This paper presents the basic features of Hyperpolitics, a methodology aimed at defining political concepts in a modular and interactive manner. Hyperpolitics has been developed as a book (Hyperpolitics. An Interactive Dictionary of Political Science, University of Chicago Press, forthcoming) and as a Website (www.hyperpolitics.net) with the aim of addressing the growing complexity of disciplinary areas in political science while fostering analytical skills and cooperation among scholars with different backgrounds and approaches.
Bringing Concepts Back In

In his Foreword to Social Science Concepts, Sartori (1984), in his usual combative style, begins with “One good way of assessing the state of the science is to look into the state of its concepts” (p. 9). Quoting a Nobel physical scientist, Sartori proceeds with the observation that any and all science “depends on its concepts. These are ideas which receive names. They determine the questions one asks, and the answers one gets. They are more fundamental than the theories which are stated in terms of them …” (p. 9). And, Sartori goes on, “whether concepts are theory-formed or theory-forming, in either case they are the basic units with which the social science profession actually performs” (p. 9).2

No social science manifesto can disregard the quest for some form – and degree – of control over its research process, and concepts remain the cornerstone of any such purpose and effort. The definition of concepts is thus part of the routine of any scientific endeavor. Yet, we have all become aware that meanings, for whatever concepts, are always fraught with history and linguistic diversity. One needs not go through the infinite nuances and burden of erudite Begriffsgeschichte to realize that most concepts have undergone deep changes through various ages and places. And no one-sided and single-minded definition, even of the simplest terms, could be sure to meet the challenge of cultural cleavages, groupings, identities. Meaning, to a large extent, remains an intersubjective matter.

Restoration of concepts thus calls for a cultural pluralism, on substantive as well as methodological grounds (della Porta and Keating 2008). Concepts are the tail of the tiger. Grabbing the tail with one hand and a singular Weltanshauung may reinforce an academic citadel, but falls short from addressing the magnitude – and complexity – of human understanding. The debate over meaning will continue, yet we are certain that «there are clear benefits to putting aside the desire for a singular answer to the question “what is a concept”».6 Pitting naturalists against anti-naturalists, the classical normative model against the language-focused framework is a useful exercise to improve either

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1 This paper largely draws upon our introductory chapter to Mauro Calise and Theodore J. Lowi, Hyperpolitics. An Interactive Dictionary of Political Science, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming.
6 Robert Adcock, What is a Concept?, Working paper of the IPSA Committee on Concepts and Methods n. 1, p. 31.
side’s arguments, yet with no definitive winner\textsuperscript{7}. The fact remains that we have to cope with both faces of the coin.

To make progress among competing rules of concept formation, one needs to set aside any pretense of having the ultimate word(ing). To define a concept as an open universe, rather than a closed circle, may sound to many a contradictory, if not self-defeating, enterprise. It certainly is a statement implying a strong commitment to an adventurous journey\textsuperscript{8}. We enter it with a new methodological compass, which we believe will prove as simple as it is effective for everyone to join in the task. A compass which will guide us in bridging the gap between different approaches as well as different meanings to the world of social science concepts.

\textbf{The Hyperdictionary}

\textit{Hyperpolitics} is, in the first place, a method for unpacking a dense concept by separating out its components while providing a logical relation among them. In other words, it is a method of concept analysis. As with any analysis the purpose is to break the object into its parts, to examine the parts and then reassemble them with a clearer understanding of its meaning and significance.

The result is a dictionary unlike any other. \textit{Hyperpolitics} is a dictionary in the irreducible sense that concepts are selected and defined one at a time. But each entry is defined in terms of other concepts related to the meaning of that entry, and all of the defining concepts are linked within a logical system. Although our dictionary is also a “collection of essays,” the essays are not written to stand alone. Each entry exists in a dynamic relation to many other entries containing overlapping concepts. Definitions in conventional dictionaries move principally from concept to referent (or experience), each definition is pre-empirical. In contrast, our definitions move from concept to concepts, making each definition pre-theoretical. This is virtually an operational definition of theoretical discourse.

The aim of this relational approach is to bring concept analysis as close as possible to the system level - of thinking as well as comparing and interacting. The hyperdictionary guides and fosters free and yet logically controlled navigation through an expanding universe of competing meanings and observations.

The systemic dimension of the hyperdictionary is built upon two main methodological foundations:

- All definitions follow the same analytical pattern: a matrix of twelve logically interrelated keywords. The dictionary provides a definition for each concept by always placing it at the center of a matrix of twelve related keywords in dialectic with each other. As a result of the matrix methodology, definitions provide a fourfold typology of each concept, allowing for a wide spectrum of comparative empirical observations and facilitating the development of tightly linked theoretical arguments.


\textsuperscript{8} On this point, we very much share Gaus’ vision that: «The construction of such a system of concepts will often involve creativity, producing novel combinations of interpretations. Political theorizing is a ongoing enterprise, and one aspect of that enterprise is drawing new conceptual maps, which logically relate political concepts in hitherto unthought-of ways» (2000: 46).
Each keyword is drawn from a list of 100 keywords, representing the basic political science vocabulary. The list was compiled through the computerized scanning and counting of all entries from 10 authoritative dictionaries worldwide, from four languages and five countries (Italy, France, Germany, UK and USA). As a result, the list approaches a representation of the mainstream vocabulary of the discipline.

The combination of these two methods produces commensurability and interactivity among all units – and subunits – of the hyperdictionary, a basic attribute of systemic navigation and understanding.

Matrix

The matrix is a common analytic tool in the social sciences. Its main purpose is to create comparability through categorization by combining two variables, to produce four interrelated property spaces. Most often the four spaces or quadrants are filled with quantitative data – for example, Democratic/Republican, cross-tabulated with liberal/conservative voting. But, for us, its greater promise is for qualitative spaces, containing not data but concepts that contribute to the definition of the selected concept. Thus, the four property spaces in our matrices are named and specified by two additional concepts, which qualify and integrate the two extremities of the axes in each quadrant. As a consequence, each definition results into four subtypes, each comprised of four concepts. Being parts of the same matrix, all subtypes are logically interrelated.

To give more clarity and coherence to this process of concept formation and specification, we use a graphic interface with the two additional concepts in each quadrant occupying a different position: one at the corner, serving as a link between the two concepts on the axes, while, at the same time, «closing off» the property space; and one at the center, to better encapsulate each quadrant’s properties and make more visible the differences among all four subtypes.

We take party as our key example. The two central axes are drawn from the most consensual definers of political parties in the international political science literature. The first is Duverger’s dichotomy of the origins of party — in the legislature and in the mass, or civil society. The second dichotomy is the most widely used distinction in organizational patterns, contrasting the U.S. preference for individualistic machinery

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9 We are grateful to David Collier for leading us to the history of the idea of property space back to Allen Barton and his mentor Paul Lazarsfeld. And we will rely heavily on Barton’s treatment in a brief article published in 1955, “The Concept of Property-Space in Social Research,” in Paul Lazarsfeld and Morris Rosenberg, eds., A Reader in the Methodology of Social Research, Glencoe: The Free Press, 1955, pp. 40-53. However, it was sufficiently “in the air” in Lasswell’s 1955-56 graduate seminar at Yale, which he taught with Nathan Leites. And, although Lasswell was not a participant in the original Lazarsfeld seminar given at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, as footnoted by Barton, Lasswell and Lazarsfeld, along with Bernard Berelson, had been closely associated in research on the content of communication going back to the early 1940s and to the work of “Lazarsfeld and his associates” (including Leites) earlier in the 1940s and in the late 1930s. In fact, Barton credits Lasswell as being virtually the founder of political content analysis: “During the late 1930s content analysis was given an important stimulus through the work of Harold D. Lasswell and his associates ... The concern of Lasswell and others with problems of public opinion and propaganda led naturally to the study of communication and thence to content analysis.” Berelson, ‘Content Analysis’, in Gardner Lindzey, Handbook of Social Psychology, Vol. 1, Cambridge: Addison-Wesley, 1954, p. 490.

10 This is also a simple and yet extremely powerful way to construct multidimensional and multilevel concepts. A concern we share with Gary Goertz’s latest work, Social Science Concepts. A User’s Guide, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006, pp. 1-24. Goertz’s main focus, however, remains on bridging the gap «between the qualitative scholars’ concern for substantively valid concepts and the quantitative scholars’ interest in good numerical measures» (p. 2), an aim which largely falls outside the scope of our dictionary.
with the European preference for a corporate or corporatist structure. The cross-
tabulation of these two analytic dimensions leads to the four property spaces, each representing a subtype of the political party characterized by four related keywords. In the upper right cell, we have chosen representation as the main relationship between the legislative origin and the stress on the individual unit and election as the main procedure for allocating power resources. And start with that upper right cell because party is so often virtually defined by elections. Yet, what can be made of its absence elsewhere?

Figure 1 - Matrix of Party

The lower right quadrant points us toward a relatively new era of post-electoral politics (Ginsberg and Shefter, 1999), an outcome largely anticipated by the advent of a large-scale market based economic model of democracy, first outlined by Joseph Schumpeter and popularized by Anthony Downs. As the U.S. political parties move more and more toward polling, they also move that much further away from their historic legislative/representation position, even though legislative activities still take place. Movement toward polling also involves a more plebiscitary relation between individual citizens and government, a phenomenon that Europe – take Berlusconi’s Italy - seems to be experiencing even more extensively than the United States.

Additional understanding of this can be drawn with a move to the lower left quadrant of the matrix where oligarchy catches best the texture of political relationships. The idea of oligarchy as a driving force, if not the driving force, for the corporate party dates back at least to the work of Robert Michels and is probably best represented by the Leninist and social democratic parties before and after World War I. These political parties, by their location in the class structures of polarizing societies, and by ideology, were antagonistic to the state, and the most radical refused to participate in the
government even when their electoral strength warranted it. By contrast, in the upper left quadrant corporate parties exist within a governmental system, each having to contend peacefully with each other. This is what Lijphart refers to as consociational politics: Whenever differences in the electorate remain frozen or otherwise attached to a substantial aggregate in the civil society and are represented through strong party organizations of a corporate type, the most likely outcome is a governing process arising out of coalitional accords with a minimum of direct electoral competition (Lijphart, 1984: 53-103).

As with any theoretical argument, the party matrix, and any other matrix, can be criticized on substantive grounds. The choice of each concept in the matrix reflects our own view, starting from the selection of the axes, by far the most relevant decision for the development of the whole matrix. The axes reflect each scholar’s theoretical preferences and/or empirical focus of investigation. Other views of party will dictate one or more changes of related concepts, which can produce a different rendering of the matrix or an entirely different matrix. This is not a matter of correct v. incorrect or right v. wrong. Alternative or concurring definitions become part of a common discourse, in which the differences are cumulative – a key feature of our matrix approach. By constructing each matrix the same way, with the identical configuration of 12 concepts, we offer a system for controlling the logical consistency of conceptual links toward theoretical argument. At the same time there is ample opportunity to compare, criticize and modify specific elements of the argument. Two competing definitions of the same concept can be easily and methodically confronted, because all matrices partake of the same logical system.

This leads to another key feature of our matrix approach: interactivity. The matrix works as a self-evident and – thanks to its graphic interface – user-friendly metalanguage to communicate the contents of each definition. This makes interaction with other readers and users easier and, at the same time, rigorous. As every definition is constructed around the same, repetitive logical pattern, it becomes easier to move from one definition to the other: whether in browsing through definitions of different concepts, or in comparing different definitions of the same concept by the same or by a plurality of authors.

There is yet one further level of interaction among different matrices, one stemming from the original choice of using the same logical pattern for all of our definitions: Interaction at the system level. Take again party as an example. In the definition we presented, Party is the central concept being defined through and thanks to 12 related keywords. This represents the core argument about party in our hyperdictionary, in a full-length essay. Yet, party also appears as a definer, as one of the 12 concepts in several other matrices comprised in our dictionary. Either as a pole in one of the axes, or as a specification of any of the quadrants. The use of a concept as a definer can be more or less frequent, depending on the relevance each concept occupies in the literature as well as in each individual scholar’s vision of the discipline. In all cases, each link to party in other matrices contributes to a better understanding of its wider conceptual domain.

These are no mere crossreferences, as there are in most dictionaries by use of a generic «see also» annotation. Thanks to the use of the matrix’s logical pattern and metalanguage as a common framework for all definitions, links in our hyperdictionary
always refer to a specific quadrant, with all other keywords in that quadrant contributing to clarifying in which context, and within which set of relationships, party is being used in that matrix. Figure 2 conveys a clear picture of the scope and complexity of system level navigation through related concepts using the matrix as a compass. Working through relational matrices thus contributes to our understanding of each concept as a prismatic universe, with its wider meaning dependent on the links incorporating it with all the other matrices in which that concept appears as a definer.

**Figure 2 – Links to the Matrix of Party**

In all cases, however, there are two invariant requirements, which our methodology meets: the requirement of generalization and the requirement of context. We share the view of Robert Goodin and Charles Tilly (2006: 6) that «against the most reductive versions of parsimony, … attention to context does not clutter the description and explanation of political processes, but, on the contrary, promotes systematic
knowledge». Indeed, one of the main purposes of Hyperpolitics is to engender investigation and development of each concept in one or more relevant contexts by means of a common logical infrastructure. This is our method. This is our route toward “systematic knowledge” and knowledge of the system.

By showing all the matrices where a given keyword is used, Hyperpolitics offers a comprehensive overview of a keyword’s conceptual domain, making the reader aware of the complex interactions in the discipline’s vocabulary, and preparing the user for thoughts and speculations at the level of theory. This, at the same time, opens up our dictionary to the participation – and improvement – by all interested users. And it brings us to what we consider a key attraction of our project: to restore the place of concepts in political analysis while, at the same time, making them as easily accessible and debatable as possible to the wider public.

We are well aware that this task calls for tough scientific guidance, as well as a good deal of self-discipline. We are trying to strike a balance between the rigorous unraveling of complex conceptual analysis and an open-ended process of critical evaluation and participation by the scholarly community. This has been the vision of our project since its very inception. There have been several attempts by social scientists to broaden concept usage and to systematize concept analysis by providing guidelines, requisites and methodologies for more consistency – i.e., to help concepts “travel” across cultures and languages. In spite of their many merits, these efforts have attracted little if any following beyond the restricted circle of methodology experts. We were compelled to ask the question: How could we bridge the gap between rules and results, by bringing concepts into a political discourse that can pass scientific requirements without reducing us to an esoteric language?

The first step was to take upon ourselves the burden of putting our method to test, by carving out of our matrix as many definitions as possible. We would thus taste the pudding or, better, test the oven by cooking several puddings, while also being able to perform a systematic consistency check of the hyperdictionary’s overall relational structure. At the onset, we must confess, the enthusiasm of discovery led us to underestimate the trials we were to face in such an unprecedented endeavor. Of all the authoritative scholars trying to break new ground in concept analysis, none had ventured into the maze of drafting a whole brand new dictionary. Yet, Hic Rhodus, hic salta.

In its present printed edition, our dictionary is comprised of a total of 66 entries (see Appendix). The entries in Hyperpolitics are subdivided into three categories: Main Entries; Short Entries; Cross-Entries.

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11 This project had been long underway when Wikipedia changed the common understanding of dictionary compilation – and use. We were all the happier to see the extraordinary success of a cultural undertaking sharing the same spirit of our and other concurring efforts: to use Internet as an opportunity for open access to qualified sources of higher learning. This is an aim we have pursued also through the Web companion to Hyperpolitics. Wikipedia, however, also contributes – by contrast – to make it all the more clear, to us as well as to our readers – what is specific with Hyperpolitics with respect to other platforms trying to make the best out of the web’s ever widening participatory process. The main virtue of Wikipedia lies in its capacity to attract experts from various cultural backgrounds to perform a strictly defined and highly specialized task: to contribute to the definition of a single particle of universal knowledge. On sheer methodological grounds, there is no difference between Wikipedia and any traditional encyclopedia. The novelty resides in the fact that access both to the drafting and the reading of a definition is an open one. There is, thus, no doubt that the social benefits of such a process are enormous. However, Wikipedia’s definitions remain within the boundaries of the encyclopedic mainstream: to provide as specific a definition as possible for as wide a number of discrete items composing the universe of scientific knowledge. In contrast, the aim of our hyperdictionary is to boost the understanding and development of links among different concepts, through a logically coherent pattern calling for criticism and improvement.
Each Main Entry chapter, of appr. 3000 words, is divided in 7 sections:

- an Introduction,
- a presentation of the two Axes,
- 4 sections, one for each Quadrant,
- a Conclusion.

We have tried our best to keep approximately the same length for all definitions, as this contributes to smoother reading and cross-referencing. Thanks to Hyperpolitics’ innovative methodology for a concept’s definition, the argument can easily be followed step by step, as the various parts are explained and illustrated in the text. (see sample of Main Entry in the Appendix). Besides, all of our full-length definitions are grounded by a page showing the matrices to which they are linked in the hyperdictionary.

The 16 entries of the second category share the complexity, coherence and interactivity of the full-length definitions, as well as their format. Each definition is first introduced by a brief statement of the concept’s main elements and historical context. Then follows a presentation of the two axes, which are cross-tabulated to develop the matrix’s four property spaces. The argument thus moves to the four quadrants, and is followed by a conclusion. And, through their linked matrices presented on a separate page, their semantic universe can be enlarged according to the reader’s interests (see sample of Short Entry in the Appendix). These sixteen shorter versions are thus bona fide definitions, useful in themselves; but a matrix with only an abstract rendering is open more to criticism, alteration and experimentation, and may lead to an entirely new matrix. Serendipity and creativity are byproducts. These matrices also serve a pedagogic purpose. They demonstrate the making of a definition at a preliminary stage. In our experience, the drafting of a full-length rendering of a matrix often leads to some changes in the original matrix – and argument. In a way, this could well be the first form of interaction by the user. Yet, thanks to the matrix, variations occur through a controlled logical method, which helps make us aware of the different paths we have chosen and others can choose. This is one of the main aims of our hyperdictionary, to serve as a platform to share and foster conceptual investigation and development.¹²

The third category in the Dictionary consists of 32 cross-entries, each on a single page, showing the matrices to which that entry is linked (see sample of Cross-Entry in the Appendix). Although there is no explicitly rendered definition of the concept, the user can get a substantial sense of its semantic scope by going to the pages where the entry appears as part of a definition, either on one of the two axes or on one of the four quadrants. Thanks to the matrix’s interface, the cross-reference can be quickly found and easily contextualized as part of a more complex argument. Besides, browsing through the links can represent one first step for users to start working toward their own matrix and definition of that entry, using the arguments and sources found in the cross-referenced matrices as a stimulus for theorizing.

As a result of its multilayer and open structure, Hyperpolitics can be used at various levels of complexity, depending on the user’s interests and skills.

¹² Indeed, some of these matrices are themselves the result of a joint endeavor with a number of junior colleagues, participating in Hyperpolitics’ workshops at various stages of our project. We are happy to acknowledge their authorship, with their name at the end of the abstracts, and are grateful to their helping us improving various parts of our platform. While, at the same time, showing that perhaps the most promising feature of Hyperpolitics lays with its capacity of stirring intellectual interest for concepts development in the younger generation of scholars.
• The simplest is reading one definition at a time, as in any other dictionary. The understanding of each concept will be further facilitated by Hyperpolitics’ user-friendly graphic layout, which allows for step-by-step explanation of each definition.

• The next step is taking full advantage of the dictionary’s hyper-structure, looking for the larger conceptual domain of each entry by browsing through one or more related matrices. Again, this is facilitated by the graphic layout, offering a bird’s-eye-view of all related matrices.

• One further, more engaging step consists of the opportunity for each individual user to alter or replace a matrix. Through its modular methodology, Hyperpolitics invites controversy, changes, improvements. This is the great virtue of Hyperpolitics — a perpetual prompter of thought.

This has, in fact, been our most rewarding experience, when we have put the hyperdictionary to the test by teaching. We have been very much encouraged by the extraordinary reception of hundreds of students who have participated in our classes, and many graduate students who have, in various capacities, contributed to the making of our hyperdictionary. For the past six years, Hyperpolitics has been used in the Introduction to Political Science course at the University of Naples, and by several undergraduate and graduate students at Florence and Cornell University, in classes varying in size from 20 to 200. In all cases, students have greatly appreciated the possibility of approaching complex arguments in an incremental way, using the matrix’s clear logical and self-explanatory interface. Group discussion and participation have thus been strongly enhanced and, in the cases of smaller classes, have led to the drafting and presentation of original versions and/or variants of a given concept by individual students.

The Web Companion

This leads to one further asset of the Hyperpolitics platform, its electronic version. The interactive features of Hyperpolitics are enhanced by its Web Companion (Figure 3), a fully developed website, allowing users to compile their own definitions after reading those in the book (www.hyperpolitics.net). The on-line version can be accessed in the read or write mode. The read mode is limited to a number of matrices and abstracts, mainly serving as an illustration of what is to be found in the book. The write mode is an e-learning environment where students, as well as mature scholars, can work out their own definitions, taking full advantage of two key features: hypertextual links and selected electronic sources.
The web platform allows for a more efficient use of the hyperdictionary relational structure. In each matrix, both in the read and the write mode, all keywords work as an immediate hypertextual link to all related matrices, thus making conceptual traveling an easier – though complex – experience. In this respect, the Web Companion is an invitation to navigate through the entire conceptual system, while remaining aware not to lose sight of the matrix’s logical compass.

The interactive features of Hyperpolitics are enhanced by its Web Companion. As with the printed Hyperdictionary, the Web Companion also allows for different levels of complexity. The on-line platform is ideal for classroom use, as it provides a stepwise presentation of the construction of each matrix, thus inviting for discussion and contributions from the students in the analysis of the various components of a definition: its axes and the four subtypes.

A further step involves students in the drafting of their own definitions, after taking advantage of the ones presented in the book as well as of the on-line sources accessible through the Web Companion. The platform’s user-friendly interface, with its built-in notepad, encourages for tentative drafting as well as for easy exchange with the teacher and/or other students. Once a matrix has been saved on the platform, it becomes visible to all interested users.

This leads to the future use of Hyperpolitics as a social software, a platform open to the contribution of all those interested in developing, confronting and exchanging their research experience in one or more conceptual domains through the form of a matrix-based definition. The results will, as always, depend on two basic requisites of all scientific research: hard work and an open mind.
Only connect …

E.M. Forster, Howards End

In the beginning of our journey toward a new conceptual dictionary many years ago, we were moved by a number of long neglected needs and new opportunities. A primary preoccupation was our awareness of the tendency in the social sciences to over-specialize and, therefore, over-simplify the basic vocabulary of our discipline. We think that this mainly stemmed from the legitimate need to increase accuracy and accountability of empirical investigation by breaking down its unit of measure as close as possible to the atom-by-atom description of the objects of analysis. Ironically, this is a scientific mentality that became common to two antagonistic approaches in social science: the positivist, overly-quantitative, operational-definition approach, versus the qualitative, context-driven particularized analysis of political reality. While very different in their methodological assumptions and applications, both approaches have often resulted in the tendencies to limit investigation, to freeze concepts to the immediate situation, and thus to limit the distance that concepts can travel.13

Hyperpolitics does not pretend to be a definitive solution to these dilemmas, whether of too little context, too much context, or too extreme a reductionist bias. It does, however, try to bring concepts back into political discourse in a way that maximizes the richness and varieties of contexts and the experiences they encapsulate, while making them easily comparable across a wide theoretical spectrum. Perhaps the most challenging use of Hyperpolitics is its capacity for reconsidering concepts in light of their use in other matrices. This methodical confrontation of concepts involves more than an exercise in construction – and de-construction. Since each concept embodies empirical experience, combining the experience embodied in related concepts creates tension, and this tension is creative tension, because it requires new sets of statements about these hitherto unrecognized relationships. This kind of creative tension among competing experiences is the essence of theory making. Theory making as its own political process.

While sharing the concern that, in social sciences, «all disciplines have lost their discipline»14, we are confident that a lot can be done to foster a stronger control over the meaning and use of concepts without losing their growing empirical, historical and cultural wealth. This can only be achieved through «a process of approximation: the better our concepts, the better the theory we can formulate with them, and in turn, the better the concepts available for the next, improved theory»15. Hyperpolitics is a modest first step in an effort which we hope will be much improved by others who share our commitment that (with Lord Byron) «every man [can be] his own Aristotle».

13 While, at the same time, contributing to the discipline’s growing fragmentation: «Indeed lexical confusion may be regarded as both primary cause of the ongoing fragmentation of the social sciences at the turn of the twenty-century, and a principal medium through which that fragmentation occurs. Because we cannot achieve a basic level of agreement on the terms by which we analyze the social words, agreements on conclusions is impossible» (Gerring and Barresi, 2009: 241).
Appendix

The Entries 15
Main Entries: a sample 16
Short Entries: a sample 22
Cross-Entries: a sample 24
The Dictionary’s Entries

The Entries

ADMINISTRATION
AGENDA
AUTHORITY
Autonomy
BUREAUCRACY
Centralization
Charity
Choice
CITIZEN
Civil Society
Class
Christianity
Coalition
Community
Conflict
Consensus
Main Entries: A Sample

BUREAUCRACY

Introduction

Bureaucracy could be social science's first experience with jargon - the invention of a word to meet a specific need. Even the inventor is known. Vincent de Gournay, a French physician, in a letter to a colleague dated July 1, 1764, proposed "bureaucracy" to identify a new form of government to add to Aristotle's three basic forms of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. Two roots form the concept: "bureau", which means office or desk, and "cracy", which means rule or government. Bureaucracy simply means a form of government by offices and desks.

The etymology of the term also captures the negative slant that has accompanied the bureaucratization of modern societies, in public administration as well as private enterprises, in unions as in political parties. The spreading of bureaucratic rationale and routines has been feared and criticized as the advent of an all-powerful and highly centralized machinery in the service of the State, or arbitrary political power. Marx would see bureaucracy as a tool for the authoritarian rule of the bourgeoisie; Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky opposed it as the dominant trait of the Leninist and Stalinist party. Even worse, bureaucracy was easily perceived as a self-referential - and self-serving - corps, "a system of government the control of which is so completely in the hands of officials that their power jeopardizes the liberties of ordinary citizens" (Laski, 1937).

On systemic grounds, Merton's analysis pointed out "the side-effects" of the extension of bureaucratic rationality "into all domains of social life" (Bourdieu and Bouricaud 1989). Yet, for all fear and criticism of bureaucracy, the main question still remains to be answered: why is bureaucracy necessary? It was Max Weber who first provided a value-free characterization of bureaucracy, defining it as a central feature of both political and economic development in modern societies. According to Weber, bureaucracy is "a specific modern solution for the
more general problem of administration" resulting in a peculiar form of organization and legitimation of power (BIBB). The main feature of bureaucracy is that its hierarchical structure, its procedures and its personnel recruitment and behavior all comply with the superior principle of a legal-rational order. In contrast with previous forms of legitimate power, like patrimonial or charismatic power, bureaucracy is highly predictable; its objectives are strictly defined by law and it operates according to the modern rules of division of labor and professional specialization. Predictability on the basis of a legal-rational order is what accounts for bureaucracy's diffusion in so many realms of activity. Yet, it also is responsible for several of its shortcomings and helps explain why "while the Weberian ideal-type of bureaucracy is relevant, its field of application is limited" (Baudon and Borrilaud 1889). In turning to empirical observation, Weber's bureaucracy stands as a guideline and a parameter, much more than as an ultimate achievement.

The Axes

One first step to better evaluate Weber's ideal-type of a collective, impersonal authority is to contrast it with the monocratic nature of older forms of bureaucratic power. Early bureaucracies were essentially an extension of the monocracies household. This is why so much of the nomenclature of bureaucracy is from regimes that were built around church and military resources. For example, from the church came clerk and minister. From the military came lineofficemanagement, as well as terms as "chains of command" and "chain of control", corps and commissar. Monarchies, in extending their scope in order to administer the greater domain, to penetrate the localities and collect taxes, were adding elements of national organization and drawing in new classes and interests that were necessary for the regime but threatening at the same time. In fact, as bureaucracies grew larger and more stable, it became more and more difficult for the monarch to obtain direct and immediate implementation of his own will. Indeed, one main consequence of bureaucratic expansion consisted in the transformation of the ruling authority from the personal toward the impersonal, or from the monarch to the collective, thus creating a permanent tension in the functioning of all bureaucracies.

A process which had originated from the sovereign's will to expand his span of control, inevitably produced a corps of people which would take pride and power in asserting its own autonomy from political interference. While this may have come as an irony in the way of primordial state-builders, it certainly struck back with a vengeance on the efforts of democratic leaders to pursue the collective good through efficient and legal means, while also taking full responsibility for their policy decisions.

As a consequence, the pendulum of democratic concern would find itself continuously swinging between two competing alternatives: to establish firmly a structural and functional divide between politics and administration, as a safeguard from arbitrary power; or to foster those systems and procedures which would enable elected officers effectively to steer the administrative process, in order to fulfill their personal mandates (Peteks, 1978, chapter 8). The same democratic dilemma can be seen from a different perspective, moving from the principles and forms through which authority and control are exercised towards the specific attributes of those in charge of bureaucratic implementation. What kind of bureaucrats is a bureaucracy made of, after all? The vertical axis of our matrix introduces two main options, and channels, through which bureaucracies can be created: patronage and elite.

Patronage is the original and easiest way to select a group of officers responsible to their own bosses - be it a prince or a party leader. Patronage can thus be easily located as the early stage in the development of modern bureaucracies, in 16th century France as well as in 18th century Nigeria (Mounier, 1945; Laioluombaza, 1967). It also remains the most immediate resource for any political leader striving to assert direct control on a number of key administrative posts. Yet, there are severe limitations to the use of patronage as the standard procedure for staffing the administrative process. One first limit concerns the scale of operations. If the criterion is personal acquaintance with the political leader, the number of appointees is necessarily restricted to a close circle of friends. After trying to rely on a small network born out of pre-existing aristocratic bonds, French monarchs were forced to contrive the running of a fastgrowing state machinery upon a larger group of people with bourgeois background. As well as from numerical constraints, the need for a new class arose out of a process of specialization of administrative functions. Indeed, these two factors were - and
remained strictly correlated. The rise of an administrative elite is a response to the growing complexity of bureaucratic tasks, which require educational qualifications and professional skills largely outside the reach of a small circle of political followers. The road was paved for the emergence of Weberian bureaucracy, as well as for its internal and external complications. Once a bureaucratic elite was established under the firm protection of collective authority regulated by public law, how could political responsibility penetrate the administrative model?

**Upper Right Quadrant**

The upper right quadrant captures the main characteristics - and shortcomings - of the Weberian ideal-type. The means through which the bureaucratic elite exercises its collective authority are strictly defined - and confined - by public and administrative law. Modern bureaucracy cannot be conceived outside a coherent set of rules and obligations set forth by a legislative body. This is indeed its main linkage to the collective entity - the State - that serves as the legitimating principle for all bureaucratic behavior. The development of modern bureaucracy is, to a very large extent, coincident with the development of Rechtstaat, a centralized state using the rule of law as its guiding principle - a relationship to which Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* (1821) paid tribute as the first and most prominent manifesto of the new administrative order. Hegel also was the first to grasp fully the implications of the "holy union" between the bureaucratic elite and state law. He "accorded civil servants a position more exalted than they have occupied in any account, before or since. The civil servant was entrusted with the maintenance of the state's universal interest and of legality in general" (Regan 1991: 62). Because of its superior function, the administrative elite was thus to enjoy a privileged status, turning into a closed estate, with social prerogatives and esoteric language. In Hegel's contemporary Prussia, these were indeed the necessary ingredients for bureaucracy to develop as a cohesive corps, able to stay independent from political and economic pressures (Koselleck, 1989). Yet, as democratization permeated the modern polity, the elite nature of bureaucratic authority came under severe criticism. Even in countries like France, which had long been proud to nurture a highly skilled administrative elite, the graduates of the elite National School of Administration (ENA) came to be portrayed as a self-referential network of mandarins, who had eventually become so powerful to occupy the higher echelons of political office (Courisirou, 1996; Suleiman, 1974). Was democracy turning into a technocracy? Where was the line to be drawn between bureaucrats and politicians (Putnam, Aberbach and Keman, 1981)? To whom, and how, was the bureaucratic estate to be responsible?

**Lower Left Quadrant**

The lower left quadrant shows how democratic theory - and practice - was to confront the same issue that absolute monarchs had originally faced in their relationship with the bureaucratic machine. What is to be condemned as the intrusion of arbitrary politics into the neutral sphere of bureaucracy, according to Weberian orthodoxy, can instead be regarded as the necessary balance between popular sovereignty and administrative autonomy. American Presidents were the first to raise the issue publicly, declaring that "to the victors belong the spoils". They understood the futility of winning an election while leaving the state apparatus in the hands of a hostile bureaucracy. They were also the first to promote patronage on a large scale, staffing a fast-growing federal machinery with party followes (Creson 1975).

While it remained the main criterion for the selection for public office, the process expanded far beyond the small group of a royal court. With the advent of mass democracy, party had grown from its original meaning as a faction at the prince's court into a large-scale organization for electoral mobilization. Party bureaucracy - or a "state of parties" (Skowronek...
BUREAUCRACY

1982) - was the first systematic response offered by the practice of democracy to the risks of bureaucratic autocracy. Yet, when Andrew Jackson promulgated his "doctrine of simplicity" Manifesto in his inaugural speech to Congress in December 1829, he was speaking to a largely agrarian society and the Federal bureaucracy the referred to had very few and elementary tasks to perform. With industrialization and economic development, the job for federal administrators became much more complex and demanding. And the US had to go through a painstaking process of bureaucratic reform in order to establish a professional civil service similar to that of most European countries (van Riper, 1958). On a longer-term perspective, however, the American democratic legacy has not proved to be only a hindrance. Elected officers in the U.S., presidents, mayors, governors - have kept a considerable number of political appointments "at their pleasure" (Lotti, 1964). These can now be recruited on a highly professionalized market, thus allowing American leaders to keep a steering capacity over the policy-making process that many of their European counterparts are far from possessing.

Upper Left Quadrant

On the whole, however, the span of political control over bureaucratic behavior remains heavily constrained by both the scale of operations and the time slot available. Much as the stall system is being re-introduced in modern governments through more qualified and professionalized channels, political patronage can reach into only a limited number of higher posts, hardly scratching the surface of the bureaucratic iceberg. Besides, individual leaders are elected for a relatively short term, while bureaucrats at all levels of the hierarchical pyramid stay in office much longer. Last but not least, the logic of administrative operating procedures often proves to be incompatible with the policy frames of elected officials and their staff. Even when administrators are willing to cooperate, the hectic timing of the political agenda is hard to adjust to bureaucratic routine (Hooton, 1997). All of this amounts to a verdict of defeat, or meager compromise at best, for most political efforts to steer the administrative machine.

If leaders really want to make a more diffuse and lasting impact on the policy process, the alternative they are left with is to fight the bureaucratic Leviathan on their own grounds, launching an overarching reform campaign. In order to make bureaucracy really politically responsible, bureaucracy must be turned into a political issue.

The politics of administrative reform has been a constant for transformational leadership (Barnes, 1978), with a special emphasis on the creation of a new bureaucratic elite to replace the entrenched interests of the old system and/or to push the state's intervention into new territories. From Frederick the Great to FDR, bureaucratic reform has been a recurrent strategy for bringing new social forces and ideas into the governmental process, while leaving an exceptional imprint on the overall institutional framework.

Nevertheless, "reinventing government" from above is a complex and challenging task that only very few charismatic leaders are likely to undertake and successfully pursue. In most of the remaining instances, the deadlock between policy innovation and bureaucratic conservatism may well be better managed through a different strategy (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). Instead of relying on presidential leadership at the macro level, administrative reform can be pushed forward through incremental changes of the micro-processes of management, by giving administrators more, rather than less, discretion over their own organization (Wilson, 1989). Given the difficulty of and resistance to making civil servants responsible towards policy-makers, it may well be the case to try to turn administrators into policy-makers, with more personal power as well as more public responsibility.

A "postbureaucratic perspective" (Thadis, 1992) strongly - albeit ironically - recalling the original Hegelian ethos of the founding stage of bureaucratic power (Richardson, 1997).

Lower Right Quadrant

Public responsibility - and visibility - for top administrators becomes all the more important in light of the trends in the lower right quadrant, describing changes and adjustments occurring within the administrative process in order to adapt it to social and economic pressures. This is a more and more widespread variant to the Weberian ideal-type, consisting of a contractual relationship between bureaucracy and various cor-
porate actors as a substitute for bureaucracy's direct intervention and implementation. In its original formulation, this quadrant refers to the expansion of the state's activity outside its core business of raising revenues and securing internal as well as external policing. As new functions—from building infrastructures to providing domestic services as electricity or public transportation—were added to the modern state, the dominant trend was to contract out these new tasks to private companies. The pattern of private partnerships may vary from outright monopolies through statute charters, as in the case of post-colonial America, to the adjudication of a grant through a public bid, by far the most widespread and flexible instrument to achieve a specific aim under clear contractual conditions. In many cases, however, corporate outsourcing may easily turn into a formalized version of patronage, with bureaucrats performing the role— and prerogatives— of political authority: a modern form of clientele covering a wide spectrum of private organizations under the firm protection of a legal agreement.

This may, in turn, lead to the external penetration of the administrative process, from occasional cooperation to outright substitution. If the case of the "captive agencies" still refers to a set of informal relationships supporting the official regulatory activity (Bertstein, 1959), neo-corporative regimes, as in Germany, Scandinavia and the Low Countries, fully legitimize arrangements in which pressure groups are "legally and officially in the process of making and administering public policy" (Peters 1978: 143). The corporate penetration of bureaucratic behavior also refers to the spread of illegitimate practices. Aside from outright corruption—a widespread phenomenon in underdeveloped countries as well as in advanced democracies (Meyn 1992)—white-collar crime can flourish through various forms of collusion: pre-packaging the contracting-out of public works, to leaving a "revolving door" open for circulation between top administrative posts and corporate boards of directors, to mere "coexistence between ministerial officials and their counterparts in private industry and banking" (Schneider, 1992). The latter attitude—and practice—leads into the muddy waters of the relationship between top bureaucrats and economic development in authoritarian regimes. In countries with no democratically elected officials to lead the process of change, administrators are often required to provide the necessary leadership and vision for turning state intervention into a useful subsidiary for market regulation and expansion (Hewison, 1989; Laothamatas, 1991). Thus turning the clock of state-building back to its original mission, and contradictions.

Conclusion

Bureaucracy has become a pejorative word in many if not all countries. It is deemed a threat to democracy and it is charged with inefficiency, formalism, redundancy, conservatism and a host of other vices. In fact, most of the charges lodged against these administrative organizations, even when they are correct and accurate criticism, are due to not enough bureaucracy. The perfectly organized, fully bureaucratized administrative agency would display a minimum of this alleged bad conduct and poor results. This is precisely why every private business organization bureaucratizes itself to the maximum. The threat of bureaucracy is not from its inherent weaknesses but from the strength of its unrestricted self-fulfillment. Before there were computers there was programming: the program of administrators and their units to comply with the mission of the agency. And the people and the units will continue to pursue the mission until a stronger and more rational force intervenes to alter the software. The challenge for political vision, whichever be the quadrant it may choose or be forced to enter, is to write the new code and keep the copyright (Lessig, 1999).
Legitimacy serves power by enlarging and stabilizing its domain. It empowers commands which are obeyed and actions performed without use of force.

The vertical axis is a continuum of power from the most informal to the most formalized. Whereas Weber defined legal-rational authority as the main form of legitimacy in complex, capitalistic, and bureaucratic societies, the axis reminds us that there is a vast territory of legitimate power outside the direct influence of the legal system. Legality and legitimacy, while highly correlated, do not necessarily coincide. The horizontal axis captures the source of legitimacy. Religion on the left, extreme indicates the sphere of the imputed-emipirical, that is belief in something which does not require evidence of its truth. Interest, on the opposite pole, designates the most rationalized beliefs, as an appeal to legitimacy based upon the results of a given governmental action.

The LIEQ is the one where historically - and perhaps logically - legitimacy originates and does for a long time linger. This is the realm of traditional authority, mainly exercised by a person with some form of exceptional reputation - a king, a religious leader. By contrast, the secularization of power depends upon its capacity to impose (self-)interest as its legitimating force, one to be regularized through positive law, thus moving into the UEQ, where law is essential but not self-validating. "Rule of law" depends upon processes by which laws are seen as by-products of successful resolution of conflicting interests.

The golden age of the legislature was the 19th century, and although it continues as a source of legitimation of control, it became only one of several sources of law, including administration, the return of the judiciary and public opinion based on mass opinion and referenda. This takes us into the UEQ, the populist and most volatile source of legitimacy. Populating the most recent institution of democracy, after people began to accept random sampling as a true measure of public opinion, with media as the main channel for its dissemination. In the UEQ, state refers to those historical cases, in both earlier Western and contemporary Middle Eastern countries, where religion served as the main ideological apparatus for establishing a legitimate power. Not that law constitutes an important aspect of these authoritarian regimes, as it is a no less important dimension of the legitimizing process. This quadrant incorporates governments which work through laws in the modern sense but rely upon more traditional, even ancient forms of legitimacy (traditional Jewish, Muslim, Marxist, etc.)
Legitimacy
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