normal functioning of society at that given stage of its evolution. In fact, crime was seen as indispensable to evolution of morality and law (Durkheim [1894] 1982: 101). This conception of the normal did not go unchallenged. In fact, a whole range of biological (Lambroso) and sociological inspired theories of crime depicted the latter as an abnormality (cf. Hacking 1990: 175). Thus, despite contending understandings of what constituted normal conduct, the normal became a predominant concept in understanding, explaining and evaluating social practices.

How then could we fruitfully conceive of the notions of the normal, norm, normalization and normativity in a manner that would enable us to address their role in the practices of government? As a general principle we will have to approach norms in a way that allows us to address the ways in which they come into rapport with particular forms of knowledge in which these norms are inscribed on the one hand, and the particular practices, devices, schemes and programs of government on the other. Thus, by the term *normal*, I am referring to those factual evaluations of how things are that emerge through specific forms of knowledge and techniques of investigation and calculation enabling the machination of the normal state of things. I am thinking here not only of the Gaussian normal distribution and the calculation of statistical averages, but also of the techniques and forms of knowledge applied in industrial production (product and later process standards, Taylorist time and method studies), in actuarial and risk technologies (social security, life insurance, currency exchange rate fluctuation insurance etc.), and in psychological techniques (IQ measurements, personality tests, social competencies tests) (Rose 1990). The point here is to address the calculative and investigative techniques (statistics, survey sampling, questionnaires, interviews) and forms of knowledge (e.g. medicine, biology, sociology, psychology) through which the normal state of things is conceived and produced.

I find it useful to use the term *norm* to refer to standards of conduct or being. By standards of conduct I am referring to the procedural standards informing for example a particular decision-making process (such as inviting stakeholders or making all decision-making documents accessible to the public). By standards of being I am referring to, for example, a

goal of an inflation rate of 3 per cent which guides monetary policies in a given nation. A fundamental point here is that both procedural norms and standards indicating a particular state of being are imbedded in particular practices (in casu a decision-making process and a monetary policy). Thus, I will conceive of norms neither as something located in the consciousness of men or women, nor as something that spring mysteriously from a certain "culture" and its abstract values. Norms are instead seen as produced through specific forms of knowledge and inscribed in diverse practices that they seek to regulate. It is in this practical-regulative sense that I believe we may fruitfully latch on to Canguilhem's dictum: 'A norm that has nothing to regulate is nothing because it regulates nothing' (Canguilhem 1994: 383).

What is then the relationship between the normal and a norm? Like the normal, the norm is articulated through a specific body of knowledge that provides a table of equivalence by which products, processes or individuality may be compared. In so far as this knowledge provides a language of equivalence in relation to which certain phenomena may be measured and individualized, it will enable differentiation and the generation of inequalities. If the above historical account is correct, it seems that in our societies the norm will often be closely related, if not directly owing its very existence, to the normal. For example, the (Taylorist) calculation of the normal time required for the average worker to complete a given element of the production process may be translated into a norm serving as a general standard of conduct for every worker to be followed. Nonetheless, the field of the normal hardly covers the entire field of norms. For example, norms may well be derived from moral or philosophical reflections based on civic virtues or forms of solidarity that need not – but certainly may be – based on conceptions and machinations of the normal.

I am applying the term *normalization* to refer to the procedures and processes through which a norm is brought into play and informs the practices that it seeks to regulate. It refers to the diverse programs, procedures, and techniques by which an individual, a group or an organization take one or more norms as the reference for measuring and perhaps problematizing the adequacy, correctness or desirability of the ways they are doing things. For example, the analysis of whether a given economic practice is efficient when measured against a specific norm, or the structuring of a political act around a norm of participation are both instances of normalizing practices. In a specific sense, normalization will always lead to a change of practice. Thus, inasmuch as a specific norm begins to serve as a standard for the measuring and problematizing certain practices, the latter are already different from what they were before this happened. However, this is not be confused with a change of practices leading to the realization or implementation of the more or less operational norms informing these practices. The latter is obviously an empirical question - and one that is dealt with more adequately by normalizing approaches, such as evaluation studies.

By the term *normativity* I am referring to the moral valuation (good or bad) of a particular norm (Canguilhem 1994: 362). For example, the moral approval of a particular standard of conduct such as self-reliance is an instance of normativity. From this point of view, normativity owes its very existence to the norm: moral valuation is always a valuation of a

particular norm. In contrast, neither the construction of the normal nor the processes of normalization are in themselves instances of normativity. Having defined the normal as the construction of what is, it obviously does not necessarily imply a moral evaluation, though as showed above this has in practice often been the case. But does not the process of normalization necessarily imply the moral affirmation of a particular norm? I find it fruitful here to uphold a distinction between the norm as a purely factual standard of conduct on the one hand, and normativity as the moral evaluation of that particular standard on the other. It is only when we start giving a moral valuation of, for example, a particular recruitment practice or an educational program revolving around the norm of intelligence levels that we are dealing with normativity.

How are we to address the relationship between norms, normalization and the governing of conduct – whether of individuals or organizations? In answering this question, I find Francois Ewald's suggestions useful (Ewald 1990). First, if norms may be regarded as referring not only to a state of being but also to a procedure, cf. above, then normalization may refer not only to making certain processes or products conform to a certain standard, but also to the choice of "procedures that will lead to some general consensus regarding the choice of norms and standards' (ibid. 148). For example, a norm of participation informing certain decision-making processes in a network may specify criteria for the inclusion of participants in a network. But a norm could also refer to a procedure by which the network participants on an on-going basis negotiate who should be included in the network.

Second, norms may be viewed as internal to a group. In so far as a norm is produced through the practices that it seeks to regulate, it may make sense to address the norm as 'a way for a group to provide itself with a common denominator in accordance with a rigorous principle of self-referentiality' (Ewald 1990: 154). Everyone in the group can measure, evaluate and identify himself or herself according to the norm, which is derived from, reproduced and updated by those for whom it will serve as a standard. Accordingly, one may speak of normalization when the group is urged if not forced to turn back upon and evaluate itself in relation to one or more specific norms. For example, while a particular norm of transparency informing the ways in which a particular network of organizations and individuals publicize and share information may be contested by others as being insufficient or not up to the standards (whatever they are), this local norm may be extremely effective in regulating the conduct of the network participants who in the process will reproduce and update that particular norm. A norm then is not simply a more or less universal value, but a strictly localized rule of judgement embedded in specific practices that serve to produce and update it.

4 Addressing network governance in terms of norms, rationalities and technologies of government

As explained above I am suggesting that we address network governance as a set of specific rationalities and technologies of government, where the latter is seen as a specific form of power that seeks to act upon the actions of others. Based on the notions of governmentality and normalization, how may we characterize more precisely the nature of

network governance? Foucault proposed the term *liberal government* to denote the rationalities and technologies of power that emerged from the end of the 18th century (Foucault 1988). This form of government was liberal in that its reflections, calculations and methods above all depended on governing through subjectivities rather than by subjecting individuals of civil society to an omni-potential state power. Hence, the metaphor the governmentalization of the state, rather than the etatisation of society. In conformity with this understanding, the recent restructuring of government have been dubbed *neo-liberal government* or *advanced liberal government* (Burchell 1996: 21-30; Dean 1999: 159, 164-165).[4] These terms point not so much to the rolling back of the state action through privatisation and rationalization of the public sector, but to the proliferation of a series of governmental technologies seeking to make markets, factories, public and private organizations govern themselves according to norms of efficiency, accountability, and transparency, and to make individuals govern themselves according to norms of civility, wealth and well-being (Rose and Miller 1992; Rose 1999). To the extent that these governmental technologies seek to augment the governmental capacities of diverse organisations and individuals, it may perhaps be proper to view this as the governmentalization of government.

Network governance then could be regarded as an instance of this conception of neo-liberal government. From this point of view, we could broadly characterize network governance as the diverse governmental rationalities, technologies and norms that seek to govern by promoting the self-steering capacities of individuals and organizations. On the one hand, such definition may be seen to be too broad in that it comprises forms of governing that go beyond the formation and functioning of networks of individuals and organizations. On the other hand, I find it suitable in order to avoid restricting the analytical scope to the phenomenological inspired focus on the interaction within and in the best cases between networks. In the following, I will briefly address some of the technologies and norms of government that I find is perhaps most pertinent to the functioning of networks, namely technologies and norms of agency, contract, performance, and accountability respectively.

During the two decades, advanced liberal democracies have experienced the emergence of a whole series of practices around norms of activism, participation and empowerment. Such *technologies of agency* may seek to bring forth the voice and opinion of the citizens, such as opinion polls, surveys, public hearings, focus groups, citizen panels, workshops with groups of citizens.[5] They may also seek to enable and induce citizens to be active and participate more directly in the decision-making processes, such as empowerment projects, school boards, community centers, consensus conferences, and citizens' juries. Technologies of agency then may be instrumental to the formation of such networks. While the formation, shape and functioning of these networks vary immensely, which is an important feature of their governmental abilities, they nonetheless often seek to formulate policies based on a certain level of consensus and legitimacy by organizing clusters of stakeholders in loose, issue-based networks that may cut across national boundaries. These networks need neither be formalized in the sense of being governed by more or less universal rules or procedures, nor do they need to be initiated or organized by public authorities, though the latter may play an important role by urging certain individuals and

organizations to participate and by providing expertise, facilities and political opinions on proposals for possible ways of handling the issue in question.

If technologies of agency may be instrumental to the formation of networks of individuals and organizations, *contractual technologies and norms* may be important to their continued functioning and reproduction. Many Western European countries have a long-standing tradition of outsourcing and delegating various social services and tasks to private enterprises and voluntary organizations. Recently however we have seen the surge of various devices and methods involved in the contracting out of social services in order to enhance efficiency, responsibility or the possibilities of individual choice. For example, there has been a proliferation of individual contracts between public authorities on the one hand, and the unemployed, the problematic parents, the welfare recipient, the delinquent etc. on the other, whereby both parties sign a contract containing a number of goals and obligations that both parties will seek to fulfil. At the organizational level, one sees the emergence of contracting out, tenders and outsourcing of social services, infrastructure utilities and educational functions to a variety of both public and private organizations. What is taking place then is not only the privatization of activities formerly undertaken by public agencies, but also the promotion of a certain competitive drive among the latter by creating a semi-market for social services. This process has included the re-articulation and creation of new linkages between private and public organizations with a view to enhance the legitimacy of policy formation and/or enhance the efficiency of policy outcomes.

The tendency of contracting out and outsourcing of formerly public activities has been accompanied by the proliferation of what one may dub *technologies and norms of performance*. This term includes the devices and methods that seek 'to penetrate the enclosures of expertise fostered under the welfare state and to subsume the substantive domains of expertise to new formal calculative regimes' (Dean 1999a: 169). In a wide range of institutional settings we are witnessing the dispersion of techniques for the devolution of budgets, benchmarking, (self-) evaluation and assessment techniques that all seek to make the organizations themselves strive to perform better in relation to more or less stable norms of performance. By urging and at times even forcing organizations to constantly evaluate their own performance according to more or less officially recognized standards and norms, these technologies may be crucial for the functioning of issue-based networks. Not only may they allow for a certain room for external steering by central public authorities, they may also establish a more or less stable common conception among participants in the network of how things should be conducted and thereby ensure the network's internal cohesion.

Finally, another set of systems and techniques is informed not so much by norms of efficiency and output, but more on process norms evolving around the notions of accountability and transparency (Power 1997; 2003). These *technologies of accountability*, which may take the form of financial audits, environmental audits, value for money audits, management audits, or teaching audits, are brought into play across shifting boundaries of public and private activities. In the public sector they will often seek to enhance legitimacy by enhancing insights into the ways that taxpayers money are spend. In the private sectors, these technologies are dealing not only with monetary flows and balances, but also with

social responsibility based on standards of proper company conduct. Thus, an increasing number of private companies, notably transnational corporations, are formulating non-legal norms pertaining to working conditions, the environment, obligations to the local community etc. These norms are produced and updated not by a single legislative authority, but in the interplay between marketing strategies and technologies, consumer perception analyses, and norms proposed by international bodies, such as OECD, the World Bank, UNCTAD, and ILO. What is new about these technologies is perhaps not so much that they increase the scope of organizational control or self-control, but rather that they render new phenomena visible and reshape relations within and between organizations. Thus these techniques may facilitate new relations within and between public and private organizations by making them reflect upon, monitor and conduct themselves in relation to particular forms of norms, procedures and knowledge on transparency and accountability.

Network governance conceived as above give rise to several fundamental questions regarding the ways in which networks are informed by norms of conduct and norms of being. First, we could ask what norms – pertaining to autonomy, efficiency and accountability - are informing the processes by which a multitude of different stakeholders seek to reach a decision on a series of actions to be taken? And here we may note that there need not be any agreement on what exactly constitutes autonomy, efficiency and accountability. While such lack of clarity give rise to struggles that may dissolve the entire network, they may just as well prove to be facilitating the political processes taking place through the network. Second, we could ask how do these networks reshape and update norms of being informing the political issues dealt with. For example, in the case of employment policies how are networks informed by and reshaping norms of activism, entrepreneurship, and life-long learning? The point of all this would be to analyze if, how, and with what effects the network participants are urged if not forced – by the other participants, by their own constituency, by politicians by concerned social scientists, and by themselves - to relate to these norms not only with regard to problematization and the enframing of a certain issue, but also with regard to the procedural practices that make up the process of political networking. Third, we could ask how the technologies and norms described above are changing the relations and forms of authority between public and private organizations? Fourth but hardly finally, we could ask what groups and practices are deemed inferior and thereby excluded by resorting to contemporary norms of autonomy, efficiency, performance? I believe that these and many other questions are in need of closer investigation, and it is my belief that the framework elaborated above may contribute to this task.

5 Conclusion

The proliferating debate on government and (network) governance is raising many pertinent questions concerning our understanding of contemporary forms of rule and authority. How can we conceive and analyze political practices and processes if the state as a particular institutional set-up, defining a particular hierarchical mode of authority, and a particular form of legitimate authority can no longer serve as the anchor-point? These and many other pertinent questions are raised with increasing force by the governance literature.

However, as briefly discussed in the introduction I do not find the answers provided so far to these questions entirely satisfactory, notably but not exclusively due to the way that agency is addressed.

In order to supplement our understanding of network governance, I have tried in this paper to propose a framework based on the concepts of norms and normalization one the one hand, and Foucault's notion of governmentality and power on the other. The analytical potential of the concepts rests with the capacity to address the manifold and concrete ways in which norms are enabling and at the same time updated by various rationalities and technologies of government. They have the capacity to analyze what I have termed normalizing effects, i.e. how certain ways of governing come to be seen as taken for granted and very little susceptible to questioning. They may also address how norms of autonomy, participation and influence depend on specific techniques and practices that may function at the expense of excluding other forms of governing.

Such a conceptual framework will also be attentive to the ways in which governmental technologies are brought into play through (potentially normalizing) forms of expert knowledge, such as industrial psychology, micro economics, business administration, auditing, accounting, public administration and even political philosophy. This is not to be conflated with the claim that we are now entering the wholly normalized society. Thus it is not a matter of checking out the extent to which the recommendations by experts are realized, nor whether expert knowledge is determining political reforms and interventions, but rather how they inform, enframe and enable particular ways of intervening. In other words, it would pay attention in particular temporal, societal and institutional settings of the ways in which expert knowledge renders reality visible and how it translates and shapes problems into a form amenable to intervention. In particular, it would address how expertise contributes to the setting of standards for what constitutes the most proper and efficient modes of conduct when it comes for instance to promote the efficiency, accountability, or participation of individuals, groups or organizations in a particular political process.

It would also address how norms of autonomy, self-determination, influence and participation interrelate with concrete governmental technologies that seek to promote, foster and induce individuals and organizations to be active and take responsibility for the discussion, formulation, and possibly implementation of particular problems and issues. That is to say, it would analyze the norms brought into play in the attempts to promote the self-steering capacities of individuals, networks and organizations. It would finally pay attention to the dividing effects of these norms and practices: What particular practices are being deemed inefficient, non-transparent, lacking accountability or in other ways incompatible with prevailing norms of acting and being?

What would the status of such an analysis of government and norms be? In its own terms it would definitely not be a normalizing framework. Not only would it refrain from operating with particular norms against which the practices studies could be evaluated as normal, autonomous, efficient, accountable etc., it would also refrain from ascribing to a particular methodological standard supporting its own analysis. That is, it would not discipline itself

according to certain more or less fixed procedures for data collection and data processing. If defined as moral evaluation, this type of analysis would not be normative: it would not provide – on the basis of a more or less explicit normative grounding – judgements as to whether this or that analyzed practice is good or bad. However, it would definitively be normative if we expand that term to include a concern for problematizing the effects of the concrete interrelations between normalizing forms of knowledge and practices of government. This implies that while this analysis is above all descriptive by asking questions of what and how rather than why, it is definitely not a neutral description. In fact, its critical potential rests exactly with its ability to describe practices, norms and forms of knowledge that either have been deemed unworthy of scientific analysis, or to describe these in a manner that will illuminate how they interact and depend on one another in a manner that have reached little attention before.

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Notes

[1] This paper has benefited importantly from the critical comments by the members of the Center for Democratic Network Governance, Roskilde University, Denmark.

[2] For an overview of different understandings of (network) governance, see (Torfing, Sørensensen and Christensen 2003).

[3] This understanding of government has informed some very interesting analyses of the role the attempts to promote the common market and a common employment strategy in the European Union (Haahr and Walters 2003; Haahr 2004).

Mitchell Dean seems to be making a distinction between neo-liberalism as the form of governing relying above all on the capacities of the market and advanced liberalism as the form of governing relying on the self-governing capacities of a plurality of more or less autonomous and interacting public and private organisations (Dean 1999: 159, 164-196).

[5] I use the term technologies of agency in a manner close to Barbara Cruikshank's notion of *technologies of citizenship* (Cruikshank 1999). However, I have chosen the term technology of agency to underscore the norms of activism and participation embedded in these practices rather than the norms for deciding what is regarded the proper conduct of a citizen. For the same reasons, I choose to distinguish the term technologies of agency from technologies of contract and performance (for a different categorization see Dean 1999: 167-168).