Governmentality, the problem of 'steering' and Public Administration

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1. Introduction

In the sub discipline of political science called 'Public Administration', the problem of 'steering' is central, and underlay much of the literature as a prerequisite for making the study of the rationalities and behaviour of public administrations relevant[1]. 'Steering' is anticipated as the legitimate goal that gives sense to the discipline and to the sheer exercise of administering public affairs. As B. Guy Peters states: "*an effective government is a good thing – a view to which people living in societies without one would probably subscribe*"(Peters 2000: 40). Thus, articles and books in the discipline rarely question the basic assumption of the inherently normative goal of steering, as for example: What does it actually mean to 'steer'? What are the social relations entailed by steering, and the conditions and consequences of steering? Why is it legitimate to want to steer public administration (or any administration) all together? In the present article I try to reflect on and to give a starting point to how one can address these issues.

From a general European viewpoint the problems of *how to achieve* steering and what renders steering *difficult* in a network society are widely discussed, especially within the governance literature (see Kooiman 1993a, Pierre 2000, etc.). Yet the normative grounds and premises necessary for giving sense to the practice of steering and making steering *possible* and *desirable* are not addressed. The aim of this article is to try to discuss and develop how the concept of 'governmentality' can be used to address these problems, especially seen from the viewpoint of the sub discipline Public Administration. I claim that the genealogy of the concept of 'governmentality' analysed and proposed by Michel Foucault (cf. Foucault 2001: ref. no. 239) gives a historical explanation of why we today find steering desirable and why we still focus on making steering possible.

The article addresses the following general overlapping questions:

- What is the problem of 'steering' in the discipline of Public Administration?

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[1] I have chosen the (for native English speaking persons) incomprehensible term 'steering' because it does not have the connotations to state rule of 'government' or the connotations to private business of 'management'. It may sound awkward, but I hope that with this term, I have found one word that encompasses both of the above dimensions.

- What are the central elements of the concept and analytics of 'governmentality'?
- How can the problem of 'steering' public administrations be analysed following a governmentality framework?

The article consists of three parts: Each answering the above three questions: The first section of the article discusses the concept of 'steering' as it is generally defined within the Public Administration and governance literature. The second part discusses and presents Foucault's genealogy of the concept of 'governmentality' and the related concepts of subject and power. The third part discusses and tries to elucidate how an empirical analysis of the problem of steering is possible from a governmentality perspective, addressing the issue of how to analyse the 'conduct of public administrations'.

2. Steering public administrations

The problem of steering is central to most Public Administration literature – as well as in many other related publications in political and social sciences (cf. Kooiman 1993a, Pierre 2000, Pierre & Peters 2000, Kickert, Klijn & Koppenjan 1997). The problem of steering is in short terms identifiable as "*the capacity of government to make and implement policy*" (Pierre & Peters 2000: 1). Following this, the *raison d'être* of the discipline of Public Administration can be framed as the question of "*how to make the public sector work better*" (Bogason 2001a: 167) – that is how the discipline can enhance and improve 'the capacity of government to make and implement policy'.

The underlying stream of 'steering' in most Public Administration literature is identifiable through the common use of rational argumentation concerning 'means and goals' of public policies, of discussions of the way the state tries to 'enhance public service' and 'design' public policies (Newman et.al. 2002), of the right way to achieve reliable knowledge about the way public administrations work (with the underlying purpose of making these better) (Gill & Meier 2000), of discussions about the problems entailed by wanting to make public administrations better (ex. by creating problems of inefficiency and 'moral hazard') (Miller 2000) and of discussions about how to make public administrations and administrators more responsive to the democratic needs of society (that is enhancing the legitimacy of public administration) (cf. Box 1998, Lundquist 1998).

The task of simply giving an overview of the way the rationality of steering permeates the entire research field is in any respect far too large for the purpose, perspective and scope of this article[2]. I will restrain myself to a discussion of the concept of steering, as it is defined and discussed in the growing literature on governance within the Public Administration discipline (and related fields of political science, as for example comparative politics)[3]. This literature addresses the issue of steering through focusing on the 'limits of steering' which entails that aspects concerning steering that are implicit in much of the general Public Administration literature become explicit when brought into a governance analysis. As Pierre and Peters (2000) put it: "*the governance perspective forces analysts to think about what perfect control from the centre of government might look like if it were ever achieved.*" (Pierre & Peters 2000: 30)

2.1. The governance debate

The general debate on governance takes place in a very large and creative research field – to put it in an optimistic way. The apparent disadvantage of this 'fruitfulness' is, that many different uses and analyses of governance have emerged. It has thus become almost a tradition for researchers in the field to start an article or a book with a deploring of the many uses of the word 'governance', saying for example "*that there are perhaps as many different views about governance as there are scholars interested in the subject*"(Pierre & Peters 2000: 28).

Secondly, it has also almost become a tradition for researchers to start their articles and books with a general overview of the different understandings and uses of the concept, potentially having the character of self-fulfilling prophecies, leading to a growing number of 'governance-schools' and potentially making the confusion about the concept grow. Thus, Rhodes identified "*at least six separate uses of governance*" in 1997 (Rhodes 1997:46-47, see also Rhodes 2000), while Kooiman in 1999 "*found at least double that amount*"(Kooiman 1999: 68-69).

Yet the imprecise and widespread uses of the word and the different analyses this diversity gives rise to also have clear advantages. They witness a large and diversified (and in that sense detailed and rich) research field, and an intensive concern with the way society is to be

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[2] For a discussion of the normative consequences of the rationality of steering, see Bang (2003, forthcoming)
[3] I further restrain my discussion to articles and books published in English. For a review of the Danish governance debate, see Bogason 2001b, 2001c.

governed and the consequences of changing conditions, analytical perspectives, etc. The great variety in the field also invites others into the debate, instead of creating closed arenas of specialists agreeing on the precise use of complicated concepts. And the ongoing (meta-) reflections on the conditions of governance and governing itself highlight central issues "*that go to the heart of the relationship between government and society*"(Pierre & Peters 2000: 29) – that is to the heart of what political science in general and Public Administration in particular is about.

This last issue is reflected in a third tradition in the writing style of the governance debate, that follow the deploring and defining of the many uses and understandings of governance in the books and articles. Indeed, almost all researchers subsequently agree that some common features of the governance perspective exist – at least in the sense it is given in Public Administration and related political science writings – although the issues they respectively raise may vary to some degree. These common features are central to understanding what steering is and what the subject of steering can be – the state, networks, firms or communities – each of these distinct parts of a legitimate whole that we usually label 'society'.

Most researchers identify the core issue of the governance problem as a difference between a society structured by a stronger state and a society that is less structured by a less strong state, or at least by a state with a changed role. This difference is for example described as a difference between 'old' and 'new' governance (Peters 2000), between steering as a 'one way traffic' and as a 'two way traffic' (Kooiman 1993b), between hierarchy and heterarchy (Jessop 1998), between a central governing authority and the lack of one (Kickert, Klijn & Koppenjan 1997) and finally in it's most simple form as a difference between government and governance (Rhodes 1997, 2000) – to name but a few typologies.

The main conclusion regarding steering that the different researchers agree on is that steering is not what it used to be. Yet there are substantial differences between the researchers, when it comes to defining the way steering is altered. This is also due to the fact that the analyses address the issue in different ways – as Rhodes writes in an often-quoted phrase, governance "*can refer to a new process of governing; or a changed condition of ordered rule; or the new method by which society is governed*" (Rhodes 2000: 55). Generally, governance researchers

can be categorized in two different groups[4]: The first group claims that the conditions of ordered state rule have changed (Mayntz 1993, Jessop 1998, Peters 2000, Pierre & Peters 2000). The second group claims that we need a new understanding of the way governing takes place – as a new process of governing (Kickert Klijn & Koppenjan 1997, Kooiman 1993b, Dunsire 1993, Rhodes 2000).

In both groups, there are advocates of the conception of governance as a new method of governing – as for example 'collibration' (Dunsire 1993, Jessop 1998); or as encompassing new management strategies (Kickert, Klijn & Koppenjan 1997). Additionally, some of the researchers also define or discuss the problem of governance as the problem of finding a new method or theory to analyse the changed process or conditions of governing (Kooiman 1999, Rhodes 2000, see also Bang & Dyrberg 1999, Andersen 2003, forthcoming)[5].

2.2. Governance vs. government

In the view of researchers who mainly position the governance problem as a problem of 'changed conditions of ordered rule' a general difference is usually at the root of their analysis: the difference between a hierarchical state as we knew it (or think we knew it) and the way society is regulated today – where the hierarchical state is challenged.

For example, Peters draw a distinction between 'old' and 'new' governance in a supervisory article from 2000 (Peters 2000). The first perspective is "*the more traditional 'steering' conception of governance*" where "*the question becomes one of the capacity of the center of government to exert control*". The second perspective is the "*'new governance' perspective*" where "*the question becomes one of how that center of government interacts with society*" (Peters 2000: 36). As Peters writes subsequently, this distinction "*leads to a associated question of whether steering decisions made by government can be implemented*" (ibid.)

This is precisely the question that Renate Mayntz reflects upon in an article about 'governing failures and the problem of governability' (Mayntz 1993). She lists four different 'governing failures' that are connected to "*regulatory policies*" – that is to 'old governance' or the 'traditional steering conception' (op.cit. 13):

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[4] Of course, this distinction between researchers is open for critical enquiry and is not clear-cut. Both perspectives may indeed be present in a writing (cf. Pierre & Peters 2000: chap. 1 and 9)
[5] Obviously, a new topic of analysis (i.e. a new process of governing), may ask for a new method of analysis or theory. Or is it the new method that permits us to see the new process?

1. The implementation problem: Which refer to a situation where "*the executive authorities are unable to enforce the norms*".
2. The motivation problem: Which is connected to the first problem, and refers to a situation where "*the target groups are not willing to comply*".
3. The knowledge problem: Which refer to a situation where "*the original problem does not disappear or when in the process of implementation, all kinds of unwanted side-effects appear*".
4. The governability problem: Which is connected to the third problem, and refers to a situation characterised by the "*impossibility to intervene* […] *in certain system processes by means of the instruments available to central authorities*"

As she states, "*presently the emphasis seems to be on governability*" – that is on the limits to state control of and intervention in society. In the rest of the article, she argues against the centrality of the governability problem, especially in the sense it has been given in systems theory, since in her view, "*this theory seems to lead to a wrong diagnosis of the real governability problems*" (op.cit. 16, see also Kooiman 1999: 71-72). She rejects the systems theoretical claim that systems cannot communicate with each other, and that ordered state rule therefore is impossible (cf. Luhmann 1997). Indeed, she claims that for several reasons (Mayntz 1993: 16-18) – "*highly organized social subsystems can enhance governability*" (op.cit. 18).

Thus, following Mayntz, steering is not impossible, even though it encounters severe limitations. It is possible to enhance governability, for example through detailed analyses of structures and processes of policy sectors, a research task she founded at the Max Planck Institute. Especially the focus on policy processes is important, since "*it is not so much the kind of governing instruments that are crucial* [to enhancing governability] *but a special form of organizing the policy process to secure that in the decision making process not only <u>information</u> about the needs and fears of actors in the policy field is taken into account, but more importantly also <u>indications of side-effects</u>, interdependencies and <u>emerging problems</u>*" (op.cit. 20, my underlining).

The research objective out-lined above is absolutely sympathetic and important, yet the problem with it is, that it is a jump back to governing failure no. 3: the knowledge problem.

Therefore, the inherent assumption of 'organized societal actors' (i.e. a state) capable of steering is left untouched – and the system theoretical suggestion to 'decentralize' the issue of the subject of steering (from one to many centres or subjects) is turned down. Steering is still seen as the privilege of one central entity (however fragmented it may be), and the possible answer to the governability problem is to govern better to overcome governing failures.

Bob Jessop describes and analyses governance and it's inevitable failure in a similar vein (Jessop 1998). Jessop distinguishes between three "*different modes of coordination*": "*heterarchic governance in contrast to anarchic ex post coordination through market exchange and imperative ex ante co-ordination through hierarchical forms of organization*" (Jessop 1998: 29). He describes the different failures each mode of coordination leads to, and finally, he explores the issue of 'meta-governance', that is "*the organization of self-organization*" – in a way similar to Mayntz (whom he explicitly is inspired of, as well as he is inspired of systems theory and the related concept of 'self-organisation' – autopoiesis).

The idea of meta-governance "*should not be confused with a super-ordinate level of government to which all governance arrangements are subordinated*" (op.cit. 42). Instead, meta-governance concerns the "*design of institutions and generation of visions*", and generally touches upon "*shaping the context within which heterarchies can be forged*" (ibid.). As he then intrepidly asserts: "*States have a major role here*" – that is as the generator of this context, where institutions and visions can develop.

However, Jessop is aware of the facts that 'as governance fails, so will meta-governance fail'[6]. For the state to exert meta-governance it is therefore "*necessary to adopt a satisfying approach to these attempts*" (Jessop 1998: 43). This 'satisfying approach' first implies a "*self-reflexive orientation to what will prove satisfactory in the case of failure*" (ibid.). Secondly, it implies the development of a strategy of 'collibration' (cf. Dunsire 1993), where several responses to steering failures are developed and used, thus providing a 'requisite variety' of strategies and tactics of steering (Jessop 1998: 43). Finally, a 'satisfying approach' requires 'the soft irony of the joker' (see footnote 6) which implies that even though the risk of failure is recognised, governing must go on "*as if success where possible*" (op.cit. 44). Basically, Jessop is self-reflective about the shortcomings of his own arguments, and this is why he

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[6] I here cite Bob Jessop from the public lecture he gave at the inaugural conference of the 'MODINET' research project at the Royal Library in Copenhagen, September 6, 2002.

advocates for an equally self-reflexive irony regarding the almost impossible act that the state is entailed to play in a 'centre-less' society.

2.3. Steering policy networks

Governance as ever marked by 'governance failures' and therefore requiring irony as a governance tool is nevertheless not the only way out of the debate on the hard times of 'old' as well as 'new' governance. Several researchers adhering to the governance perspective (as well as researchers from related fields) reject a 'state-centric' approach and solution to governance problems, and state that the issue of governance needs new concepts and theories. In the anthology "Managing Complex Networks – Strategies for the Public Sector", the so-called 'Rotterdam governance-club' (cf. Rhodes 2000: 60) offers an insightful contribution to the discussion of how steering is possible and how it can be conceptualised within this 'new process' perspective.

In their introductory chapter, Walter Kickert, Erik-Hans Klijn & Joop Koppenjan (hereafter called KKK) state: "*we are witnessing a worldwide departure of the dark days of complete lack of trust and confidence in the public sector*" (Kickert, Klijn & Koppenjan 1997: 1). Yet the "*call for government involvement*" is not a call for the state to re-enter it's "*post-war position as the central governing authority in society*", since "*the steering potentials of government are limited*"(ibid.).

What is needed instead, KKK state, is a need to reflect "*upon the relation between government and society*" (ibid.), by focusing on "*the concept of policy networks*". Instead of focusing on the efficiency and legitimacy problems that policy networks (also) give rise to, KKK claim that the concept of networks offers a way to reframe the issue of government, where policy networks are seen as "*an opportunity for public policy making and governance*".

As KKK make it clear "*a network perspective differs in a number of ways from more conventional views on governance and public management*". One of the reasons for this is to find in KKK's definition of governance. Indeed, they choose a relatively broad definition, saying, "*governance can roughly be described as directed influence of societal processes. It covers all kinds of guidance mechanisms which are connected with public policy processes*" (Kickert, Klijn & Koppenjan 1997: 2).

Following KKK, governance not only concerns the actions of public governmental institutions, since … "*government does not perform all the governing itself*" (my underlining). "*All kinds of actors are involved in governance*" and "*self-steering mechanisms exist which ensure that policy processes proceed smoothly*" (ibid.). The 'state' or more precisely public governmental institutions are parts of "*the social system and* [are] *only* [some] *of the many social actors influential in public policy processes*" (op.cit. 5).

KKK define policy networks as "*more or less stable patterns of social relations between interdependent actors which take shape around policy problems and/or policy programmes*" (op.cit. 30). The goal and function of governmental steering in a network becomes "*coordinating strategies of actors with different goals and preferences*" (op.cit. 10), which entails that "*network management is an activity that takes place at the meta-level*" (op.cit. 44). Their book concerns how this meta-level steering is possible, through the analysis of "*the potentials of a network perspective on governance and public management for managing policy networks*" (op.cit. 2).

KKK's argument concerning 'meta-steering' is related to Jessop's argument concerning meta-governance. However, they do not address the issue from the viewpoint of a (flawed) state, trying against all odds to 'have a role' or to insert some authority. To KKK, it is clear from the beginning that the state cannot have this authoritative role (cf. op.cit. 1). As they say in their concluding chapter, "*in principle, every actor who is active in the policy process can fulfil the role of manager*" (op.cit. 168). A network perspective thus raises empirical questions that entail "*that we analyse management strategies and then look at which actor is responsible*" (ibid.).

In the works of Jan Kooiman, a similar rejection of a one-dimensional view on steering is identifiable (1993b, 1999, 2000, 2003, forthcoming). For KKK, the lesson of governance as a new process of governing is primarily practical, and entails managerial demands for new practices of management. In the case of Kooiman, the lesson is primarily theoretical, and entails an intellectual demand for new theory. Thus Kooiman builds up a new theoretical approach to analysing governance as a 'new process', which he calls 'social-political governance' (Kooiman 1999: 74).

The core issue of his argument is, that "*present-day societies*", the "*opportunities and problems*" they face, and their "*institutional conditions*" all are dynamic, diverse and complex (op.cit. 74-75). This entails the demand for equally dynamic, diverse and complex answers, either as attempts at '*social-political governing*' or as a theoretical approach as such. Thus, Kooiman develops a complex model of analysis, involving the analysis of dynamic societal interactions and diverse governing orders (ibid.; see also Kooiman 2003, forthcoming).

Rod Rhodes (2000) also advocates for a network approach, and connects it to a new method of analysis, the study of narratives. Yet his analyses of the 'differentiated polity', of governance and of networks (Rhodes 1997) are difficult to place in any governance category, since he interchangeably uses at least three different definitions of the governance problem. Roughly speaking, his analysis jumps between understanding governance as facts, institutional variance or a new method of governing.

When analysing and speaking of the 'differentiated polity' (ibid.), he asserts that hierarchical steering never has been a realistic characteristic of British government. Inter-governmental relations have always been broad in scope, subject areas and participants – the 'facts' of British government seems to be, that it was 'hollow' from the beginning (op.cit. 7). On the other hand, he states several times in his book that networks "*are a third governing structure*" (op.cit. 57) beside the market and hierarchical governing, and that it should be possible for government to choose the most appropriate institutional structure in different policy-areas and settings.

However, the third (and I assess most dominant) strand in his analyses is on the consequences of a network perspective, both for understanding policy-outcomes, governance and the possibility of theorizing about them. He explicitly places himself within his own 'new process' group of governance researchers (op.cit. 15), and his definition of governance as referring to "*self-organizing, interorganizational networks*" (op.cit. 53) is followed by a list of characteristics that tends to 'deconstruct' the idea of a state or a governmental locus independent from the processes and structures of interactions in networks.

For example, Rhodes stresses "*interdependence between organizations*" (ibid.) – which entails that "*the boundaries between public, private and voluntary sectors became shifting and opaque*". On the other hand, he stresses a few lines below that "*although the state does*

not occupy a sovereign position, it can indirectly and imperfectly steer networks" (ibid.). How can the state at the same time be a part of a 'shifting and opaque' network, and still be identified as an entity capable of steering, however indirectly and imperfectly? This seems to be a contradiction. Rhodes is not clear as to whether the state should be reinterpreted (as a part of networks), restated (as relatively powerful) or rejected (as hollow) as a category in understanding steering.

In his article in the anthology of Jon Pierre (2000), 'Debating Governance – Authority, Steering and Democracy', Rhodes (2000) apparently comes closer to asserting that the state and the capacity of government to steer society should be reinterpreted. Through connecting his own view of and analysis of governance and networks to a narrative approach (Rhodes 2000: 64-86), he favours the unique stories of diverse participants in governance at several levels over the idea (or narrative!) of the state and government as a unitary actor standing beside or above networks. In addition, the narrative approach not only tends to deconstruct the idea of a unitary state, it also deconstructs the idea of steering and the common self-understanding of the discipline of Public Administration as well. Thus, government – administration – society interaction may not necessarily be framed as concerning steering[7]. On this I will elaborate in the final section of this article.

The governance debate is large and diverse, and only parts of the many central arguments concerning steering have been touched upon in the discussion above. However, I have roughly sketched out two general perspectives in the governance debate that differ in their view on steering and on who the subject of steering might be:

1. In the first perspective, the subject of steering is the state or government. It is seen as the central actor that has the capacity (and legitimacy) to enforce the operation 'steering'. The discussions concern how the state can enhance or strengthen it's capacity to steer, despite governance failures and problems. The state is seen generally as a unitary actor that stands above or beside society. This entails a one-dimensional rationality of steering – as a one-way traffic – where power is a capacity and a privilege of the state or government.

2. In the second perspective, the state is not the only 'steering subject', and therefore several societal actors are capable of enforcing the operation of 'steering'. The

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[7] As Rhodes' reference to 'the everyday maker' (cf. Bang & Sørensen 1998) tends to show.

discussions concern what steering is or could be, given that the state is a relatively unclear actor on the same level as other societal actors (who also are rather unclear – at least theoretically)[8]. This entails a multi-dimensional rationality of steering – as a two-way traffic – which empowers all participating subjects (not only the state, but also networks, communities, street-level bureaucrats, etc.) and gives all actions direction (and not only the ones identifiable to the state).

Still the conceptual, normative and historical grounds from which these definitions of steering originate are left unexplored. The question remains why we find steering desirable, in whatever form it takes – 'old', 'new public' or network management. Further, the question is also how the issue of steering has emerged historically, and how steering has become possible according to that historic view. My answer in this article will be, that the concept and rationality of steering can be explained as the establishment of contingent historic norms and expectations about power, rule and subjects, which gradually have emerged for approximately the last 2500 years of the development of so-called western civilization. In the following section, I will elaborate on this and discuss how Michel Foucault in several lectures and articles analysed this historical development as a "*governmentalization of the state*" (Foucault 2001, ref. 239: 656, see also ref. no. 291, 306, Dean 1999).

3. Governmentality

The issue of 'governmentality' was raised by Michel Foucault in the late 1970'ies and has developed in several directions since (cf. Dean 1999, Dyrberg 2001). It has also to a certain extent been taken up within the discipline of Public Administration and in the governance literature (cf. O' Malley, Weir & Shearing 1997, Kooiman 1999, Jessop 2001). In the following I will try to give a rather intensive discussion and analysis of the concept of governmentality as it is developed in Foucault's own writings (a feeling of redundancy will certainly pertain to familiars of Foucault).

The purpose of my discussion will be to answer the following questions:
  A. How Foucault conceives the state as an emerging form of power, and

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[8] This unclear picture of what steering is or could be is one of the reasons why Pierre & Peters (2000) in their discussion of 'governance, politics and the state' deliberately choose a state-centric approach (cf. Pierre & Peters 2000: 26-27).

B. What the prerequisites of this form of power are[9].

I will answer the questions by analysing the subject of power, the object of power, the rationality of power operations and the goal/telos of power for each form and modality of power emerging prior to the modern state in the eighteenth century.

Answering these questions will lead to the answering of the questions of

1. Why is steering desirable?
2. What makes steering possible?

Finally, the analysis of governmentality as a form of power prepares the ground for answering the question of how a study of the problem of steering can be analysed following a governmentality perspective – and what the contributions of the governmentality perspective are to the governance debate and analyses.

3.1. A genealogy of government

Generally, I view Foucault's analysis of governmentality as a roughly sketched genealogy of the concept of government. His analysis concerns how a certain form of power has emerged that he calls 'the State of government' (Foucault 2001: ref. no. 239: 656)[10]. Governmentality, or more simply governmental power, is thus not the only possible form of power, but Foucault's argument is that this form of power has become dominant more or less since the Enlightenment, at least within the state itself and political science. However, as in the second part of the governance literature discussed above, the state is not to be seen as a unitary actor that arrived on Earth 200 years ago and has dominated us in more and more subtle ways ever since.

The issue at stake here is, that the development of a 'state of government' should be understood as a contingent process dependent on several other factors, for example previous power forms and modalities available for this state. A genealogy thus in no way demonstrates a linear 'Hegelian' teleology of power forms (cf. Dupont & Pearce 2001), but is instead an analysis of a fragmentary and in many ways undetermined process where strategies become connected. Strategies are to be understood in Foucault's own terms as consisting of "*several*

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[9] I analyse Foucault's argument as a contribution to a theoretical as well as empirical debate about the emergence of the modern state, and do not question the empirical validity of it. For a deeper analysis of the validity, consistency and productivity of Foucault's argument, see Dean 1999.

[10] I have chosen to use exclusively the French edition of Foucault's articles in 'Dits et écrits', vol. II (Foucault 2001) and to translate relevant parts myself, since there are slight differences between the French and English editions. I therefore do not go into discussions about which versions are the most correct.

ideas formulated or proposed from different points of view and objectives". A strategy " *finds its motive in searching for different objectives simultaneously, with several obstacles to overcome and several ways of doing it*". In short, a strategy "*cumulates advantages and multiplies the benefits*" (Foucault 2001: ref. no. 277: 836). Further, Foucault's own analysis is so filled with 'loose ends', circular arguments, self-contradictions and repetitions that it is a gross oversimplification to accuse it of representing a deliberate teleology.

3.2. Political power

As seen from Foucault's perspective, the rationality of government and of the state has multiple historic lines reaching far back in history. One of them has its anchoring point in the Antiquity with the establishment of 'the political' as a matter of concern and practice in Greece. Analysing (among others) Plato's writings on politics, Foucault finds that the subject of power is the king or the politician heading the city. His 'role' or the operation he was to enforce was to mediate between the various interests present in the city, to combine 'virtues' and 'temperaments'. As Foucault writes, quoting Plato: "*the royal art of governing consisted in gathering the living 'into a community that rests on accordance and friendship' and in that sense to weave 'the most magnificent of all tissues'.*" (Foucault 2001: ref. no. 291: 962). The object of power available to the king to weave this tissue was the "*'shuttle' of popular opinion*" (ibid.). Finally, the goal of politics in this rationality of power in Ancient Greece concerned the "*forming and securing of the unity of the city*" (op.cit. 963). "*The problem of politics is that of the relation between the one and the many in the framework of the city and its citizens*" (ibid.).

The Greek conception of politics is both challenged and continued through the Roman Empire and medieval times. Apparently, the central concern of politics in the Medieval Age becomes the issue of sovereignty. In a detailed discussion and analysis of the way 'sovereignty' – as a concept and practice – is challenged by an emergent literature on 'arts of government' in the sixteenth century, Foucault focuses on some of the features of a sovereign form of power that shares some aspects with the Greek conception of politics.

3.3. Sovereignty

Foucault's analysis of sovereignty is seen through the lenses of the 'arts of government' literature, a series of treaties written in the sixteenth century. These are in great part a reflection upon and critique of Machiavelli's 'The Prince'. Not in an absolute theoretical sense, but in a sense relative to what the authors of 'arts of government' literature wished to

assert and discuss. As Foucault puts it about the authors of the 'anti-machiavellian literature', "*one gives oneself or reconstructs oneself an adversary Machiavelli*" (Foucault 2001: ref. no. 239: 638). The issue at stake is, that the reception and use of Machiavelli's book by the 'anti-machiavellian literature' need not necessarily concern what Machiavelli originally meant, or what we can deduce from his book today. Instead the 'anti-machiavellian literature' should be interpreted in its positivity, as a "*positive genre that has its objects, its concepts, its strategy*" (ibid.).

In the 'constructed Machiavellian' conception of government as sovereignty, the subject of power is (not surprisingly) the prince. The relation between the prince and his principality is characterised as being exterior to him, artificial and transcendental. This entails that the relation of the prince to his principality is fragile and constantly threatened. "*There is no a priori immediate reason for the subjects to accept the authority of the prince*" (op.cit. 639). Again, this entails that the operations of the prince are to be the dispositions that will keep and reinforce the (abstract) relation between himself and his principality. The fragility of the relation requires a constant focus on the threats opposing the prince. And the relation requires "*an art of manipulating power relations*" (ibid.), that is the capacity for playing strategic games, playing out adversaries against each other etc.

Foucault identifies the object of sovereign government as being the territory that the prince governs. The populations living on the territory are (only) seen as "*variables related to the territory, which is the foundation itself of the principality and sovereignty*" (op.cit. 643). And related to the argument above, Foucault identifies the goal of sovereign power as sovereignty itself, obtained through the ability of the prince to stay in power, and through the subjects' compliance to the law (op.cit. 645-646).

The connection between the ancient Greek conception of power and government, and the conception of sovereignty is, that both operate with a unilateral connection between a ruler and the ruled, and a unitary goal of government – to forge a unity of the many interests present in the city, or to reinforce the position of the prince. The difference between the conceptions is that Greek political rule consisted in uniting and mediating between interests, while sovereign rule consisted in reinforcing a power relation between the prince and his principality. The multiple political interests were at best the inputs to a strategic power game, while mediation of interests and public opinion were irrelevant.

3.4. Pastoral power

While political government in ancient Greece and a sovereign form of power in medieval times developed, a parallel historical development concerning power and rule outside the state (or city) occurred. This form of power concerned the government of souls through the relation of God to his 'disciples', translated in worldly terms into the pastoral power of the pastor in relation to his 'flock'. It is Foucault's argument that this form of power has had a deep impact on the rationality of our governmental state and has become related to the development of governmentality from the sixteenth century and onwards (Foucault 2001: ref. no. 291).

The pastoral form of power is seen as having its roots in the ancient Hebrew society. The essential elements in the Hebrew conception of pastoral power were, that the subject of power, the pastor, was responsible for the well being of his flock and for the uniting of them. The object of power was the flock, rather than the territory, as in the sovereign power form. The operation the pastor was to enforce was to '*assemble, guide and conduct*' Foucault 2001: ref. no. 291: 957) his flock, and the flock only existed to the extent that he did that. The operation of governing through pastoral power thus required the pastor since without him the flock would split. Finally, the goal of pastoral power was to continually conduct the flock to 'good pastures' and ultimately to provide for their divine salvation (op.cit. 956-958).

This model was further developed in medieval times through Christian interpretations. The contributions of Christianity were, that the personal relation between the pastor and his flock was further elaborated on. The pastor was seen as responsible for every act the flock and each sheep were to do in detail. This entailed that the pastor "*has to know what goes on in the soul of each*" (op.cit. 965). And further led to the Christian appropriation of ancient technologies of the self, self-examination and the direction of conscience (advice). Following this, Christian pastoral power instituted a situation of 'permanent guidance' of the flock.

Additionally, the goal of pastoral power, salvation, was also further developed. It led to the establishing of a "*personal linkage of obedience*" between each sheep and the pastor (op.cit. 964). Obedience was seen as a goal in itself, and therefore, obedience became a virtue. This meant that each individual was to follow each and every order of the pastor to reach salvation. From this followed that the individual had to give up himself and his interests in this world to have the chance to be saved in the After World (op.cit. 964, 966). Christian Pastoral power thus also introduced a situation of 'permanent obedience' to a higher order.

3.5. Economic power

According to Foucault, pastoral power and the government of souls became connected to the politics of a state in the emergent literature on 'arts of government' in the sixteenth century. This literature is a part of a general contestation of the act of governing, which pertains not only to states, but also to the government of one self, of souls and conducts, and of children. "*How to govern one self, how to be governed, how to govern others, who should one accept to be governed by, how to become the best possible governor*" (Foucault 2001: ref. no. 239: 636) are the questions and problems that are raised in the sixteenth century. These questions are raised as two processes are developing concomitantly, one of centralisation, leading to the establishment of the "*great territorial, administrative, colonial States*" (ibid.) and one of decentralisation, concerning the way "*one should be spiritually guided on this earth towards one's destiny*" (ibid.), that is how one should be governed (by e.g. pastoral power) and govern one self – and ultimately pertaining to the ethical question of who and what a human being is or should be.

Through contestation of a 'constructed Machiavelli' (cf. p.15), the themes raised by the 'arts of government' literature are in a sense a deconstruction of a sovereign conception of power. First, the subject of power is no longer only a 'prince' (or any another regent). Instead, the authors recall regularly – rather innocently – that governing consists of "*multiple practices, since many people govern*" (op.cit. 640), for example the family father, the superior of a convent, the teacher, etc. The relation of the prince to his principality is therefore only one modality of power, and the subject of power is no longer one person or entity, but become multiple persons.

Second, all these practices and relations of government take place within the state. This conception challenges (e.g. deconstructs) the singularity of the prince to his principality. A variety of government levels appear or are constructed, among which the task of defining what pertains to the totality of the practices of government, that is to the entire state, is a central one. This gives rise to a model of government with three types of government: The government of one self, the government of the family and the government of the state (ibid.), The operation that the multiple subjects are to enforce is thus also divided in at least three types or levels.

Thirdly, the object of government in the 'arts of government' literature is no longer seen as the territory, but instead becomes a "*sort of complex constituted by men and things*" (op.cit. 642). This 'sort of complex' is what Foucault a few pages before named 'the economy' (op.cit. 641-642). The economy in the sixteenth century designated "*the right way to manage individuals, goods, wealth, as is possible inside a family*" (op.cit. 641-642). A central part of the debate in the 'arts of government' literature thus concerned, "*how to introduce this attention, this meticulous concern, this type of relation between a family father and his family inside the management of a state*" (op.cit. 642).

Foucault further states, that '*the introduction of the economy into politics is what, I think, is to become the essential stakes of government*" (ibid.). "*In the sixteenth century, the term economy designated a form of government; in the eighteenth century, it will designate a level of reality, a field of intervention*" (ibid.). Our conception of the economy as a separate sphere of society is thus not 'original' – instead it could be said that 'the economy' is born out of, or was a product of deliberate reasoning about the state and government.

Finally, the goal of government is a "*plurality of specific goals*" (op.cit. 646). These specific goals are for example to promote wealth and prosperity, to help the people by giving them basic means of subsistence, to promote the ability of the population to grow, etc. Related to the operational level of this rationality of government, this again entails, that a large number of specific 'tactics' and means are being invented. In this sense, the abstract laws of sovereignty become means for other ends (ibid.). This invention of multiple tactics is again tied to the development of the discipline of Public Administration, since the latter explicitly concerns how all these instruments and tactics are to 'work better'.

Indeed, this has lead one scholar to propose a renaming of the historical development of governmentality as "*managementality*" – seeing the "*emergence of management as a political form of rationality*" (Altunok 2000: 74) and the transformation of ruling into "*a technical knowledge*" (ibid.) as the central part of the story, which the term 'governmentality' potentially eludes, since it unconsciously leads us to think of it as matters only pertaining to the government of a state. Indeed, I agree that the history of governmentality is also the

history of management in any sense of the term[11]. This is also what I want to emphasize in this article. However, Foucault's own focus was primarily on the development of a governmental rationality pertaining to the 'collective subject' we call a state, thus raising a concern (in e.g. political science and Public Administration) for governmental power as being primarily state power, as I have emphasized in the first part of this article.

3.6. State power

The conceptions launched in the 'arts of government' literature are developed further approximately a century later in the so-called 'reason of state' doctrine (Foucault 2001: ref. no. 239: 648 & ref. no. 291: 969). The contribution of this is primarily to introduce the 'state' as the ultimate means of its own ends (op.cit. 970), as the unitary subject of government. This is both a break with the pastoral form of power, (as exemplified by Foucault with a reference to the understanding of rule of St. Thomas of Aquinas) where divine salvation was the goal of rule. But it is also a continuation of the rationality of 'permanent obedience' – The divine end of salvation being substituted to the mundane end of state politics.

The 'Reason of state' doctrine builds upon the 'arts of government' debate, since it in a sense 'recenters' the multiple concerns of the contestation of government and rule of the sixteenth century to become common issues of a state. Thus, the goal of the 'reason of state' doctrine is the state itself, and the various goals of 'the arts of government' literature become means to enforce and expand the power of the state. The stakes of the 'reason of state' doctrine is thus in a way to combine or reintroduce the themes of the Antique Platonic conception of politics into seventeenth century debates of government; that is the unique goal of securing the unity of the city – but with a much larger available 'arsenal' of means (possible operations) to do so.

These operations are developed further within what Foucault calls the "*doctrine of the police*" (Foucault 2001: ref. no. 291: 969) or what in Germany was called "*Polizeiwissenschaft*" – 'the science of police' – which was the term used to designate the discipline of Public Administration at the time. The operations of the police are multiple. Foucault cites different parts of the literature, and the most detailed description states that there are eleven concerns of the police inside the state:

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[11] See again Altunok on this point. She makes an excellent case of the etymological meaning and history of the words 'rule' and 'management' where the latter almost precisely concern 'the art of government' of the sixteenth

"1) Religion, 2) morality, 3) health, 4) provision, 5) roads, bridges and pavements, and public buildings, 6) public security, 7) liberal arts (in short, arts and sciences), 8) business, 9) factories, 10) servants and prisoners, 11) the poor" (op.cit. 975-976).

The 'police' thus determine the totality of the "*new domain, in which the centralised political and administrative power can intervene*" (op.cit. 976).

The object of the state and of the 'police', in turn is the population and the life of each individual, in all of its aspects. The state thus takes over the devotion to saving the life of each and every individual within the territory from the pastoral form of power, again with the sharp distinction that the devotion in pastoral power has divine salvation as its goal, while state politics in the seventeenth century has the strengthening of the state itself as its goal.

3.7. The population as the locus of power

An essential part of the development of governmentality is this; that the population becomes the locus of governmental power, through several processes, but accordingly primarily through the 'pastoralisation' of political power. This entails that the concepts of the individual, of subjectivity and the ethical question of what constitutes a human being have become central issues for society and for us in modern societies. A central part of Foucault's argument that runs through most of his research (cf. Foucault 2001: ref. no. 306: 1042) is that the subject as we know it today is a consequence of a specific historic development concomitant to and to some extent coextensive with the development of a modern governmental state.

Through the concern for the population, former and newer forms of power become modalities to a governmental form of state power. Scientific, pastoral, disciplinary, economic and sovereign forms of power become connected and change status from being and having their own means and ends to becoming modalities. This does not mean that they cease to exist and develop in other directions, that they loose importance or necessarily become 'deformed'. On the contrary, it could be argued (and Foucault to a certain extent does) that through their 'governmentalization' these other forms of power gain in strength and longevity (cf. Foucault 2001: ref. no. 239: 656).

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century that Foucault analyses in Foucault 2001: ref. no. 239.

The contribution of the sciences to the 'governmentalization' and strengthening of the state evolves through the 'measuring' of the life and health of the population as rates of mortality, fertility, poverty, illnesses etc. – for example through statistics, but also later on through the humanities (op.cit. 972). The pastoral form of power contributes with the concern for each and every individual. Additionally, it turns morality into a governmental issue, and especially contributes with the moral codex of 'permanent guidance' and 'permanent obedience' (as is in focus in Weber's classical work on protestant ethics in capitalist society). The disciplinary form of power provides the structural framework that is the condition of possibility for managing the population "*in depth, delicately and in detail*" (Foucault 2001: ref. no. 239: 654). It provides the '*quadrillage*' of society that renders an attempt to control and guide each individual sensible (see Foucault 1975: 197).

The economic form of power contributes with the invention of a 'political economy' (op.cit. 642, 653), that is the creation of "*a nation-wide administration of house-keeping*" (Arendt 1999: 28). And it contributes with the 'family' as an element of intervention, inside the population, and as an instrument to govern populations, thus becoming a "*fundamental relay of the government of it*" (Foucault 2001: ref. no. 239: 651 & 652). The contribution of a sovereign form of power to the strengthening of the state, are on the one hand to provide the instruments or operations necessary to fulfil the 'negative task' of "*die Politik*" that "*consists in, for the state, to fight ones enemies within and outside*" (Foucault 2001: ref. no. 291: 978). On the other hand, the issue of the (legitimate) relation of the ruler to the ruled (emphasised both in ancient Greek politics and by sovereignty) stays a crucial issue of the state. This is an issue Foucault only very lightly touches upon, for example when he cites Rousseau and his discussions of a 'social contract' (Foucault 2001: ref. no. 239: 654). But as we know, the issue of legitimacy and of who should rule – when and how (!) – is still a hot issue of contestation today in what we call our liberal democratic state, and in the field of 'democracy theory'.

The articulation of the subject that is coextensive with the development of a modern governmental state, is then first of all a subject that is submitted to morality, that is to general normative rules about how to behave correctly to be a 'good man' (or occasionally and later a 'good woman'). These rules are in part derived from pastoral power, with the difference that norms and rules of good behaviour extend well beyond matters pertaining to personal guidance towards God. That "*labor* [becomes] *the most esteemed of all human activities*" (Arendt 1999: 101) and that it becomes a virtue to exercise one's rights as a citizen, are thus

examples of how a pastoral conception of the individual is conjugated with (ancient) political and economic forms of power.

The concern with each and every part of individual behaviour is what makes the issue of the 'conduct of our conduct' so crucial to a governmental form of power. And this 'conduct of conduct' again takes on many concrete configurations, regarding within which modalities it is formed. A governmentality perspective thus does not suggest that there is only one way of 'conducting conducts' but rather the phrase puts emphasis on how important individual behaviour and the category of the subject become in the 'governmental state'. I will come back to this in the concluding parts of the article.

The above analysis simplifies the issues at stake almost to a critical level. Indeed, a central part of the story is about how the multiple power forms within the state, as it was being discussed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were in opposition to each other, and also how they became conjugated with each other. Further, the history of governmentality did of course not stop here[12]. An immense and extensive development of and debate over state reason, governmental power, managerialism (managementality), liberalism, etc. has occurred and still occurs today.

Still, as I see it, these further historic developments are elaborations of themes that already are present in the history analysed above. For example, the division of society into civil society, the economy and the state is a reformulation of an older division present in the treaties of the seventeenth century concerning advices to the 'dauphin' about the government of himself, the family and the state (cf. p.17, Foucault 2001: ref. no. 239: 640-641, see also ref. no. 274: 820). Thus the emergence of governmentality as a specific rationality of power and rule has been the condition of possibility for the raise of our modern societies, for the raise of political science as a discipline and ultimately for the issue of steering to become relevant to us. In the following, I will try to sum up what the most important inherent features of the governmentality rationality are, especially focusing on the 'steering dimension'.

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[12] Mitchell Dean's work is an example of the further discussion and elaboration of (historic and theoretical) themes that I haven't been able to include in my review of the history here (see Dean 1999, 2001, 2002a, 2002b).

4. Steering and governmentality

The above discussion of governmentality has substantial, theoretical and normative implications and consequences, which obviously overlap. The substantial and theoretical part both concerns the leading questions of the article about the desirability and possibility of steering, and the questions of what a Foucauldian power perspective implies for the understanding of the problem of 'steering' and government. The governmentality perspective thus offers qualifications of and rephrases some of the essential issues of the governance debate. Finally, the normative implications of the analysis concerns the critical stance of the governance and governmentality studies – and the apparent problems that arise, if we want to take a critical stance to e.g. B. Guy Peters' argument – 'that an effective government is a good thing' (cf. page 1).

Steering is today perceived as **desirable**, because a centralised governmental state has developed, which sees the welfare and security of the population as a political issue and as its inherent purpose. The welfare of the population is 'policed' through the analysis (sciences), nurturing (bio-politics) and ordering (schools, armies, factories, prisons, cities, etc.) of all individuals within a (sovereign) nation. On the other hand, steering is **possible**, because we have become a population of 'free subjects', capable of being both subjects and objects of this rationality of state. In gross, we have become subjects to the state through a long process of 'subjectivation', as mentioned briefly above (cf. Foucault 1984). Morality has become a political issue, and the ethics of our individual conduct have become an issue of concern for us, as well as for the state.

4.1. A definition of steering

The historical development of how governing and steering have become possible and desirable has several consequences for the way it is possible to understand and analyse governing or steering today – if we follow Foucault's perspective. First of all, 'governing' (that is 'steering') has become a **relational** operation that concerns the creation of "*a field of possibilities*" (Foucault 2001: ref. no. 306: 1056, emphasis mine). Indeed, governmentality is a 'strategy' in the Foucauldian sense. As I have already stated (cf. page 14) a strategy "*cumulates advantages and multiplies the benefits*" (Foucault 2001: ref. no. 277: 836). To govern following Foucault is thus not the operation of one centre in society or following one

type of modality or rationality[13]. To delimit what steering or governing is according to Foucault is not (essentially) a theoretical problem. Different forms of power, e.g. 'government' may appear in **various empirical configurations**, with "*multiple individual disparities, objectives, given instrumentations on ourselves and others, more or less sectored or general institutionalisations and more or less rational organisations*" (Foucault 2001: ref. no. 306: 1059-1060).

Secondly, these power relations and this 'field of possibilities' have a **subject** as its object, as already mentioned above. The behaviour and subjectivity of each has become an important vehicle for and object of most public policies. Through the creation of a responsible legal subject, a political citizen with the right to vote, a patient that can be treated, a pupil that can receive teaching, a worker that can be employed, a manager that has the ability to manage, etc. our identities and personal possibilities of being ethical subjects have become tightly connected to the policies of state and of public welfare. This 'governmentalization' of ethics is for example reflected by the tendency to conflate the meaning of the words 'ethics' and 'morality' in common sense language.

However, the third crucial element that is born out of the 'governmentalization of the state' is not that the state has come to govern more and more other parts of society (cf. page 13). Rather, it is the development of a certain rationality of '**communalisation**' that has become a central condition of possibility for modern societies. It is a core issue for the possibility of having any 'policy' or 'politics' in an essential sense, since both require a 'common legitimate societal room' (i.e. a 'community' in a non-normative, nominal sense)[14]. This 'communalisation' has the consequence of making the creation of these 'legitimate wholes of populations/individuals' a central act of any government, be it at state level, at the level of the enterprise or even at the level of collective action in so-called civil society. It is important to stress this aspect, since the existence of a 'legitimate whole' in no sense is a 'natural' phenomenon, but indeed is an important consequence of the political history of our contemporary so-called civilised western states.

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[13] In contrast to e.g. Luhmann's definition of steering where "*steering designates a very specific use of distinctions, namely the attempt to reduce the difference*" (Luhmann 1997: 43).
[14] Cf. David Easton's classical definition of politics as '*the process whereby values are authoritatively allocated for the whole society*" (Easton 1971: 141)

Obviously, an important contribution of Foucault's analysis of governmentality is his stress on the historicity and contingency of our practical and theoretical understanding of politics and the state today. What Foucault argues for, is that the definition of what it means to govern is changed gradually throughout history, and thus that the subject, practice and discourse of government has changed. Therefore, it is not unproblematic for us today to compare our forms of state power to the ones that were in rule 500 years ago, since the constituting elements of each form of governing power are essentially different.

According to this view, the main interest of a governor in the times of 'the prince' was the territory and the strategic power game, not because a prince did not care about his 'subjects' but because the 'care for the population' as practice and discourse had not arisen yet to the level of state governing. In the same vein, it does not make sense to criticise that according to a governmentality perspective, we cannot account for so-called 'sovereign' forms of power today (cf. Dean 2002b). Sovereign power never ceased to be an important part of what constitutes a state and governmental power, not least in international relations (where the 'mean-main' topic and delimiting concept of almost all theories is 'sovereignty').

According to Foucault's governmentality story, government and governing is and has for a long time been an operation with a 'plurality of specific goals' as well as governing subjects. This is reflected in the number of different semantic concepts addressing the issues of government, as this article also is an illustration of. To 'govern' can be to lead, to conduct, to manage, to steer, to guide, etc. The different modalities of a governmental rationality are also identifiable at the level of the discipline of political science as a structure that is found in the institutions of the discipline: the departments, conferences, journals, curriculums, etc.[15]. We thus did not have to wait to the advent of political liberalism to receive a 'decentred' perspective on government (cf. Foucault 2001, ref. no. 274, see also Walther 1984), even though liberalism in itself is a valuable reflection upon and reformulation of what governmental power is and should be.

Governmentality offers some ambivalent conditions of being for the state and society, but it does not delimit the exhaustive possibilities of them. It argues for the importance of

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[15] As an example, the curriculum of a bachelor study of Political Science at the University of Copenhagen consists of the following topics: Sociology, Methodology, Economy, International Politics, Comparative Politics, Public Administration and Public Law, see http://sis.ku.dk/, page downloaded November 18. 2002.

understanding how 'the conduct of conduct' becomes a central logic of government, without necessarily reducing all governmental acts to that. Therefore, Foucault's analysis is a standing invitation for all eager to know ourselves and our society better to go about doing empirical analysis, that can broaden the sketches he began elaborating when he started analysing the issue and problem of 'government' (cf. Foucault 2001: ref. no. 239: 655). And the focus of possible empirical analysis is very broad; encompassing what Dean calls the '*episteme*' (rationality, regime, theory, philosophy, ideology), the '*techne*' (practices, technologies, effects) and the '*ethos*' (individual and collective identity, forms of subjectivity and agency) of government (Dean 2002b: 119-120).

4.2. Governance revisited

Foucault's analysis of governmentality offers some possibilities of clarifying issues and theoretical problems pertaining to the governance debate. First of all, it becomes clear that the governance debate itself is a part of the empirical material available for governmentality researchers of today. In that sense, the authors I discussed in the first part of my article are 'caught' in a web of interfering concepts and understandings relative to our understanding of government today, just as the writers of the 'art of government' treaties or the promoters of the 'reason of state' doctrine were in the sixteenth and seventeenth century.

On a more substantial level, a theoretical problem of a large part of governance theorists is that they confuse the problem of steering with the problem of the dominance of the state as steering subject – which in turn is sanctioned as a good or a bad thing – either as something to (re-) enforce in an old or new way (cf. Mayntz 1993, Jessop 1998, Dunsire 1993) – or as something to get rid of – in practice (as a perversion, cf. Luhmann 1997) or in theory (as a perspective, cf. Kooiman 1999, Rhodes 2000).

Yet, seen from a governmentality perspective, society is not necessarily to be seen as dominated by a state – since the state as such is not a unitary steering subject. Instead the argument is that a certain rationality of steering has emerged historically and has become a central function in society overall, and that multiple subjects (including ourselves) perform the operation 'steering' today. This is why Foucault advocates for a change in perspective, from a focus on the '*étatisation* of society' to one on 'the governmentalization of the state' – that is to analyse how this rationality of steering has come to permeate our society and state today.

It is misleading to say that steering is not possible without a state, or that steering necessarily is challenged in a condition where the state is becoming less central to understanding political processes and the development of policies. This is the point that the 'second part' of the governance theorists acknowledge, as I have shown above (cf. part 2.3.). The difference between governance theorists and Foucault is however, that the latter focused on how steering already several centuries ago was an operation that 'covered all kind of governance mechanisms' and that government never 'performed all the governing itself' – to borrow a few lines from the argument of KKK (Kickert, Klijn & Koppenjan 1997: 2).

Following this, it is also misleading to contrast hierarchical steering and the rule of law with heterarchical steering and reflexive government technologies – if one uses the distinction to establish that steering today is less predictable or controllable than in the past. As already stated, both forms of steering were and are vulnerable to diverse strategies of evasion, as for example Pierre Bourdieu's discussion of '*Droit & Passe-droit*' – the rule of law encompassing the practice of making exceptions to it – shows (Bourdieu 1990).

The fragility of and challenge to steering relations are not new phenomena that have developed during the last 30 years, as most governance theorists want us to believe. The 'rule of law' or of hierarchies were as unstable then as now. The reason for this is that hierarchies and rules already then were instruments or technologies of rule, that is modalities of power, and not 'the divine justification' of the state, as they accordingly were in medieval times. All modalities of government being a part of a strategic field of possibilities, that has 'a legitimate whole' of 'free subjects' as its object means that all modalities of power are continuously contested and rarely obtain a dominant position – where the performance of one modality becomes 'automatic', even though this can of course be an empirical possibility in certain institutional environments and periods.

If the state is challenged by Foucault's governmentality analysis, it however remains a crucial concept to the understanding of steering and governance. It is clear in Foucault's analysis (cf. Foucault 2001: ref. no. 306: 1060) (and obvious in any introductory political science course) that the state was and still is strongly associated to an idea of a certain rationality of government and steering. The debate in the past as well as now concerns how, why, how not and why not the state can be the central governing and steering subject. That the state does not

(and probably never did) perform all steering functions or never came to play the intended role does not mean that the idea of having a state capable of steering is of no use at all and should be rejected. We are indebted to the state as a central category in understanding power and knowledge, and that we critique this state so vividly can even be seen as a proof of how vital the category is to us (cf. Bartelson 2001).

5. Concluding remarks

These concluding remarks concern the normative implications of the governmentality perspective, the possibilities of providing a critique, and subsequently a research agenda for the analysis of steering public administrations. Indeed, the danger with the concept of governmentality is that the phenomenon potentially has become so dominant in society and in the management of the state, as to making the very idea of thinking beyond or beside it absurd and totally adverse to all practice and discourse in public administrations and society as a whole, as I have already intended to show with my quoting of Peters (cf. page 1; Peters 2000: 40). In other words: How is it possible to analyse public administrations as anything but governed by governmentality, and how is it possible (if at all desirable?) not to more or less explicitly have as a goal to make this governance better – more efficient or legitimate?

As I see it, there are at least two ways out: One concerns the possibility of doing empirical analysis about e.g. public administrations not (necessarily) concerned with making these work better. The other concerns the possibility of raising a research agenda that directly question the normative implications of a traditional steering perspective. The first way out has its point of departure within the discipline of Public Administration itself. The second way out is placed on the margins between disciplines, and takes its point of departure primarily within political theory.

One way of analysing steering could accordingly be to abandon the implicit normative position of much Public Administration research, that focuses on implicitly or explicitly to make these work better. According to Peter Bogason, this research task is already taken up within parts of the American post-modern PA discipline (see Bogason 2001a). It could be argued that the research agendas proposed by Rhodes and Kooiman offer two ways of analysing the 'conduct of public administrations' from a similar perspective: A narrative approach does not privilege one level of analysis over others, and potentially lead to a richer analysis of the implications, conditions and consequences of the attempts to steer society (cf.

Rhodes 2000). 'Societal governance' (cf. Kooiman 2000), and an explicit focus on diversity, dynamics and complexity also potentially opens up for an analysis of the contingency of steering operations.

Another way of analysing public administrations and their interactions with society is reflected by the (mainly) theoretical attempts within political theory, that are preoccupied with the need to reformulate a concern and theory of the social dealing with community (cf. Bang & Dyrberg 1999, Bang & Sørensen 1998). This position thus advocates analyses of contemporary societal development, where the concept of 'community' and the 'social activities of individuals' neither are made a prerequisite of a democratic state (the role assigned to civil society in much democracy theory), nor is made a function of public administrations (communities as forums ensuring the efficiency of public policies, cf. Newman et.al. 2002).

The way we organise ourselves need not necessarily concern 'the common good' and need not be (made) relevant for the functioning of the state or society as a whole. In short, the purpose of this strand of research is to question the normative implications of the 'communality' of public policies and to find answers beyond the traditional divide between communitarian and liberal understandings of society – since both are articulations within the governmentality history (cf. Foucault 2001: ref. no. 291: 980). What is at stake is to develop theories that offers us a possibility to analyse 'public administrations' as societal actors in their own right (and not as 'instruments' of a certain rationality or of a state), as for example self-determined 'street-level bureaucrats' that live and act on the margins between a 'governmentalised society and state' and a social world of every day practices that are permeated by various other strategies and rationalities (cf. Certeau 1990).

Foucault's governmentality perspective represents in itself a vital research programme for analysing societal issues, as for example the 'conduct of public administrations'. But first of all, the perspective offers a focus on the conditions of possibility of the discipline of Public Administration as such. Therefore, one important implication of following a governmentality perspective must be for us to become aware of this legacy. We need to take a stand to our own position within this "*living museum*" of political science (Bartelson 2001: 30) – that steering, governance and management are 'a good thing' – instead of making it our blind spot.

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