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**Neo-liberalism, the Erosion of Democracy and the Risk of Degeneration into
Technocracy.**

Prof. Michele Sorice.

SUPERVISOR CANDIDATE

Tommaso Pantano,
095372.

CANDIDATE

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Introduction.

The present thesis investigates the intricate relationship between neoliberalism, democracy, and the rise of technocratic governance, with a critical lens aimed at highlighting the erosion of democratic processes. The study encompasses a comprehensive exploration of the historical development, ideological principles, and critiques surrounding neoliberalism's impact on democratic governance. Furthermore, it delves into the challenges faced by democracy in the neo-liberal era, examining the erosion of democratic values and threats to political participation and representation. In addition, the thesis delves into the potential transformation of democracy into technocracy under the pervasive influence of neo-liberalism.

Neo-liberalism, characterized by its market-oriented policies and emphasis on individual freedom, has garnered substantial attention and criticism due to its adverse effects on democratic societies. The thesis begins by tracing the historical development of neo-liberalism, from its origins to its contemporary relevance, offering insights into the intellectual foundations and key proponents of the ideology. By examining its ideological principles, particularly the emphasis on de-regulation,

privatization, and the primacy of market mechanisms, the study sheds light on how neoliberal policies have shaped democratic governance.

Critiques on the impact of neo-liberalism on democratic society form a central pillar of this investigation. The thesis explores the adverse consequences of neoliberalism, such as widening social inequality, the concentration of power among economic elites, and the marginalization of the public interest. These critiques highlight the inherent tension between neo-liberal principles and democratic values, questioning the extent to which neoliberalism fosters inclusive and participatory democratic processes.

Moving forward, my analysis delves into the challenges that democracy faces in the neo-liberal era, considering the complex interplay between economic globalization and corporate influence.

Economic globalization, with its transnational flows of capital and the increasing influence of multinational corporations, has posed significant challenges to the traditional nation-state's ability to safeguard democratic values. The thesis scrutinizes the implications of corporate influence on political decision-making, exploring the extent to which democratic processes are compromised by the power dynamics between corporations and elected representatives.

Furthermore, the thesis addresses the threats posed by neo-liberalism to political representation and participation, by examining the impact of factors such as political financing, the reduction of the welfare state, and the erosion of national sovereignty on democratic governance. The study critically analyzes the role of money in politics, assessing its impact on the democratic ideal of equal representation and the potential for undue influence on policy outcomes. Another topic to be explored concerns the implications of neo-liberal policies that prioritize market mechanisms over social welfare, which raises concerns about the diminishing role of the State in addressing societal needs.

The final chapter focuses on the risk of democracy's transformation into technocracy under the influence of neo-liberalism. By examining the historical development, definition, and characteristics of technocracy, and its connections with neo-liberalism, the thesis aims to understand its impact on democratic decision-making processes. The analysis encompasses the phenomenon of depoliticization, wherein the role of elected representatives is marginalized in favor of technocratic expertise, and the subsequent shift towards an expertise approach in governance. Moreover, the analysis seeks to evaluate the implications of this transformation for democratic values and processes, in particular for political participation, representation and accountability.

In conclusion, the thesis critically examines the multifaceted relationship between neo-liberalism, democracy, and the rise of technocratic governance. By analyzing the historical development, ideological principles, and critiques of neoliberalism, as well as exploring the challenges faced by

democracy in the neo-liberal era and the potential transformation into technocracy, the study aims to shed light on the erosion of democratic processes. It emphasizes the protection of the public interest and of the democratic processes in the face of neo-liberal and technocratic influences. Through this comprehensive analysis, the thesis contributes to a broader understanding of the complexities and threats posed by these ideologies, fostering critical reflection on the future of democratic governance.

Chapter 1: Neoliberalism: Historical Development, Ideological Principles, and Critiques on its Impact on Democratic Governance.

- 1.1 Historical Development of Neoliberalism: From Origins to Contemporary Relevance.

First of all, to deal with the influence of neo-liberalism on democracy and the effects it set in motion, it is necessary to define, contextualize and reconstruct the development of the phenomenon in question, trying to identify the causes that led to its conceptualization and the historical-political-economic conjunctures that then allowed neo-liberalism to establish itself as a hegemonic thought in the world.

The concept of neo-liberalism is primarily concerned with political and economic practices that propose to liberate individual entrepreneurial freedoms and capabilities for the benefit of human welfare, within a framework of strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. In such a context the State has the responsibility of creating and preserving an institutional framework suitable for these practices. It must establish the necessary military, institutional, legal structures

and functions to secure private property rights and to ensure the proper functioning of markets, even by force if required. In situations where markets do not exist, such as education, social security or environmental pollution, they must be established, even by State action. However, beyond these responsibilities, the State should not interfere; in fact, according to the theory, the State should minimize its interventions in markets after creating them, as it lacks sufficient knowledge to interpret market signals and because influential interest groups will inevitably manipulate state interventions for their own advantage.

Since the 1970s, there has been a widespread shift toward neoliberalism, both in practices and in political and economic thought, leading to deregulation, privatization and the withdrawal of the state from many areas of social welfare. Almost all countries, including those that were previously social democracies or welfare states, have adopted some form of neoliberal theory and modified at least some policies as a result, either willingly or under pressure. Neo-liberalism has become dominant as a mode of discourse, with advocates occupying influential positions in education, media, and corporations, as well as decision-making roles in financial institutions and key State institutions as treasury departments and central banks and also in those international institutions that regulate global finance and trade such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). However, it is worth analyzing how neoliberalism, in particular through its leading exponents, reached these certain decision-making positions and what were the causes that led this theory to be taken as a reference first by the world's leading economists and then even by the political offices of the world's major countries.

After the end of World War II, States were faced with the need to create a new world order, which had mainly two goals: firstly, to prevent a return to the catastrophic economic conditions that had threatened capitalism during the Great Depression of the 1930s, and secondly, to avert the re-emergence of geopolitical rivalries that had led to war. To ensure domestic peace and stability, a compromise between capital and labor was necessary; in fact, both raw capitalism and communism had been deemed failures, and the solution was to create the right blend of state, market, and democratic institutions to ensure inclusion, well-being and stability. To stabilize international relations, a new world order was constructed through the Bretton Woods agreements and new institutions, such as the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were created. Free trade was encouraged under a system of fixed exchange rates, anchored to the convertibility of the U.S. dollar into gold at a fixed price, although fixed exchange rates were not compatible with free flows of capital, which had to be controlled. Nevertheless, the United States had to allow the free flow of the dollar outside its borders if it wanted the dollar to function as a global reserve currency. Against this backdrop, under the protection of U.S. military power, a

variety of state forms emerged in Europe, including Social Democratic, Christian Democratic and dirigist States; all these State forms had in common that they accepted that the state should focus on full employment, economic growth and the welfare of its citizens. Fiscal and monetary policies, referred to as "Keynesian," were employed to ensure full employment, mitigate business cycles and set standards for the social wage by building a series of welfare systems. This form of political-economic organization is commonly known as "embedded liberalism," to indicate how market processes were surrounded by a network of social and political constraints and a regulatory environment. During this period, in some countries such as Britain, France, and Italy, state planning and state ownership of key strategic industries, such as steel or coal, were quite common. During the 1950s and 1960s, the system of embedded liberalism led to high levels of economic growth in advanced capitalist countries. Although it expanded export markets, its attempts to export development to much of the rest of the world, especially Africa, largely failed. Within advanced capitalist countries, the system involved redistributive politics, such as the integration of working-class trade unions and support for collective bargaining, controls over the free mobility of capital through financial repression, expanded public expenditures, welfare state-building, active state interventions in the economy, and some degree of development planning. This system helped achieve relatively high rates of growth, with the business cycle successfully controlled through the use of Keynesian fiscal and monetary policies. Additionally, an interventionist state helped foster a social and moral economy, often supported by a strong sense of national identity, and working-class institutions had a real influence within the state apparatus. However, by the end of the 1960s, the system began to break down both internationally and domestically. Signs of a crisis in capital accumulation became apparent, with high unemployment and inflation rates leading to a period of stagflation throughout the 1970s. Fiscal crises arose in various states as tax revenues plummeted and social expenditures increased, and Keynesian policies were no longer effective. The Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates backed by gold reserves had already fallen into disarray even before the Arab-Israeli War and the OPEC oil embargo of 1973. Embedded liberalism was exhausted and no longer working, prompting the need for an alternative approach to overcome the crisis. During the 1970s, paradoxically, 'the lefts' advocated for more state control and regulation of the economy through corporate strategies that included limiting workers' and popular movements' objectives through austerity measures, income programs, and wage and price restrictions. These policies were backed by European socialist and communist parties, but they were incompatible with the objectives of capital accumulation, causing an opposition between social democracy and central planning on one hand, and corporate power and economic interests seeking to restore market freedoms on the other. The latter group rose to prominence in the mid-1970s, and the capitalist

world gradually moved toward neoliberalism as the new orthodoxy, setting as its benchmark what has been called the "Washington Consensus." The Washington Consensus refers to a set of economic policy recommendations widely supported by international financial institutions, such as the IMF and World Bank, which included free market policies such as trade liberalization, privatization of state-owned enterprises, deregulation and fiscal austerity. The relevance achieved by neoliberal thinking in this era has also undoubtedly been favored in the United States and Britain by financial support for a few influential think tanks, such as the Heritage Foundation in Washington and the Institute of Economic Affairs in London. At the same time, neoliberal thought also gained credibility within academic circles, particularly at the University of Chicago, thanks to the awarding of the Nobel Prize in Economics to Friedrich Hayek in 1974 and to Milton Friedman in 1976.

Having achieved this status at the theoretical level and given the dire economic scenario in which most developed and developing countries found themselves, neo-liberalism was first implemented at the state level in Chile through a military coup led by Pinochet on September 11, 1973. The coup aimed to overthrow the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende, who was perceived as a threat by the national business elites because of his socialist policies. The coup was supported by U.S. interest groups, the CIA and U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and led to the violent repression of social movements and leftist political organizations. Popular organizations were dismantled and the labor market was freed from regulatory or institutional constraints, such as union power. However, the stalled economy needed revitalization, and the import substitution policies that had dominated Latin America's attempts at economic development fell by the wayside. A group of economists known as "the Chicago boys," proponents of the neoliberal theories developed by Milton Friedman, were invited to help rebuild the Chilean economy. These economists had trained at the University of Chicago and their work had been funded by the United States since the 1950s to counter leftist trends in Latin America. They negotiated loans with the IFM and restructured the economy according to their theories, canceling nationalizations and privatizing public assets, opening natural resources to private and unregulated exploitation, privatizing social security, and facilitating foreign direct investment and freer trade. The immediate revival of the Chilean economy was short-lived, and the Latin American debt crisis of 1982 led to a more pragmatic and less ideological application of neoliberal policies in the following years. In any case, the Chilean experiment became a model for the formulation of subsequent neoliberal policies in both Britain under Thatcher and the United States under Reagan in the 1980s. Therefore, after taking the measure in the southern hemisphere, the consolidation of neoliberalism as the new economic orthodoxy governing state-level public policies in the advanced capitalist world took

place in the United States and Britain in 1979. Thatcher, elected prime minister of Great Britain that year, was in fact closely linked to the neoliberal Institute of Economic Affairs through politician Keith Joseph, and recognized that Keynesianism was no longer effective and that "supply-side" monetarist solutions were needed to solve the stagflation that had plagued the British economy in the 1970s. To achieve this goal, the new British government adopted a strategy that included weakening the power of trade unions, dismantling social solidarity structures that hindered competitive flexibility, such as those led by local councils (including professional associations), reducing welfare state commitments, privatizing state-owned enterprises and reducing taxes: in short, creating a business-friendly environment so as to attract a significant amount of foreign investment.

In October of 1979, Paul Volcker, the chairman of the US Federal Reserve Bank during Carter's presidency, initiated a radical change in US monetary policy. The longstanding commitment to Keynesian policies in the liberal democratic state was abandoned in favor of a policy designed to combat inflation at all costs, even if it meant sacrificing employment. The Federal Reserve set positive real interest rates, arguing that it was the only way to solve the problem of stagflation that had plagued the US and global economy throughout the 1970s. This led to "a long and deep recession that would empty factories and destroy unions in the United States and bring debtor countries to the brink of insolvency, beginning the long era of structural adjustment"(Nash, 2001). However, the shift to monetarism was not enough on its own to pave the way for neoliberalism; it required the implementation of government policies in various other areas. Reagan's election in 1980 proved critical, as his administration continued the trend of deregulation, tax cuts, budget cuts, and attacks on unions and professional power. These policies had a significant impact on the labor force, leading to a decline in real wages and the deregulation of industries ranging from airlines to finance. Tax breaks for investment encouraged the movement of capital from unionized regions to non-unionized areas, and deindustrialization and offshoring became more common. The market was touted as a means of promoting competition and innovation, but it ultimately served to consolidate power among corporations and the upper class, leading to greater social inequality.

Nevertheless, there was another simultaneous change that drove the transition to neoliberalism in the 1970s: the rise in oil prices as a result of the 1973 oil embargo. This upheaval provided oil-producing states like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait with immense financial power. It is now known that the US was preparing to invade these countries in 1973 to restore the flow of oil and bring down oil prices. The Saudis agreed at that time, presumably under military pressure, to recycle their petrodollars through New York investment banks (Alvarez, 1999). Suddenly, these banks were in possession of vast sums of money and needed to find profitable outlets for investment. Given the

depressed economic conditions and low rates of return in the mid-1970s, investment opportunities within the US were scarce. The New York investment banks, therefore, looked to governments in the developing world, which were eager to borrow money. However, to lend money, the banks required open entry and secure conditions. The US imperial tradition was invoked to find a local strongman who would provide economic and military assistance to repress opposition, accumulate wealth, and keep their country open to US capital and support. In return, the strongman would promote US interests in the country and the region. As a result of these developments, surplus funds were distributed globally. Before 1973, most US foreign investment was of the direct sort, mainly focused on exploiting natural resources or cultivating specific markets in Europe and Latin America. After 1973, New York investment banks became more focused on lending capital to foreign governments, requiring the liberalization of international credit and financial markets. The U.S. government began actively promoting and supporting this strategy globally in the 1970s, with developing countries being hungry for credit and encouraged to borrow heavily, albeit at rates that favored New York bankers. However, since the loans were denominated in dollars, even a slight increase in U.S. interest rates could push vulnerable countries into default. The first major test of this was Mexico, which went into default in 1982-1984, following the "Volcker shock." The Reagan administration resolved the issue with debt repayment in exchange for neoliberal reforms. This treatment became standard, and the IMF and World Bank became centers for propagating and enforcing neoliberal orthodoxy. The indebted countries had to implement institutional reforms, such as cuts in social spending, more flexible labor market laws and privatization, in exchange for debt renegotiation. This was the birth of "structural adjustment," which over the following years became widely adopted by neoliberal state apparatuses around the world.

Having explored the conditions and events that have led neoliberalism to achieve the position of hegemonic theory in political economic matters, in the next section I will shift my attention to an analysis of the theory's pivotal principles, attempting to clearly explain the processes of deregulation and privatization, the concept of individualism and more generally the principle of openness to the free market.

-1.2 Ideological Principles of Neoliberalism: Market-oriented Policies and Individual Freedom.

As I tried to highlight in the previous chapter, the rise of neoliberalism in the late 20th century had a profound impact on economic and social policies around the world. The ideology of neoliberalism emphasizes free markets, deregulation, privatization and individualism as the means to achieve economic growth and prosperity. The implementation of neoliberal policies is associated with a

shift toward market-oriented policies aimed at reducing the role of the state in the economy and promoting private enterprise. This has often involved deregulating industries, privatizing public services and implementing austerity measures to reduce government spending. Moreover, individualism has emerged as a core value of neoliberal ideology, as it emphasizes the importance of individual freedom, choice and responsibility over collective decision-making and social welfare. While neoliberalism has been praised for promoting efficiency and economic growth, it has also been criticized for exacerbating inequality and undermining social welfare programs. Discovering and analyzing the ideological principles of neoliberalism is crucial to understanding the policies that have shaped the global economy and political landscape in recent decades. This chapter will examine the key ideological principles of neoliberalism, including its focus on market-oriented policies, deregulation and privatization.

Neoliberal ideology emerged as a response to perceived threats to the capitalist social order, with a group of academic economists, historians, and philosophers gathering around Friedrich von Hayek to establish the Mont Pelerin Society in 1947. The group's founding statement claimed that the central values of civilization were in danger and that the position of individuals and voluntary groups was progressively undermined by extensions of arbitrary power. The society believed that these developments had been fostered by the growth of theories that question the desirability of the rule of law and a decline of belief in private property and the competitive market. In the "Statement of Aims" of the Mont Pelerin Group, it emerges very clearly what was intended to be addressed at the theoretical-academic level and why:

“Believing that what is essentially an ideological movement must be met by intellectual argument and the reassertion of valid ideals, the group, having made a preliminary exploration of the ground, is of the opinion that further study is desirable *inter alia* in regard to the following matters:

1. The analysis and exploration of the nature of the present crisis so as to bring home to others its essential moral and economic origins.
2. The redefinition of the functions of the state so as to distinguish more clearly between the totalitarian and the liberal order.
3. Methods of re-establishing the rule of law and of assuring its development in such manner that individuals and groups are not in a position to encroach upon the freedom of others and private rights are not allowed to become a basis of predatory power.
4. The possibility of establishing minimum standards by means not inimical to initiative and functioning of the market.
5. Methods of combating the misuse of history for the furtherance of creeds hostile to liberty.

6. The problem of the creation of an international order conducive to the safeguarding of peace and liberty and permitting the establishment of harmonious international economic relations” (The Mont Pelerin Society).

The members of the group thus believed that it was necessary to start from the critical problems of the time and lay the intellectual foundations to create a theory useful for decreasing the intrusive presence of the state and increasing the weight of the market, as well as creating a peaceful and cooperative international system at the economic level.

The neoliberal label signalled their adherence to free market principles of neoclassical economics that had emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century. Neo-liberalism was therefore deeply opposed to State interventionist theories, such as those of John Maynard Keynes, and even more fiercely opposed to theories of centralized state planning, such as those advanced by Oscar Lange. Indeed, neo-liberal theorists believed that State decisions were bound to be politically distorted depending on the strength of the interest groups involved, and that State decisions on investment and capital accumulation were bound to be wrong because the information available could not compete with that contained in market signals.

However, before it can be expressed through the implementation of policies, such as de-regulation and privatization, a theory must be assimilated within society so that it is accepted by its members and does not trigger discontent or protest when moving towards a certain policy direction. To establish itself, a school of thought must therefore develop a conceptual framework that aligns with the values and instincts of the social environment in which it wants to flourish. Once successful, this framework becomes so ingrained in everyday thinking of the society that it becomes unquestioned. By laying as the basis of the theory itself commonly accepted principles in Western post-conflict societies, neo-liberalism posed itself as a theory of freedom.

In fact, according to David Harvey (2005), the founders of neo-liberalism based their theory on political principles that reflected the common sentiment of the time, such as human dignity and individual freedom, which were considered primary values of civilization, especially after the end of World War II. Neo-liberal thinkers believed that the political ideals of human dignity and individual freedom were central to civilization, and that they were threatened not only by dictatorships, but also by any form of State intervention that substituted collective judgments for those of free-choice individuals. The main principle of neoliberal ideology is that freedom of market and trade guarantees individual freedoms, and given this, the main purpose of the State is to establish favorable conditions for the accumulation of profitable assets by local and foreign capital. After slowly establishing itself in the academies and drawing rooms of the elites, neoliberal thinking also began to spread among policy makers and prominent members of the world's leading

economic institutions due to the various political and economic junctures analyzed in the previous chapter.

In the 1970s, policy makers began to believe that public intervention was the main problem and that the remedy was to change the economy in a way that favored market influence over State intervention. Following the groundwork established by Friedman in his first book, *Capitalism and Freedom*, “first, governments must remove all rules and regulations standing in the way of the accumulation of profits. Second, they should sell off any assets they own that corporations could be running at a profit. And third, they should dramatically cut back funding of social programs” (Klein, 2007).

The initiative suggested by Friedman thus focuses primarily on three market-oriented policies, including de-regulation, which involved removing government regulations and restrictions on businesses, allowing them to operate more freely and competitively in the marketplace. Since, according to neoliberal thinkers, government is often inefficient in regulating businesses and regulations can stifle innovation and economic growth, the process of de-regulation is aimed at creating a more efficient and competitive market by reducing the burden of regulations that businesses must comply with. De-regulation can take many forms, including removing price controls, relaxing environmental and labor standards, and reducing barriers to entry in industries. The underlying assumption of de-regulation is that the market will self-correct and naturally correct any inefficiencies or excesses. According to Friedman and his colleagues, de-regulation encourages competition, leads to lower prices and more innovation, which benefits consumers. One example of the implementation of such policy is the "Big Bang" reforms in the United Kingdom in 1986, which led to the deregulation of financial markets and the removal of many restrictions on the operations of banks and other financial institutions. “On October 27, 1986, the “Big Bang” eliminated fixed commissions on securities trading; authorized firms to operate in dual capacity, representing investors (brokering) and executing wholesale trades (dealing or jobbing) on both equities and government debt titles (also known as gilts); opened the Exchange to foreign firms; and implemented a screen-based technological platform in lieu of floor-based trading” (Goldman Sachs 2019).

The deregulation of the financial industry under the Big Bang reforms played a significant role in the growth of the sector and helped make London one of the world's leading financial centers. However, critics argue that the deregulation also contributed to the financial crisis of 2008, contesting that the removal of regulations allowed banks and other financial institutions to take on excessive risk, leading to the collapse of some of the world's largest financial institutions.

As seen, another central policy that had to be widely implemented is that of privatization, which involved the transfer of ownership and control of government goods and services to the private sector, allowing market forces to determine their allocation and pricing. The neo-liberal argument for privatization is grounded in the assumption that government-run enterprises lack the incentives to innovate, to minimize costs, and to maximize productivity. In order to remedy this perceived problem, the neo-liberal solution is to transfer ownership and control of public assets and services to the private sector, which is believed to be more efficient and innovative due to the incentives created by competition and the profit motive. Such process is intended to be a win-win situation, as it not only creates new opportunities for private enterprise, but also saves taxpayers money by reducing the burden of government spending. “This trend has been particularly pronounced in infrastructure industries such as telecommunications, electricity, water, sanitation, and transportation, in which state-owned enterprises long enjoyed monopolies” (Henisz, Zelner, & Guillén, 2005).

However, critics of privatization argue that the public sector provides many essential services, such as healthcare, education, and public utilities, which are not well-suited to the profit-driven logic of the market; additionally, they argue that privatization can lead to increased inequality and social exclusion, as private firms have an incentive to provide services only to those who can afford to pay for them.

The concluding set of policies to be implemented according to Friedman and his supporters are the cutsback, also referred as austerity measures, which refers to reducing public spending and downsizing public services and social programs to prioritize market-oriented policies and promote private sector growth. The idea behind this policy is that public spending on social programs and public services is inefficient and that the private sector can do a better job of providing these services. The rationale is that by reducing public spending, taxes can be lowered and resources can be allocated to the private sector, promoting economic growth.

However, the implementation of these cuts has resulted in reduced funding for public services such as health care, education and social security, leading to deteriorating living conditions for many people. Critics of neoliberal cutsback policies argue that they have disproportionately affected marginalized communities, exacerbating inequality and poverty. They also argue that the market alone cannot address social issues such as health care and education, which require some level of government intervention to ensure equitable access for all citizens.

The implementation of these policies was possible, as highlighted earlier, due to the support of neo-liberalism on common societal values of the time, especially that of individual freedom. Individual freedom is considered a core value that should guide economic and social policy in neoliberal

theory. Individuals should be free to make their own decisions and pursue their own interests without excessive state involvement; this includes the freedom to own property, start a business and compete in markets without government intervention. Individual freedom, according to the neoliberal view, is a crucial driver of economic progress and wealth because it incentivizes individuals to innovate and work hard to succeed. This emphasis on individual freedom as a core value is associated with the concept of individualism, which emphasizes the idea that each person is responsible for his or her own well-being and success. Individualism is an ideology that emphasizes the importance of individual autonomy and self-determination and views the individual as the main unit of society. The roots of individualism can be traced back to the Enlightenment period of the 18th century, when the idea of individual rights and freedoms gained popularity. In the context of neoliberalism, individualism is a central principle, closely linked to the belief in the efficiency of the free market. Proponents of neoliberalism argue that market competition and individual initiative lead to greater economic growth and prosperity. The neoliberal approach to individualism assumes that individuals are rational actors who make choices based on their self-interest and that the pursuit of profit and economic growth benefits society as a whole. From this perspective, individualism is seen as a necessary condition for economic success, and government intervention is seen as an obstacle to individual freedom and efficient market functioning.

In conclusion, what seems clear is that austerity policies, deregulations and privatizations, and thus more generally market-oriented policies, all aim to marginalize the State from economic decision-making in favor of the market. Underlying these policies are values intrinsic to society, chief among them individual freedom, which aims to increase competitiveness and efficiency, emphasizing the rationality of human beings and their ability to have a decisive say in deciding their destiny.

However, there is no shortage of criticism, aimed at both neoliberal policies and the values on which they are based. These are criticized as increasing economic inequality, allowing the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of a few, and the social marginalization of weaker groups, who are more susceptible to the effect of such policies. In addition, the concentration of power in the hands of a few individuals has a direct influence on the democratic process, which is despoiled of its representative and popular value since decisions take place in the centers of power and not in parliament, and sets aside the public interest at the expense of that of the most influential groups. In the next section I will investigate exactly this, namely the impact of Neo-liberalism on the democratic society.

-1.3 Critiques on the Impact of Neoliberalism on Democratic Society: Social Inequality, Concentration of Power, and Marginalization of Public Interest.

The impact of neoliberalism on democratic society has been increasingly debated in recent years. Critics argue that neo-liberal policies have contributed to the growth of social inequality, the concentration of power in the hands of a few actors, and the marginalization of the public interest. As seen in the previous chapter, these policies have been characterized by a focus on deregulation, privatization and market-oriented reforms, which have often led to the erosion of democratic values. While proponents of neoliberalism argue that market-oriented policies promote economic growth, which benefits all members of society, critics argue that these policies often lead to the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few, leaving the majority of the population behind and leading to a widening gap between rich and poor and other forms of social inequality. This is because neo-liberal policies often privilege the interests of the private sector over those of the public sector, leading to the privatization of public services and the weakening of democratic institutions. As a result, some argue that the public interest has been marginalized in favor of the interests of the rich and powerful.

Throughout this chapter, I will attempt to explore the impact of neoliberalism on democratic society by analyzing and criticizing the main consequences caused by the implementation of market-oriented policies.

One of the most significant criticisms of the impact of neo-liberalism on democratic society is the concentration of power among a few large corporations and wealthy individuals. As neoliberal policies favor market-based decision-making, the State takes a back seat in the economy, leaving market forces to drive economic growth. This has led to the creation of monopolies and oligopolies, where a few companies hold significant power and control over the market, further perpetuating the gap with small and medium-sized enterprises and the working classes. These powerful actors can also use their economic power to influence policy decisions and shape policy outcomes in their favor. In fact, the concentration of power is not limited to the economic sphere, but also extends to the political sphere: wealthier individuals and corporations have the ability to influence political campaigns and lobby politicians for their interests. In the words of Henry A. Giroux, “Corporations more and more design not only the economic sphere but also shape legislation and policy affecting all levels of government, and with limited opposition. As corporate power lays siege to the political process, the benefits flow to the rich and the powerful. Included in such benefits are reform policies that shift the burden of taxes from the rich to the middle class, the working poor, and state governments as can be seen in the shift from taxes on wealth (capital gains, dividends, and estate taxes) to a tax on work, principally in the form of a regressive payroll tax”(Giroux, 2005). As a result, democratic governance is eroded as the interests of a wealthy few are prioritized over the

needs and desires of the broader population. The concentration of power also has implications for social justice and human rights, as marginalized communities and groups are often excluded from decision-making processes that disproportionately impact their lives. This further perpetuates social inequality and undermines the values of democracy, in which all individuals should have an equal say in shaping policies that impact their lives. Therefore, critiques of the impact of neoliberalism on democratic society often highlight the concentration of power as a significant concern, as it poses a threat to the principles of democratic governance and social justice.

One of the most obvious consequences of this concentration of power, both economic and (consequently) political, is reflected in the growing social and economic inequality we observe in countries that have adopted neoliberal policies. Not surprisingly, this is precisely one of the main criticisms of the impact of neoliberalism on democratic societies. Because the basic principles of neoliberalism prioritize the role of the market in shaping economic outcomes, the policies that are implemented tend to favor the rich and neglect the needs of the poor, resulting in a clear increase in (economic) inequality. According to Goudarzi, Badaan and Knowels (2022), who conducted a study that address the issue of Neo-liberalism and inequality, free-market reforms appear to increase people's perception of high levels of income inequality.

To draw this conclusion, they examined several data sets to examine the link between economic institutions and human values in more than 160 nations during a 25-year period (1995-2019). The neoliberalism of a nation was measured using specific elements from the Fraser Institute's annual "Index of Economic Freedom," which was used as a tool to determine the extent to which different economies throughout the world are aligned with neoliberalism. The researchers examined data from the World Values Survey (WVS) to see if neoliberalism influenced views about inequality. The researchers were able to determine whether or not a nation's economic system preceded a shift in people's sentiments across three to five-year intervals by using both the Fraser Institute's "Index of Economic Freedom" and the WVS. This perception often manifests itself as a response to reduced public spending on social programs and services, which disproportionately affects the most vulnerable communities.

Moreover, neoliberalism's emphasis on individualism and personal responsibility ignores the structural inequalities that limit opportunities for some individuals and groups; as a result, social mobility is hindered, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and disadvantage to the detriment of the "usual" social groups. The concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a small number of individuals and corporations further exacerbates social inequality by consolidating decision-making authority among a select few, often at the expense of the broader public interest. This leads to the implementation of policies that favor large interest groups, while undermining workers' rights and

protections, which can lead to declining wages, job security and benefits for the working class. Furthermore, the erosion of democratic values such as transparency, accountability and participation can enable those with wealth and power to manipulate the political process and maintain their privileged position in society. The resulting social inequality not only undermines the democratic ideal of fair representation and participation, but also poses a threat to social cohesion and stability, leading to a decrease in collective action and solidarity, making it more difficult for marginalized groups to advocate for their rights and interests.

Against this backdrop, assessments of the impact of neoliberalism on democratic values and society have highlighted the need to address social inequalities through policies that prioritize the needs of marginalized communities and promote (renewed) greater democratic participation and accountability.

Another major criticism levelled at neoliberalism is its marginalization of the public interest, as a consequence of neoliberal policies that prioritize private sector interests but pay no attention to the public good. This prioritization of private interests can be noticed in the reduction of the scope of the public sector as a cause of neoliberal policies that have promoted privatization and outsourcing of public services themselves, disfavoring the needs of citizens to meet the needs and demands of large power groups. In addition, de-regulation and cutback policies also have a negative impact on the public interest: with regard to de-regulation, this happens because these policies can lead to a lack of control and accountability as corporations prioritize profits over the public interest; with regard to cutbacks, on the other hand, the damage to the common good occurs because of the decrease in public revenue, which can limit the government's ability to invest in public goods and services for the benefit of the public interest. This trend has led to a decline in the quality of public services, such as health care and education, as private providers focus on maximizing profits rather than providing quality services. In addition, neo-liberal policies have led to a decline in the ability of the State to regulate and enforce laws that promote the public interest, such as environmental protection and labor rights. This is because regulations and laws that limit the actions of corporations and their profits are seen as obstacles to economic growth and development. As a result, the state has become increasingly complicit in prioritizing private interests over public interests. The marginalization of the public interest under neoliberalism has further exacerbated social inequality as the benefits of economic growth are distributed unequally, with those who are already wealthy benefiting the most. A clear example of the negative impact of neoliberal policies on the public interest can be seen in the privatization of the water system in Chile in 1981 with the implementation of the 'Water Code'. The Pinochet regime implemented a law that privatized the country's water rights and granted landowners, agribusinesses, and mining companies exclusive

rights to water resources and to buy and sell water rights on the market. This led to a situation where large agribusiness and mining companies had access to abundant supplies of water, while many small farmers and rural communities struggled to access clean water for drinking, irrigation and other basic needs.

Certainly, one of the most troubling aspects of the marginalization of the public interest is the way it undermines the democratic process itself. When the public interest is ignored or actively suppressed in favor of private interests, it can erode trust in democratic institutions and lead to apathy or even hostility toward democratic values. Moreover, when important decisions are made without sufficient input from the public, it can lead to policies that are ineffective or even harmful to society as a whole. To preserve democratic values and ensure that the needs of all members of society are taken into account, it is important to prioritize the public interest over narrow private interests. In sum, the neoliberal emphasis on individualism and the market has led to the erosion of the public sphere and the decline of the ability of democratic institutions to promote social equality and the common good, as well as the difficulty of avoiding the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of a few individuals and corporations. As we will see in the next chapter, all these conjunctures have had a direct effect on democracy and the original conception we had of this system of government.

Chapter 2: Democracy in the Neo-liberal Era: Challenges, Erosion of Democratic Values, and Threats to Political Participation and Representation.

2.1 Democracy in the Age of Neo-liberalism: Conceptual Understanding and Evolution.

In this chapter I will try to analyze democracy in the neo-liberal era, specifically trying to understand its evolution and the challenges facing this governmental system. Starting from the neo-liberal conceptualization of democracy and the evolution project theorized by Hayek, I will move to the challenges of globalization and the growing influence of business on democratic institutions and decision-making processes. After that I will try to go deeper (than the final section of the first chapter) into what can be considered the erosion of democratic values that is taking shape nowadays, and then conclude with the dangers that undermine the democratic process as such, namely political participation and representation. To accomplish this task, it is first necessary to define democracy as a form of government and provide a brief overview of what are its main features.

Democracy is essentially a political system in which power is held by the people, either directly or through elected representatives, however in this analysis I will focus on representative democracy. This form of government is characterized by free and fair elections, which provide citizens with the opportunity to elect the representatives who will act on their behalf in government; the rule of law, which ensures that everyone is subject to the same laws and that the law is applied impartially; and the protection of individual rights, including freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and the right to due process, through laws and institutions that are designed to safeguard against abuses of power by the government or other actors. Finally, democratic systems are designed to prevent the concentration of power in any one person or group through a system of checks and balances that divides power among the different branches of government. This ensures that no one person or group can dominate the political system and that all voices are heard. Moreover democracy is based upon some core values including equality, freedom and the right to participate in government

decision-making; all of these characteristics work together to create a system that is accountable, transparent, and responsive to the needs and interests of the people it serves. Indeed, at the heart of democracy are the concepts of (popular) legitimacy and responsiveness (to the voters). In the neoliberal era, the conceptual understanding of democracy has been influenced by the belief that market forces should be the main drivers of social, economic and political decision-making, at the expense of the state, and in this case the democratic state. Neoliberal thinkers argue that a laissez-faire approach to the economy, with minimal government intervention, is necessary to maximize individual freedom and promote economic growth. In this view, democracy is seen as a means to these ends rather than an end in itself. As a result, the neoliberal conception of democracy tends to focus on protecting property rights, individual freedoms and market competition, often at the expense of social welfare and equality. As I explained extensively in the first chapter, neo-liberalism has developed in the academies and think tanks of the most advanced Western countries, with the goal of cutting the state out of the decision-making process. While it is true that it has taken shape at the very heart of democratic civilization, certainly not posing itself as an antagonist to democracy, it is also true that, in the idea of many neo-liberal theorists, representative democracy, as it functions, hides limitations and can be improved to meet the demands inherent in neo-liberal theory.

According to Christian Laval and Pierre Dardot, what is challenged by neoliberalism is not explicitly about the democratic form of government per se, which involves the exercise of power by citizens. Instead, what is challenged is the evolution of democracy into a peculiar combination of a mechanism for selecting leaders and a policy of redistributing resources in favor of the classes with less wealth, known as the welfare state. This evolution is attacked because of the neoliberals' fear of the propertyless majority and the possibility that their democratic ambitions may impact the freedom and economic power of the wealthy minority.

The concept of modern democracy is rooted in the idea of promoting social justice and correcting market inequalities on behalf of the people. In democratic societies, citizens participate in government through the selection of leaders, who must then govern in the interests of the majority, which is why democracy is often called “mass democracy”, as it seeks to meet the needs of the majority and provide social protection. However, the neoliberal vision “immediately reduces 'democracy' to a technical procedure for appointing rulers” (Laval & Dardot, 2019). In this vision, democracy is simply a way to choose leaders based on the preferences of the majority, without any substantial value. This view ignores the importance of substantive democratic values, such as social justice, equality and participation in decision-making, which are essential for a functioning democratic system. By reducing democracy to a mere procedural method for selecting leaders, the

neo-liberal vision ignores the substantial role that democracy plays in ensuring that government is accountable to the people and promotes the public interest. This devaluation of democracy is dangerous because it undermines the very idea of popular sovereignty, which is the foundation of democracy, that holds that the will of the people is the only source of legitimacy for the actions of rulers. In any case, neoliberal theory significantly criticizes the idea of the "absolute power" that the majority should have over the minority as a result of its direct influence over the rulers through the electoral process. In reality, however, popular sovereignty inevitably includes the subjection of the rulers to the will of the majority, at least through the control imposed on them by the representatives of the majority in Parliament. In the idea of several neoliberal thinkers, the very fact that the government is obliged to adapt to the opinion of the electoral majority is the main source of weakness and instability of democracies. According to their views, "instead of allowing them to dictate their conduct, the people's power over the choice of rulers must be restricted" (Laval & Dartot, 2019).

To address this issue, Hayek sought to organize and systematize the concept of representation and questioned its very logic in the case of the legislature. According to the thinker, the representatives of the majority produce laws that suit only their interests, oppressing the minority through the supremacy of the legislative branch. Hayek's viewpoint runs counter to John Locke's belief in legislative authority as the supreme power. He claims that such authority is an indication of a democracy without limitations that may devolve into a "totalitarian democracy." As a result, the customary difference between "democracy" and "totalitarianism" is rendered in principle invalid. Popular choice does not ensure proper use of power, because proper use of power is based primarily on restricting the rulers' scope of action. Hayek's assessment, however, does not so much provide a critique of democracy as a form of government, but rather an existential distrust of representative democracy, initially embraced by classical liberalism. In simple terms, neo-liberal thinkers criticized representative democracy because they believed it gave too much power to the government, which they saw as a threat to individual freedom and economic efficiency. They argued that the State's role in regulating the economy was often misguided and led to inefficiencies and market distortions. They also believed that representative democracy was vulnerable to the influence of special interests, which could use their political power to secure preferential treatment and distort the market. The underlying concern, then, is the establishment of non-negotiable limits to representative democracy per se. The central question is to determine the nature of the limits that restrict the power of government. These limits, in the neo-liberal conceptions, consist of rules of law that apply universally and primarily because of their generality. As early as 1938, at the Lippmann Colloquium, the pre-eminence of legal rules over government was a widely held belief

among proponents of the re-foundation of liberalism. These legal rules must be imposed on all governments, regardless of election results, and in practice are "rules of conduct" for individuals that apply to everyone under all circumstances. The specific legal rules referred to are exclusively those of private or criminal law, and, according to Hayek, coercion of an individual is legitimate only when it is used to enforce precisely the rules of private and criminal law. Leaving out criminal law, the role of the State is to ensure that individuals respect the rules of private law, which means that the State must also apply these rules to itself. In other words, the state must behave like a private individual and impose the same rules on itself that it claims to impose on private individuals. This neoliberal conception of the rule of law is precisely distinguished by the constraint placed by private law on any legislation and any government. The question remains: how can private law prevail over legislative and executive power? Western legal thought has since the 18th assigned the task of defining the various powers constituted within the state to the Constitution, as the fundamental law or supreme judicial norm. The principle of separation of powers, seen by Montesquieu as a balance that ensured that one branch of power constrained the other branches of power, stipulates that the various powers of the state, such as the executive, legislative and judicial, should be assigned to different organs to avoid their concentration in a single entity. However, the principle does not determine the role of private law, as it is not for the Constitution to determine the relationship between the powers and private law. Although a State's constitution may recognize property law as fundamental law, it need not explicitly state so, as political constitutions are not the appropriate place for private law. "Neo-liberalism breaks with this conception of the Constitution. With it, the rules of private law are accorded a quite unique, utterly unprecedented status as fully fledged constitutional norms." (Laval & Dartot, 2019). This idea is central in Hayek's "Constitution of Liberty", in which he proposes a three-part institutional framework to safeguard individual liberty. These three bodies - a constitutional court, a legislative assembly and a governmental assembly - seemingly correspond to the three traditional powers enshrined in constitutional law; however, their functions are distinctly different. Within this framework, the Constitutional Court is considered the supreme authority and no other power can claim superiority over it. The Court's role is to control the constitutionality of laws passed by the legislature, and its authority cannot be controlled by either the legislative or executive branches. This unbalanced concentration of power is a deliberate strategy to prevent the legislative branch from gaining dominance. The ultimate goal of the neoliberal project is to replace the government of people with the government of laws, which involves the subordination of governmental power to legislative power and of legislative power to the higher instance that reviews the constitutionality of new laws. In pursuing this goal, neoliberalism sacrifices the principle of the "balance" of powers, despite the fact that it's a

cornerstone of traditional constitutional theory. Hayek's objective is to explicitly isolate the idea of "law" from the influence of public opinion and raise it to a higher standing. Here, his focus was on the political institutions through which economic policy must be implemented: political institutions should be arranged in a way that if the adversaries were to govern, they would be constrained to take actions not so different from those that one would desire. As Walter Lippmann explained in an article published in the Washington Post on January 5, 1961, "the crux of the question is not whether the majority should govern, but what kind of majority should govern."

Hayek, further reinforcing this idea, argues that genuine law cannot be produced by a legislative body, but rather stems from pre-existing norms that are merely validated by judges. In his view, laws are not created by anyone, but rather are the result of what he calls "nomocracy" or, more simply, rule of law. This approach to law emphasizes the significance of establishing a legal system that is not susceptible to the whims of politicians or public opinion, but rather is founded on established norms and principles that are consistently enforced. Hayek aspires to build a more stable, predictable, and objective legal system by eliminating the legislative body from the law-making process. The Hayekian conception of democracy, however, suggests that laws are not merely a codification of custom, but rather are determined by judges and experts who are committed to protecting private property. True power thus resides in these individuals, rather than in the elected representatives of the people. Hayek argues that representative democracy is inclined to favor the private interests of an electoral majority, rather than the general interest. To counter this tendency, neoliberalism advocates the creation of inviolable general rules that protect the general interest and prevent social democracy from taking hold. Despite the emphasis on individual freedom and private property, the State can still engage in legal interventionism to ensure that private interest groups respect private law.

The main intention of the Hayekian project, however, is to limit democratic politics by altering the balance of power and the rule of law, with the ultimate goal of shrinking the space available for politics and policies.

This conception, in my view, is based on the assumption that neoliberals are convinced that they are (or pretend to be) the only actors within the landscape of a state that pursue the general interest of the people, despite the fact that this is often not even the case, and therefore any attempt to implement a policy that does not espouse the one they envision is seen as dangerous and unworkable. For that very reason, the idea of democratic evolution is to create fixed norms that leave little room for those who wish to deviate from what the neoliberal ruling class has premeditated and intends to implement at all costs.

Having analyzed the democratic project advocated by neo-liberal theorists, in particular Hayek, and the possible developments it would entail, in the next section I will try to point out the main factors acting on and challenging democracy, namely globalization and the increasing power in the hands of large corporations.

2.2 Challenges Faced by Democratic Nation-State in the Neo-liberal Era: Economic Globalization and Corporate Influence.

The advent of neoliberal hegemony in the international arena has brought significant challenges to democratic governance, particularly in the form of economic globalization and corporate influence. The increasing interdependence of national economies and the growing power of multinational corporations have made it more difficult for governments to regulate economic activity and pursue social welfare goals. This has led to a situation where democratic decision-making is often circumscribed by market imperatives, with elected representatives constrained by the need to attract investment and maintain competitiveness. At the same time, the influence of corporate interests on democratic politics has grown, with many politicians and parties becoming dependent on corporate donations and support.

Neo-liberalism and globalization are deeply interconnected, as globalization has been a key driving force behind the spread of neo-liberal ideology and policies. The neo-liberal economic agenda emphasizes, as is now well known, the importance of free markets and trade, which has been facilitated by the globalization process. In this regard, globalization has allowed the free movement of goods, services and capital across borders, creating new opportunities for businesses and investors, promoting economic growth and development, but also exacerbating many of the negative consequences of neoliberalism, including the erosion of democratic governance and the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few multinational corporations. Despite the flourishing of liberal-democratic forms of government virtually around the world in the second half of the 20th century, the prospects for democratic governance in its purest sense are in decline. Indeed, while the growth of the nation-state has had a profound influence on the formation and consolidation of contemporary liberal democracy, whose social foundations remain firmly anchored in this structural context, in today's globalized world, intersecting and often overlapping systems and processes of governance are gradually taking on privatist and oligarchic traits, with neo-liberal standards degrading democratic State governance. As a result, democratic governments are witnessing a deterioration in their political capacity to transform the inputs of the democratic process into power outcomes, and it appears increasingly difficult to restore the democratic

connection between accountability and effectiveness. Moreover, the process of globalization is altering the concept of the nation-state through socio-economic, cultural and (though still in its embryonic stages) legal changes, posing a serious threat to national identities and, consequently, to the democratic (nation-)State as well. The process of economic globalization includes both general tradable goods and specific international goods that require multinational organization through cross-border mergers and cartels, as well as the establishment of different international authorities with the task of supervising some specific aspect of this complex inter-connection. In such framework, national technological and governance patterns, according to the endogenous growth theory, are firmly established, integrating the demands of global market competition and the adoption of new technologies into national systems rather than leading to global convergence.

“National differences may entrench certain patterns of competitive advantage and disadvantage, but it is the interaction of these differences which creates a global economy” (Cerny, 1999).

These differences, however, might impact wage demands and expectations for change; while such changes do not undermine and may even increase State sovereignty in certain ways, they frequently shift State-specific functions and activities outside the jurisdiction of the State. This growing complexity of cross-border relationships across socioeconomic communities, interest groups, and transnational political networks erodes national identity and allegiance. Another set of facts that challenge the concept of the nation-state are increased information flows, postmodern cultural fragmentation, and the formation of multicultural identities that disorient previously established cultures, eroding national identities, which formed the basis for the acceptance of democratic rules. States also actively participate in the globalization process in this context, with the aim of satisfying domestic constituents and extending secondary advantages by promoting international competitiveness and minimizing isolation and de commodification. The "competition State" intervenes more frequently and systematically in social and economic issues, emphasizing market liberalization and commodification rather than State sovereignty. As part of this process policy instruments are dismantled, strategic competencies are fragmented through liberalization and privatization, State agencies become more independent, trans-governmental political networks expand and institutional gatekeepers impose international market discipline on State apparatuses. Another factor eroding the power of the democratic State has its roots on Hayek's thesis of the preeminence of private law, as given in the preceding paragraph. In fact, State legal orders, which serve as the foundation of national sovereignty, are becoming more and more circumvented, particularly by well-connected international firms and market actors.

“The changing nature of public/private relationships, accelerated and deepened by the crystallization of private sector interconnections across borders, is leading to the development of

new legal approaches and procedures which are replacing [...] 'democratic public law' with negotiated private law, although this change is as yet embryonic and uneven." (Cerny, 1999)

Despite the structural changes brought about by globalization, there has been no development of new national institutional capacities to manage governance on a global scale. Instead, this process has led to a situation where there are fragmented States and authority, causing a proliferation of ambiguous boundaries between State and private sector responsibilities and capacities, as well as between national and international decision-making networks. Consequently, democratic governance has been weakened, along with the trust and legitimacy that are crucial for the success of democratic systems in persuading people of the value and usefulness of democratic institutions and processes themselves. Indeed, a further impact of globalization on democratic states includes the emergence of various international and transnational institutions and regimes. While, traditionally, these institutions have been created or supported by State authority, however, in recent years there has been a noticeable trend toward the rise of private regimes, in which the influence and decision-making power of private actors have been increasingly favored over public ones. While some argue that this represents a (quasi-)democratization of the international system through cooperative mechanisms, replacing realist anarchy with multilateral cooperation, others, including myself, see it as an extension of oligarchic corporate corporatism or interest group cartels at the international level. In fact, this form of international cooperation does not reflect the expansion of democratic processes globally, but rather signifies a shift in decision-making power away from effective democratic control and responsiveness.

While these private interest institutions have traditionally derived their effectiveness and power from State acceptance, advocacy and delegated authority, today there is a growing network of transnational private interest "governments". These institutions, both formal and informal, not only lack democratic accountability, but also prioritize private interests over the public interest and are able to operate independently without relying on State patronage or delegated authority.

In this contest "democracy is often presented as the preservation of the private rather than the pursuit of the public, but the effectiveness of the former depends on the capacity of accountable and effective democratic governance structures to maintain and reinforce the latter" (Cerny, 1999).

All these structural conjunctures have led to various effects on the power and effectiveness of national democratic governance as we understand it at the State level, with reference to democratic practices per se and how they are then carried out by the political class and citizens.

Firstly, effective political power is no longer exclusively in the hands of national governments, since multiple actors and agencies at the national and international levels share power, assuming several duties previously governed by the state and its bureaucratic elite.

Second, the idea of a self-determining political community can no longer be limited to a single nation-state, because fundamental forces and mechanisms that influence life opportunities are now beyond individual governments' power. National political communities' endurance is undermined by complicated economic, administrative, legal, and cultural procedures and structures that restrict their effectiveness. If these processes and structures are not recognized and integrated into the political process, they bear the potential to bypass or circumvent the democratic state system. Thirdly, States are affected by increasingly complex global and regional systems that alter the balance between national and international legal frameworks and administrative practices, posing a serious threat to State authority and sovereignty. While consistent concentrations of power still are under the control of States, these are becoming increasingly ingrained in fragmented realms of political power. "Against this background, it is not fanciful to imagine, as Bull once observed, the development of an international system that is a modern and secular counterpart of the kind of political organization found in Christian Europe in the Middle Ages, the essential characteristic of which was a system of overlapping authority and divided loyalties." (Held,1997)

Lastly, new types of boundary problems arise in a world where transnational actors and forces intersect with national communities. These issues create dilemmas regarding who should be accountable to whom, and on what basis, as overlapping spheres of influence, interference, and interest limit democratic thought.

In this framework, the assumption that in liberal democracies consensus legitimizes government policies and that the ballot box is the appropriate mechanism for citizens to confer on the government the authority to regulate economic and social life becomes problematic when challenging the very nature of the community to be considered. Indeed, the issue lies in identifying the appropriate constituency and jurisdiction for the development and implementation of public policy on issues such as health, education, or the retirement system. In this regard, national boundaries have traditionally defined the basis on which individuals are included or excluded from decisions affecting their lives. However, as nowadays many socio-economic processes and the outcomes of decisions related to those processes extend across national boundaries, key governance processes escape the categories of the nation-state, leaving traditional national resolutions of key issues of democratic theory and practice in doubt.

It is precisely in this space that multinationals have inserted themselves, causing a significant impact on the transformation, if not erosion, of the traditional role of the nation-state and its democratic institutions. The growing influence of multinational corporations on democracy has become an increasingly pressing issue: as corporations have grown in size and turnover, they have been able to exert greater influence on democratic processes, both within individual nations and on

a global scale. Indeed, with the development of globalization, corporations have gained increasing power and influence, being able to operate across national borders and take advantage of economic liberalization policies. Meanwhile, neoliberalism has promoted the idea that the private sector is more efficient than the public sector in providing goods and services. As a result of these two structural upheavals, corporations have been granted greater access to and influence over government decision-making processes, including policies related to taxation, regulation and trade agreements. Corporate political influence, commonly referred to as CPI, describes the various methods by which corporations can impact the policy-making process. Such influence is typically exerted through a combination of formal and informal interactions between corporate actors and individuals or institutions associated with the public sector. These interactions may be legal or illegal, direct or indirect, transactional or relational. The key components of CPI include providing direct or indirect payments, as well as other types of support, to politicians, political parties, and election campaigns. Additionally, corporations may offer financial assistance to lobbying and advocacy organizations and engage in other forms of influence over the cultural and knowledge circuits that inform policy-making and shape ideological frameworks. This corporate influence has led to policies that often favor the interests of large corporations over those of citizens, leading to a growing sense of disillusionment and frustration with democratic institutions. At the heart of this problem is the tension between the interests of corporations and those of citizens. While corporations are driven primarily by profit and shareholder values, citizens have a wide range of competing interests, including concerns for social welfare and individual rights. In many cases, the interests of corporations and citizens are in direct conflict as corporations seek to maximize their profits at the expense of other actors, in this case citizens and the democratic State.

One of the ways in which corporations have been able to exert influence on democracy is their ability to finance political campaigns and lobby government officials. Although my focus is on corporate influence, it is important to emphasize that wealthy people, unions, and other players in the electoral process also fund political campaigns. But what is striking is that “the volume of resources dedicated to corporate lobbying is not only vast but far exceeds that available to other stakeholders and interest groups” (Utting & O’Neill, 2020). Corporate political spending and advocacy are justified on the basis of a pluralist view of politics and democracy, which holds that all actors should have the right to participate in the policy-making process. However, while this view assumes that all participants should have an equal opportunity to make their voices heard, the current trends of corporate political influence significantly erode any semblance of equality in the political discourse. To provide empirical evidence, in the late 1970s corporations and trade unions used to spend roughly similar amounts on funding congressional campaigns. However, since then,

there has been a significant increase in the gap between them: currently, for every dollar spent by trade unions and public interest groups on lobbying, large corporations and their associations spend 34 dollars.

This has led to a situation where corporate voices are often amplified over those of individual citizens and ‘common good interest groups’, as corporations are able to use their financial resources to influence public opinion and political decisions. To put it with the words of Stern & Barley, “so powerful have large corporations become that their decisions affect the welfare of entire states and nations. Democracy itself has increasingly become the province of organized action. Although officials are still elected by a plebiscite, elections are disproportionately financed by organizations to which candidates must appeal for support. Battles over legislation are fought by an army of lobbyists employed by organizations claimed to represent the interests of groups of citizens” (Stern & Barley, 1996).

In addition to direct lobbying activities, corporations have also been able to influence democracy through their control of the media and other forms of communication. By controlling the narratives that shape public opinion, corporations are able to shape political discourse and ensure that their interests are prioritized over those of other actors. This can be achieved “by providing technical expertise, generating both scientific and anti-scientific data and analysis, and the so-called revolving door syndrome—the two-way flow of personnel between the public and private sectors” (Utting & O’Neill, 2020) to exploit an ex-official’s expertise in a specific public field for the benefit of the new private employer.

In addition to their influence over government decision-making processes, corporations have also gained increasing clout in policies affecting the common good. One way they have done this is through the privatization of tasks previously performed by state governments. As governments have outsourced more and more services to the private sector, corporations have gained significant control over areas that were previously considered public goods, such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. This has often resulted in reduced access to these goods for the public, as corporations prioritize profits over the needs of citizens. Furthermore, corporations have also found ways to obstruct or deflect institutional bodies created to defend the public good from their actions and the externalities they cause. For example, they may use their financial resources to influence the findings of scientific research, or to discredit watchdog organizations that seek to hold them accountable. In some cases, they may even engage in illegal or unethical practices to maintain their power and influence. These tactics make it increasingly difficult for citizens to hold corporations accountable for their actions and to ensure that policies are enacted with the common good in mind.

The increasing power and influence of corporations have affected the very foundations of democratic institutions. The principles of democracy, such as representation, accountability, and transparency, have been undermined as corporations have gained more control over government decision-making processes. This shift has led to the rise of technocracy, where policy decisions are made by technical experts rather than elected representatives. This technocratic approach to governance is often seen as a way to bypass democratic processes and to prioritize efficiency over public input. This trend, that will be discussed in depth during the next chapter, has led to growing concerns about the erosion of democratic norms and values, as well as the need for a more robust and inclusive form of democracy that can address the complex challenges facing society today. In the next section I will address the threat posed on the democratic process by neo-liberalism, particularly in the form of political participation and representation.

2.3 Neo-liberal Threats to Political Representation and Participation: Political Financing, Reduction of the Welfare State and Erosion of National Sovereignty.

Political participation and representation are at the core of the democratic system and ensure that citizens have a voice in decision-making processes and that their interests are adequately represented. However, the influence of neo-liberalism on electoral politics and decision-making has introduced significant threats to these basic principles. As neo-liberalism emphasizes concepts such as the free market, deregulation, and limited government intervention, it had a decisive role in reshaping the global political landscape in recent decades. While neoliberal policies have been associated with economic growth and efficiency by those who promoted and supported them, their impact on political representation and participation is increasingly under scrutiny. During this section I will explore the ways in which neo-liberalism's influence on electoral politics and policy-making processes is posing serious challenges to the democratic fabric of societies, compromising the representation of diverse interests and limiting citizen engagement.

As I have pointed out in previous sections, in neoliberal societies privatization of public services, deregulations and reduction of the welfare state have become prevalent policies. These policies, often implemented under the guise of promoting individual freedom and economic prosperity, have led to an increasing concentration of power and influence in the hands of business elites and corporations. As a result, political campaigns and electoral processes have become increasingly dependent on private financing, creating an environment in which money plays a decisive role in determining political outcomes. For example, according to research conducted by the CAGE Research CentreLink external at the University of Warwick, “data reveals that donations have almost trebled[...], rising from £41 million in 2001 to £101 million in 2019. Individual giving has

also risen substantially, with 60% of donations in 2019 coming from private individuals.” (University of Warwick, 2022). The same is true for U.S. political campaigns and for European countries too. This political financing can undermine the democratic process as candidates with access to substantial resources gain a disproportionate advantage over those with limited financial support, with the result that the voices and concerns of ordinary citizens can be overshadowed or neglected in favor of the interests of wealthy donors and corporations. The political financing refers to the growing influence of money in political campaigns and electoral processes, where the availability of financial resources plays a significant role in determining political outcomes, in particular affecting popular representation in the institutional bodies and in the drafting of policies. Echoing Dahl's thought, democratic representation is the ability of political groups to aggregate and represent, within democratic institutions, diverse and widespread interests in societies. Throughout the history of representative democracy, politicians have faced challenges in finding methods to finance political competition that promote the democratic process while safeguarding crucial democratic values. In the most favorable light, money in politics has been regarded as an unfortunate necessity. Nevertheless, it is crucial to emphasize the fundamental differentiation between influencing, where politicians make decisions based on their own judgment, and the facilitation of favors granted by public administration, which often involves the violation of laws and regulations. “In the first case lawmakers and governments shape laws and regulations [...] taking into account demands and interests from campaign donors [...]. In the second case, elected officeholders use their influence on civil service to arrange for donors to earn contracts, get access to public loans or earn other benefits. This involves undue political influence on public service and unlawful behavior of public servants involved in public procurement [...] where companies expect illegal favors in return for campaign donations.” (Speck & Olabe, 2013). In both cases, however, the phenomenon whereby large sums of money enter the democratic electoral process has the potential to undermine the principles of equality and fair representation in several ways. First, the increasing reliance on private funding in political campaigns creates an imbalance of power between candidates who have access to substantial financial resources and those who do not. Wealthy individuals, corporations and special interest groups can exert significant influence by providing financial support to candidates who align with their interests. As a result, candidates without financial support may struggle to compete effectively, resulting in biased representation that favors those with greater financial resources. This scenario undermines the principle of political equality, as the ability to raise money becomes a determinant of political success, rather than the merit of ideas or the will of voters. Second, the financialization of politics can perpetuate inequality by reinforcing existing disparities in wealth and power. Wealthy donors often expect a return on

their political investments, whether through favorable policy decisions, regulatory exemptions or access to decision makers. As a result, politicians may feel compelled to prioritize the concerns and interests of their wealthy benefactors over those of the general population. This dynamic not only undermines the principle of equitable representation, but also perpetuates a system that favors elites and weakens the voice and authority of marginalized communities.

Moreover, the increase in political financing can lead to a political culture that prioritizes fundraising and campaign financing over addressing the needs and concerns of ordinary citizens. Instead of focusing on policy issues and engaging with constituents, politicians may be compelled to spend significant time and effort on soliciting financial contributions and cultivating relationships with potential donors. This shift in focus can create a disconnect between elected officials and the communities they are meant to represent, as their attention is directed towards securing financial support rather than understanding and addressing the diverse interests and concerns of their constituents. As a result, the representation of ordinary citizens may be compromised, leading to a democratic deficit where the voices of those without financial resources are marginalized or ignored.

Furthermore, the political financing can contribute to public perceptions of corruption and erode trust in democratic institutions. When the influence of money is perceived to determine political outcomes, it can breed cynicism and skepticism among the public. Citizens may question whether their votes truly matter and whether their elected officials are genuinely acting in their best interests or serving the interests of their financial backers. This erosion of trust also brings with it negatives on political participation, as individuals may become disillusioned and disengaged from the political process, further undermining the principles of equality and fair representation. To put it with the idea of Jan Rosset, Nathalie Giger and Julian Bernauer (2013), in conclusion, the process of representation can be impacted by economic elements such as party financing, incentives for politicians, and disparities in political engagement among income groups. This raises the probability that the policy preferences of wealthier individuals receive greater attention. Consequently, political institutions are more likely to align with the policy preferences of high-income groups, regardless of their numerical representation, rather than those of low-income citizens.

As repeatedly pointed out, neo-liberal policies that prioritize limited government intervention and market forces as primary drivers of social progress have had significant implications for the ability and scope of the State to regulate economic activities and ensure social welfare. This emphasis on reducing the role of the state has led to a weakening of public institutions and a decrease in the

provision of public services, with serious repercussions for citizens and, consequently, their political (non-)participation.

One of the most notable impacts of neo-liberal policies is the reduction in access to quality education, healthcare, and social support systems. As the State withdraws from its role as the primary provider of these services, the responsibility often falls on individuals and private entities. This shift can result in unequal access to essential services, with marginalized and economically disadvantaged communities suffering the most. Inadequate educational opportunities limit social mobility, while limited access to healthcare undermines public health outcomes. The absence of robust social support systems can leave vulnerable individuals and communities without adequate safety nets, perpetuating existing inequalities and exacerbating social divisions. The erosion of public infrastructure and social safety nets not only affects individuals' well-being but also has implications for their political participation. Marginalized individuals and communities face numerous obstacles in exercising their rights and engaging meaningfully in the political process. As several studies suggest, “political participation is a further factor that is affected by economic inequality. Generally speaking, political participation has been found to be lower in more unequal societies” (Rosset, Giger & Bernauer 2013). For instance, limited access to quality education can hinder political awareness and civic engagement, preventing individuals from fully understanding their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Inadequate healthcare can lead to health disparities, making it difficult for individuals to actively participate in political activities due to illness or the need to prioritize survival over civic engagement. The absence of social support systems further exacerbates these challenges, as individuals may be preoccupied with meeting their basic needs rather than participating in political discourse. The resulting lack of trust and disillusionment among citizens is a natural consequence of these circumstances. When individuals perceive that the State fails to address their basic needs and provide essential services, their faith in the political system and democratic institutions vanishes. A cycle of participatory disengagement may emerge, as citizens become disenchanted and disheartened by the perceived inability of the political system to address their concerns and improve their well-being. This disengagement further weakens democratic governance, as the voices of the marginalized are silenced, and their demands for change go unheard, further limiting the representation of diverse voices and interests. Moreover, neo-liberal policies frequently place greater emphasis on advancing the interests of globalized markets and international capital, often at the expense of local communities and domestic actors. This prioritization can have profound implications for national sovereignty and democratic decision-making processes. As policies and regulations are influenced by powerful

international financial institutions and multinational corporations, the ability of citizens and local communities to shape policies that directly impact their lives can be significantly weakened. The erosion of national sovereignty occurs as governments, in pursuit of economic competitiveness and attracting foreign investment, may feel compelled to align their policies with the demands and preferences of global markets. This can result in a loss of autonomy for domestic actors, as decision-making authority shifts away from democratic institutions towards supranational organizations or corporate entities. The influence of international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund or World Bank, can often come with conditions that prioritize market-oriented reforms, austerity measures, and deregulation. These conditions can limit the policy options available to national governments, undermining their ability to address local needs and respond effectively to social, economic, and environmental challenges.

Furthermore, the concentration of power in transnational entities can hinder the participation of citizens in shaping the policies that affect their lives. As decision-making authority is dispersed beyond national borders, citizens may feel increasingly detached from the political process, perceiving it as distant and disconnected from their concerns and aspirations. This detachment can lead to a sense of diminished agency and a reduction in the perceived effectiveness of democratic governance. When individuals believe that their voices are ignored or overridden by global market forces, feelings of apathy, cynicism, and disillusionment can arise, deterring active participation and contributing to democratic deficits.

Additionally, the influence of globalized markets and international capital can lead to a concentration of economic power in the hands of a few dominant players. Large multinational corporations, with their extensive resources and global reach, can exert significant influence over governments and policy-making processes. This influence can manifest through lobbying, campaign financing, or even the threat of relocating operations, creating an environment where corporate interests often take precedence over the needs and preferences of local communities.

Money plays a significant role in shaping politics, as parties and candidates are accountable to their financial supporters. Political participation often follows the expectation of responsiveness to donors. However, when disagreements arise between citizens or interest groups and candidates or political parties, there is a tendency for individuals to withhold donations. Donors have diverse expectations, and officeholders employ various methods to fulfill those expectations. Where parties or politicians are responsive to a group of donors rather than to other actors or where donations earn financial benefits in dealings with public administration, financial support corrupts representative government. When lawmakers represent or appear to represent financial interests rather than the

voters, the voters lose trust in representative government. Benefitting political donors will often include breaking laws by civil servants, thus undermining the integrity of public administration. Such dynamics can marginalize marginalized groups and exacerbate existing inequalities, as their voices and concerns may be overshadowed or disregarded in favor of the profit-driven agendas of transnational entities.

In conclusion, neo-liberalism's influence on electoral politics and policy-making processes has introduced significant threats to political participation and representation. The prioritization of market-driven principles, privatization of public services, and the concentration of power in the hands of economic elites have undermined the democratic fabric of societies. Political financing, reduction of the welfare state, and erosion of national sovereignty have all contributed to limited citizen engagement and compromised their political representation.

Chapter 3: The Risk of Degeneration: Examining the Potential Transformation of Democracy into Technocracy under Neoliberal Influence.

3.1 Understanding Technocracy: Historical Development, Definition and Characteristics.

In recent decades, the rise of neoliberalism has had a profound impact on governance structures and decision-making processes around the world. Neoliberal policies, with their emphasis on market-oriented approaches and the prioritization of economic considerations, have redefined the relationship between states, markets and society. A notable consequence of this change has been the potential transformation of democratic systems into technocratic models, where decision-making authority is increasingly concentrated in the hands of technical experts rather than elected representatives. Understanding technocracy in the context of neoliberalism is critical to understanding the changing dynamics of contemporary democratic governance. This chapter aims, first, to explore the definition and characteristics of technocracy by clarifying the history and conceptualization of this theory of governance. In the second section I will examine the intricate relationship between technocracy and neo-liberalism, seeking to shed light on the implications for democratic processes and the shift toward a government of technicians. Finally, I will critically analyze the tensions and contradictions that arise when technocratic governance clashes with democratic ideals and processes, seeking to understand what are and what might be the major disruptions that, by eroding democratic principles, are leading to the entrenchment of technocratic governments within '21st century societies.

In this first section, after providing a historical analysis of the birth and evolution of the concept of technocracy based on literary and sociological writings, I will focus on the definition of technocracy in a governmental context, outlining the main characteristics of this model of governance.

As highlighted by J. G. Gunnell in his article "The Technocratic Image and the Theory of Technocracy", the concept of technocracy was introduced in the United States in 1919 by an engineer called William Henry Smith, who defined technocracy as "national industrial government", but it rose to prominence in the early 1930s as a response to the Great Depression. At the period, a movement arose, inspired by Edward Bellamy's utopian novel "Looking Backward," which envisioned a future ruled by technology. This social reform movement, formed of technicians and engineers, was also influenced by Thorstein Veblen's economic ideas and Frederick W. Taylor's concepts of scientific management. These theories, coupled with later contributions from James Burnham in "The Managerial Society," suggested that technical experts should shape society instead of politicians and industry entrepreneurs. While this trend appeared unusual, it expressed a uniquely American belief in the harmonious link between technology and civic development. Its purpose was to eliminate political corruption and antiquated economic structures while fostering administrative and technological rationality.

Since the development of the first philosophical theories "there has been a fundamental tension between the concepts of Homo faber and Homo politicus. The Greeks believed that social life began with the Promethean gift of Techne, but the legacy of that gift was ambiguous. According to Plato it was the origin of politics in the sense that human beings were able to undertake their own governance. Yet it has often been suggested that Plato's notion of the application of political knowledge [...] would eliminate politics as a distinct and autonomous mode of human activity. Plato and Aristotle both emphasized the primacy of political rule for determining scope and application of all other arts and forms of knowledge within the polis, but Aristotle stressed the idea of the polis as a political association or public community of citizens deliberating about managing the affairs of the polis"(Gunnell, 1982).

The notion of employing technology to improve the well-being of humans may be traced back to Tommaso Campanella's "City of the Sun" and its focus on technical knowledge and the employment of machinery in every field of human life. However, Francis Bacon's "New Atlantis" is often recognized as the prototypical example of a scientific utopia. Bacon imagined a new social order committed to promoting modern science and attaining progress via mastery of nature, albeit he left some uncertainty regarding the link between power, knowledge, and the function of the state. Following that, the French philosophes of the 18th century predicted unstoppable progress in knowledge and its rational application for solving human issues. However, opponents of such

vision as Rousseau expressed reservations about the effects of development in the arts and sciences on human happiness and the integrity of democratic societies. Many elements of the technocratic vision can be found in the works of Henri de Saint-Simon, who imagined an industrial society led by a class of engineers, scientists, industrialists, and planners who would apply technical knowledge systematically to solve social problems and establish a rational social order. Saint-Simon's proposal is the first example of a pure form of technocracy, in which political institutions were to be replaced by a parliament of technical specialists. "If Bacon's New Atlantis was the first example of a scientific utopia, Saint-Simon provided the first model of a pure technocracy" (Gunnell, 1982). A significant portion of Western sociology has accepted the idea that when societies grow, they tend to move toward instrumental rationality. The theories of Max Weber on bureaucracy have served as a basic paradigm for explaining the technocratic phenomena. Modernity, according to Weber, includes a continual advance toward rational-legal administration, which is characterized by procedural norms and rational reasoning. Bureaucracy is recognized as the most functional and developed form of government, but it also has the potential to become an independent entity that interferes on policymakers' domain. Weber claims that bureaucracy is unsuited to this task and frequently represents the conservative viewpoints of the privileged classes from whom bureaucrats are generally chosen. Moreover, while politicians must compete in the public context to earn support, bureaucrats are evaluated mostly on their expertise and efficiency.

According to Weber, the issue in modern society was to regulate the bureaucratic domain while maintaining democratic political will. Bureaucracy, in Weber's opinion, reflected not just governmental administration, but also the widespread tendency toward rationalization seen in all parts of contemporary life, including law and economics. "His concept of the march of technical rationality in the world, the rise of a bureaucratic elite, and the relationship between bureaucracy and ideology exemplified all the principal elements of the technocratic image" (Gunnell, 1982).

By the 1930s, however, Karl Mannheim gave a more "hopeful" perspective, claiming the possibility for social government and planning through an applied science of politics that transcends ideology and utopian aspirations. While recognizing that all knowledge and political beliefs are influenced by specific social and cultural interests, Mannheim argued that twentieth-century society gave the opportunity for a type of social knowledge free of particularistic considerations. He envisioned a convergence of knowledge and power enabled by an educated elite that was becoming increasingly classless. Mannheim suggested that specialized knowledge might be applied to democratic social planning at a time when rationalization was growing and conventional politics was being replaced by administration. These concepts acquired relevance in the arguments linked with the "end of ideology" thesis of the 1950s, which held that modern industrial society, with its

ability to address basic societal challenges, rendered radical ideologies obsolete. The emphasis moved towards utilizing administrative, intellectual, and technical resources to pragmatically address specific societal concerns. Mannheim's viewpoint is reinforced in Lane's "Decline of Politics and Ideology In a Knowledgeable Society (1966) in which is explored the fact that the progression towards more advanced thought processes, thanks to the evolution of technological means, and the differentiation between one's inner and outer worlds, accompanied by the ability to imagine alternative scenarios and engage in reflective abstraction, has led to the development of more effective frameworks for understanding and analyzing complex issues. This intellectual growth has resulted in changes in policy-making procedures, as there is a growing emphasis on applying scientific criteria to inform decision-making. This shift occurs at the expense of traditional short-term political considerations and ideological thinking, which are replaced by a more rigorous and evidence-based approach to policy determination. The increased knowledge and evolving thought patterns are driving this transformation, as policymakers recognize the value of objective and long-term perspectives in shaping effective policies. Thus, it is possible to consider technocracy as a "system of governance in which technically trained experts rule by virtue of their specialized knowledge and position in dominant political and economic institutions"(Fischer, 1990).

According to Dries, technocracy can be attached to 4 meanings: "(1) expert rule; (2) rule coerced by technological imperatives; (3) rule by reaction to factual constraints; (4) trend towards a surveillance state" (Barbi, 2022). These meanings collectively represent symptoms of technocratic tendencies within a democratic system; however, in this section, I will mostly focus on the concepts of "expert rule" and "rule coerced by technological imperatives", particularly the form that this model of governance has taken in modern Western societies.

In accordance with Habermas' theoretical analysis, a perspective sees technocracy as a project aimed at undermining the decision neutrality of bureaucratic organizations. This viewpoint contends that for technocracy to develop, a conception of rational decision-making is required, rather than an organized endeavor to construct a technocratic society. Although there have been supporters of technocratic initiatives throughout history, such as Saint-Simon in Restoration France or the Technocracy Movement in the United States during the Great Depression, their impact has been limited. In contrast to the "project" theory, theorists who see modernity as a rationalization process claim that technocracy is a conceivable, if not necessary, outcome of the bureaucratization and rationalization inherent in modernity and the modern state.

Technocracy, however, is not restricted to the administrative dimension. As explained in Miguel Centeno's book "Democracy in Reason: Technocratic Revolution in Mexico," technocracy refers to a wide range of knowledgeable elites in positions of authority, both inside and outside the state

bureaucracy. It also includes a widespread mindset that, because of their access to scientific authority, technical specialists should meaningfully inform all elements of the democratic process. This technocratic mentality is not limited to the governmental or administrative apparatus, as proposed by the project thesis, but permeates the public sphere itself. This suggests that, contrary to what a simplistic separation between the administrative and political realms may imply, the public sphere is not intrinsically antagonistic to technocracy; “rather, public deliberation is liable to technocratic deformations aiming at decision-making by epistemic principles– such as knowledge, expertise, and truth”(Barbi, 2022).

The concept of the technocratic project is not tied to a specific social class or elite, rather it encompasses a diverse range of individuals from various backgrounds who contribute their specialized knowledge, experience and skills to the collective decision-making processes of public and private organizations. This group is commonly referred to as the "technostructure," which initially included specialists and technicians responsible for the extensive planning and control required in the large organizations of the new “industrial” State. However, in a more contemporary context, technostructure has undergone significant expansion and includes a wider range of participants: “From this vantage point, the technostructure – policy planners, economists, engineers, management specialists, computer analysts, social scientists and technologists – process the critical information essential to the stable and efficient operation of our contemporary institutions” (Fischer, 1990).

To put it with the words of Habermas, who was one of the first philosophers that analyzed and criticized the technocratic model: “the decisionistic definition of the relation of expertise to political practice is being abandoned by many in favor of a technocratic model. The dependence of the professional on the politician appears to have reversed itself. The latter becomes the mere agent of a scientific intelligentsia, which, in concrete circumstances, elaborates the objective implications and requirements of available techniques and resources as well as of optimal strategies and rules of control” (Habermans, 1971). The technocratic framework diminishes the authority of politicians, leaving them with an illusory role in decision-making. Indeed, they are relegated to a mere placeholder in an incomplete process of power rationalization, wherein scientific analysis and planning have assumed the primary initiative. On a broader scale, the technocratic model advocates the establishment of a "technical state," in which the role of the state shifts from being a mechanism for enforcing interests with no scientific basis, resolved solely through arbitrary decisions, to becoming a fully rational administrative body. The idea of technocratic scientificization of politics gained momentum mainly due to the interplay between technical and scientific advances, which were in turn linked to the rise of industrialism and the emergence of an industrial society in which

science, technology and industrial use were seamlessly integrated into a cohesive system. As a result, a form of scientific management emerged, characterized by a logical, practical, and goal-oriented approach, based on precise calculations and a systemic understanding of processes. The technocratic model of governance is based on the “assumption that human problems, like technical ones, have a solution that experts, given sufficient data and authority, can discover and execute. Applied to politics this reasoning finds interference from vested interests, ideologies, and party politics intolerable. Its antithesis is decision making through the weighing of forces and compromise”(Kuisel, 1981).

The technocratic model of governance not only seeks to undermine bureaucratic compromise with political leadership as intended by Weber, but it also seeks for the entire elimination of politics from the state and the larger political system. Indeed, its purpose is to develop a completely rational administration of society that is founded on scientific management. As a result, the technocratic “scientificalization” of politics inevitably leads to depoliticization. Technocracy, in practice, deprives societies of their political essence by isolating the criteria for ordering social life from the rules of interaction; this system, however, is fundamentally incompatible with individuals' personal experiences, public involvement and elected representatives' discretion as well as democratic bargaining process. In essence, technocracy asserts that the progress of society can only be achieved through the depoliticization of social issues.

In the next section I will explore this in more detail, trying to shed light on the impact of technocracy on democratic decision-making, particularly addressing the issues of depoliticization and the rise of expert figures in decision-making roles within the public sphere.

3.2 Technocracy's Impact on Democratic Decision-Making: Depoliticization and the Shift Towards the Expertise Approach.

In contemporary democratic systems, the rise of technocracy has emerged as a significant force shaping decision-making processes. This section delves into the impact of technocracy on democratic governance, with a particular focus on the phenomenon of depoliticization and the shift towards the expertise approach for political evaluations. Technocracy, characterized by the domination of experts and the primacy of technical knowledge, defies traditional notions of democratic decision-making, privileging rationality and efficiency over the political process of compromise among the diverse interests present in the broad composition of society. By examining the depoliticization trend inherent in technocracy, I will explore how political decision-making is increasingly divorced from normative regulations and public participation. Additionally, my

intention is to examine the growing emphasis on expertise in decision-making processes, as technocrats and specialized elites assume prominent roles in policy formulation and implementation. Thus, this section aims to shed light on the implications of technocracy for democratic systems, critically analyzing its impact on the core principles of democratic decision-making and the role of citizen engagement in shaping public policies, by deeply exploring the concept of depoliticization.

Nevertheless, before proceeding to analyze the impact of technocracy on democratic governance, it is extremely important to explain the points of contact between the concepts of neoliberalism and technocracy, as it is intuitively evident that there is a strong connection between these two concepts. Neoliberalism, as an ideology and set of economic policies, emphasizes the free market, limited government intervention and individual freedom; technocracy, on the other hand, emphasizes the domain of experts and the application of technical knowledge in decision-making processes.

One of the key intersections between neoliberalism and technocracy lies in their common emphasis on efficiency and rationality. Neoliberalism advocates market-based solutions and the efficient allocation of resources, guided by the invisible hand of the market. Similarly, technocracy promotes the idea that technical skills and scientific knowledge can lead to optimal outcomes and effective problem solving. Both neoliberalism and technocracy challenge traditional democratic processes and institutions. Neoliberalism advocates reducing the role of the State and deregulating markets, often at the expense of social welfare programs and collective decision-making. Technocracy, with its emphasis on expert governance, can overshadow the role of elected representatives and diminish the influence of public participation in decision-making.

Moreover, neo-liberalism and technocracy share a belief in the supremacy of market mechanisms and the pursuit of economic growth as the primary goals of governance. This alignment can lead to policy decisions that prioritize economic considerations over social concerns. The influence of technocratic experts, often from corporate circles, can further reinforce market-oriented approaches and neoliberal ideologies.

At the same time, it is worth noting that the link between neoliberalism and technocracy is not without tension. Indeed, both ideologies can lead to the concentration of power in the hands of a technocratic elite or wealthy interests, neglecting equity and social justice. The sidelining of democratic deliberation and accountability in favor of technocratic decision-making can indeed limit the ability of citizens to shape policies that directly affect their lives.

In the last section I emphasized the fact that technocracy deprives societies of their political essence, promoting a model of government in which the goals to be achieved are not so much those that emerge from social bargaining, but rather those decided by a class of (unelected) experts who

make decisions to maximize efficiency. This plays a decisive role in causing a process of depoliticization within democratic states, as a polity in which decision-making tends to turn into the affirmation of decisions made outside the institutions of representation becomes precisely 'depoliticized'. However, depoliticization is a misnomer; in reality politics remains, but the arena or process through which decisions are made is changed. Thus, the processes commonly referred to as depoliticization could more accurately be described as 'arena shifting', as they refer primarily to the removal of institutions and individuals associated with representative democracy (legislators and elected politicians) from the actual positions that have a pivotal weight in the decision-making process. It emerges that the presence of an indirect governing relationship is central to the concept of depoliticization. This is because it is still the politicians who decide which functions are to be depoliticized and the subsequent selection of appropriate tactics and tools, as, in addition to the powers conferred by their office, they retain the ability to use significant mechanisms of indirect control, reserve powers or discretion. Taking in consideration the idea developed by Flinders and Buller (2006), we could say that depoliticization takes shape through three tactical elements. One commonly observed approach to depoliticization is institutional depoliticization, which involves establishing a formalized relationship between elected politicians and appointed officials. In this arrangement, politicians focus on shaping general policies, while officials are granted a certain degree of operational and managerial autonomy, often within independent agencies that operate within the broader guidelines set by government ministries. Another tactic of depoliticization is rule-based depoliticization, which aims to limit the authority of political decision-making through the implementation of specific regulations. By relying on seemingly impartial and universal rule systems, politicians are shielded from social pressures. As a result, policy implementation becomes viewed as a purely technical matter that does not require political compromises. The last tactic of depoliticization involves the construction of preference mechanisms through the use of communication, rhetoric and ideological tactics. The aim of this tactic is to provide explanations and make a particular political viewpoint more acceptable to the public. By framing political issues in certain ways and appealing to specific ideologies, policymakers can create the perception that their decisions are grounded in objective reasoning rather than political interests. The use of those tactical tools plays a decisive role in causing the depoliticization of government, which has many implications for the polity and the connection between government and governance. In fact, it consists of the transfer of decision-making powers from elective offices to arenas portrayed as neutral, objective, and remote from institutional politics such as independent regulatory authorities, agencies, central banks and public utilities privatized and made dependent on

the market rather than on the interference of politicians, with experts appointed in key roles of such institutions in order to implement rational and calculus driven policies.

Thus, we can say that the "depoliticized" governance model is based on the adoption of an institutional, procedural and ideological framework that aims to build a kind of buffer zone between politicians and certain areas of public policy. The aforementioned tactical tools are used to change the structure of decision-making, and once a policy is established according to the scientific knowledge, its implementation is reduced to the technical task of monitoring and occasionally adjusting goals, without the need for political negotiations. These adjustments downplay the political aspect of decision-making and, through representation, grant legitimacy to individuals who are less interested in recognizing the existence of the political aspect within decision-making, since they only care about maximizing efficiency, leading the political class to take less responsibility for society's regulatory decisions and the implications of their costs and failures on economic, social and cultural processes, to the point where market-influenced policy decisions take on the characteristics of necessity and inevitability. This paradigm shift undertaken by the political classes and consequently by institutions has led to a distancing of the State from the needs of citizens and, in turn, a distancing of citizens from the State, resulting in a process of political disengagement that has evolved into anti-political sentiment. Depoliticization can thus be understood either as a specific approach to government that begins at the State level and has a substantial impact on society through the implementation of policies, or as a systemic phenomenon that affects society as a whole in the form of a general spread of "anti-politics" caused by an increasing distancing of the ruling classes from the needs of citizens.

This shift in democratic decision process and the distancing of politics from the needs of citizens, as the process of depoliticization per se, is the consequence of the rise of an approach that relies on the presence of specific technicians and experts in decision-making roles within and outside political institutions. As Putnam (1977) states, the replacement of politics with expert technique is decisive in creating figures who in practice are apolitical and reflect this characteristic in the decisions and policies they implement; moreover, as a result of the increasing reliance on technological means, most of society believes that efficiency in policy implementation is best achieved through pragmatism and rationality, rather than through ideology and from political beliefs, thus trusting technological progress more than the social policy-oriented community bargaining process. In practice, the dedication to scientific administration renders the technocratic project anti-political, anti-ideological and anti-democratic. This vision, however, fit well with the industrial technocracy that peaked in the 1960s and 1970s, but then had to take steps backward as governments became less and less enthusiastic about the extensive planning and social engineering that was advancing.

Fischer recognized this shift in perspective as a new type of 'silent' technocratic revolution. Instead of taking an overtly anti-political stance, technocracy adopted a more subtle position as the servant of organizational and socioeconomic requirements. By functioning in the shadows, technocracy gained even greater power. While the early technocracy's call for scientificization and depoliticization was quite blatantly aimed at the political field, the 'peaceful' technocratic revolution sought to obscure the inherently political nature of depoliticization, thus holding out the promise of true scientific management. However, in the years since, the technocratic project has evolved far beyond the confines of the silent revolution. This development is particularly evident through the paradigm of public policy governance and public sector reform, which has given the technocratic project a distinct logic of transforming government into governance. Indeed, the governance paradigm gives a new dimension to the technocratic project, extending its scope and influence in policymaking and public administration. Central to this paradigm are the figures of experts who play a crucial role in shaping and implementing policies. Their specialized knowledge, skills, and experience are seen as valuable assets that contribute to effective policy formulation and implementation. Experts are often appointed or consulted to provide evidence-based advice and recommendations to policymakers, drawing on their deep understanding of specific domains or sectors. These experts bring a high level of technical expertise to the table, which is considered essential for addressing complex societal challenges and maximizing policy outcomes. Their contributions help bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical implementation, ensuring that policies are well-informed, efficient, and aligned with the desired goals. Moreover, the governance paradigm emphasizes the importance of collaboration and partnerships between various actors, including experts, policymakers, civil society organizations, and the private sector. This collaborative approach acknowledges that complex problems require diverse perspectives and input from multiple actors. Experts, with their specialized knowledge, provide valuable insights and contribute to the collective decision-making process. By elevating the role of experts within the governance paradigm, the technocratic project gains greater prominence and influence. The expertise of these individuals becomes a driving force in shaping policies, as their recommendations carry weight and are often considered authoritative. This shift towards expert-driven decision-making reflects a strong belief in the power of technical knowledge and rationality to guide policy choices and produce desired outcomes.

In any case, it is important to note that the expansion of the role of experts in the governance paradigm also raises issues of accountability, democratic participation, and potential exclusion of diverse perspectives. Although in our increasingly complex and intricate societies, the importance of knowledge, expertise and the community of scholars in shaping effective state policies and

promoting social progress is widely recognized, nevertheless, scholars have often warned of the potential undemocratic consequences of granting too much power to experts, as it tends to create an imbalance of power between them and ordinary citizens. The debate surrounding the transfer of power from democratically elected representatives to unelected technocrats is closely linked to one's perception of the nature of specific political issues. This shift implies the belief that certain issues primarily require practical or technical solutions rather than reconciling diverse and valid individual interests and values.

Regardless of one's perspective on this matter, numerous scholarly works indicate that scientists and experts have gained increasing influence over policymaking in recent decades. These developments have been driven by factors such as changing incentives for elected politicians resulting from partisan shifts and realignment, the growing complexity of modern society, technological advancements, and evolving notions of good governance. Relying on scientific advice and knowledge to inform policy decisions, or even delegating decision-making authority to experts, follows a different rationale compared to the traditional approach of decision-making by democratically elected representatives. It is based on the notion that individuals with superior knowledge and expertise are better qualified and possess greater legitimacy to participate in decision-making processes. However, this fundamentally contrasts with the principle of political equality, which asserts that no individual should wield more influence over the state than another. It also raises concerns about accountability, given the inherent challenge for those outside the scientific community to assess the quality and reliability of scientists' recommendations.

In conclusion, it is evident how the shift of decision-making from the hands of politicians to those of technicians brings with it positive aspects in terms of achieving maximum efficiency and the best solutions from a rational point of view; however, it is equally obvious how it causes consequences on decision-making and on some of the cardinal principles of democracy, such as representation, accountability, and participation.

3.3 The Path to Technocracy: Analyzing the Erosion of Democratic Processes and the Rise of Technocratic Governance.

In this final section I delve deeper into the phenomenon of technocracy and its implications for democratic processes. Having previously defined technocracy and examined its key characteristics, as well as explored the impact of technocracy on the decision-making process, particularly through depoliticization and the growing influence of experts, this section aims to trace the trajectory that has led to the prominence of technocratic governance. By analyzing the erosion of democratic processes and the rise of technocratic tendencies, I seek to shed light on the factors and

developments that have propelled the ascent of technocracy as a governing approach. Through this investigation, I aim to gain a comprehensive understanding of how democratic governance has been affected, the challenges it poses, and the implications for broader notions of political participation, accountability, and legitimacy. It is crucial to critically examine the erosion of democratic processes to grasp the shifting dynamics and mechanisms that have contributed to the prominence of technocratic governance. This erosion can be attributed to various interrelated factors, including socioeconomic and technological advancements, increasing societal complexity, and evolving ideals of good governance.

One of the main causes of the rise of technocratic tendencies can be considered the evolving landscape of contemporary societies, which is characterized by the intricate interplay between rapid technological advancements and the complexities of modern challenges. In this context, the perceived need for technical expertise and problem-solving approaches in decision-making has become increasingly pronounced. The intricate and multifaceted nature of societal issues has created a growing demand for specialized knowledge and analytical tools to effectively address them. “Modern democracy demands the contribution of the scientist, and scientists must assume a sense of public responsibility” (Gunnell, 1982).

As technological advancements continue to reshape various aspects of society, decision-makers recognize the importance of incorporating technical expertise into policy formulation and implementation. The complex nature of contemporary challenges, such as climate change, healthcare, and economic globalization, requires a precise understanding and specialized knowledge to develop effective solutions. Traditional approaches to decision-making, which relied primarily on political considerations and ideological frameworks, often fall short in addressing the intricacies of these multifaceted issues.

Consequently, there has been a notable shift towards problem-solving approaches that emphasize scientific analysis and expert input. Therefore experts, who possess in-depth knowledge and experience in their respective fields, are seen as valuable resources in navigating the complex terrain of contemporary challenges, since their ability to employ analytical tools and interpret data enables them to provide evidence-based recommendations for policy formulation. This increased reliance on experts and scientific analysis as primary drivers of decision-making reflects a broader recognition of the need for specialized knowledge in addressing societal issues: the expertise and technical skills of professionals from various disciplines, including economics, environmental science, and public health, are leveraged to develop comprehensive and effective policies. By integrating scientific insights and analytical methodologies, decision-makers aim to ensure that policy responses are grounded in empirical evidence and have a higher probability of success.

Moreover, the erosion of democratic processes can be attributed to the evolving ideals of good governance and the shifting perception of decision-making authority.

Historically, democratic systems have placed a strong emphasis on the role of elected representatives as the primary decision-makers, tasked with representing the interests and values of the population, in order to ensure a balance between competing interests and promote inclusivity in decision-making.

However, the rise of technocracy has introduced a paradigm shift in the ideals of good governance. Technocrats, equipped with their specialized knowledge and expertise, have emerged as proponents of effective problem-solving and decision-making in the face of complex societal challenges. The emphasis on technical competence and evidence-based approaches has led to a reevaluation of the traditional understanding of democratic decision-making. “The point is that technology and the conditions created by technology supplant political action or severely limit its possibilities. At a certain point, the givens of technology define the range of choices and shape the purposes that can be pursued and the needs and goals that are defined” (Gunnell,1982).

Indeed, technocrats are regarded as possessing a unique set of skills and insights that qualify them as authoritative figures in addressing multifaceted issues. Their expertise is seen as essential for navigating intricate policy domains, understanding the complexity of scientific research, and effectively implementing solutions. Consequently, the influence of technocrats has grown, challenging the conventional democratic notion that decision-making authority should primarily rest with elected representatives. This shift in ideals of good governance poses a significant challenge to democratic processes: while technical expertise can undoubtedly contribute to effective policymaking, it also raises concerns about the concentration of power and the potential exclusion of diverse perspectives. The increasing authority of technocrats may undermine the principle of political equality and dilute the voice of ordinary citizens in shaping public policies.

Another significant factor contributing to the rise of technocratic tendencies is the evolving political landscape, which is marked by partisan dislocations and realignments. Political actors, motivated by changing incentives and ideological shifts, have turned to technocratic approaches as a strategy to showcase their effectiveness and gain public approval. In this regard, the delegation of decision-making authority to unelected technocrats or the establishment of independent agencies with operational and managerial autonomy has become increasingly prevalent. The changing political landscape has created an environment where elected politicians seek to distance themselves from the potential risks and criticisms associated with contentious decision-making. By entrusting decision-making to technocrats, politicians can align themselves with the perception of effective governance while avoiding direct responsibility for potentially controversial outcomes. This

delegation of authority to technocrats allows elected officials to maintain a facade of accountability while mitigating the immediate political consequences of their decisions.

In this context the formalization of relationships between elected politicians and appointed officials, described in the previous section, has played a crucial role in facilitating the depoliticization of decision-making processes. By establishing formal structures that delineate the roles and responsibilities of politicians and technocrats, the decision-making process is framed as a technical and managerial endeavor rather than a political one. This formalization serves as a mechanism to shield politicians from direct involvement in operational details and to create a sense of expertise-driven decision-making. Furthermore, the establishment of independent agencies with operational and managerial freedom has provided an additional avenue for depoliticization, since these agencies, insulated from direct political influence, can develop policies and implement them based on technical considerations and expert knowledge. By designating decision-making authority to these independent bodies, the political realm is further removed from the policy process, with decisions based on technical merits rather than political compromises.

According to the work of “if political criteria decline in importance relative to more universalistic scientific criteria, and if the professional problem-oriented scientists rather than laymen come to have more to say about social policy, the shift in perspective is likely to occasion some differences in policy itself”(Lane, 1966). The rise of technocracy as a governing approach, indeed, has significant implications for the democratic process, especially for participation, accountability, and legitimacy. The growing influence of technocratic decision-making presents a challenge to the principles of political equality and inclusivity, as it concentrates decision-making authority in the hands of a restricted group of experts. This shift has raised fundamental questions about the extent to which ordinary citizens can effectively participate in shaping policies that impact their lives.

One of the key concerns surrounding technocratic governance is the potential erosion of democratic legitimacy, in that the appointment of experts as decision-makers may undermine the perception of political representatives as legitimate representatives of the people. Technocrats, with their specialized knowledge and expertise, may be seen as detached from the concerns and values of citizens, leading to a perceived democratic deficit. As a result, the exclusion of ordinary citizens from decision-making processes can lead to a sense of alienation and disenfranchisement, challenging the fundamental principles of democracy.

Additionally, the involvement of experts in policy formulation raises questions about transparency and accountability. While technocrats may possess valuable insights and scientific expertise, the assessment of the quality and reliability of their recommendations can be challenging for those outside the scientific community. The lack of transparency in the decision-making process may

create skepticism and undermine public trust in the legitimacy of technocratic governance. It becomes essential to establish mechanisms that ensure transparency in the expertise-based decision-making process and provide avenues for public scrutiny and evaluation.

Furthermore, the reliance on experts in policy formulation necessitates careful consideration of the potential biases and conflicts of interest that may arise. Experts, like any other individuals, can be influenced by their own values, interests, and affiliations. It is crucial to establish robust mechanisms for ensuring the independence and impartiality of expert advice. Transparency regarding the selection and appointment of experts, disclosure of potential conflicts of interest, and diverse representation within expert bodies, for example, can help mitigate concerns related to bias and ensure a more inclusive and accountable decision-making process.

To address these challenges and strike a balance between technocratic expertise and democratic principles, it is important to foster greater public engagement and participation in decision-making. Efforts should be made to enhance the accessibility and comprehensibility of expert knowledge and recommendations. This can be achieved through public consultations, deliberative processes, and the provision of clear and concise information that enables citizens to make informed judgments. Additionally, mechanisms for oversight and accountability should be established to ensure that technocratic decisions are subject to scrutiny and evaluation.

In conclusion, the ascent of technocracy as a governing approach raises profound questions about democratic participation, accountability, and legitimacy. The concentration of decision-making power in the hands of experts challenges the principles of political equality and inclusivity. The transparency and accountability of expert recommendations become crucial considerations to maintain public trust and democratic legitimacy. Balancing technocratic expertise with mechanisms for public engagement and oversight is essential to ensure a more inclusive, transparent, and accountable approach to decision-making in technocratic governance.

Conclusion.

This thesis has examined the intertwined relationship between neoliberalism, democracy, and the emergence of technocratic governance. Through an exploration of the historical development, ideological principles, and critiques of neoliberalism, it became evident that this economic paradigm has had a profound impact on democratic governance. The neoliberal emphasis on market-oriented policies and individual freedom has often resulted in social inequality, the concentration of power, and the marginalization of public interest.

The subsequent analysis of democracy in the neoliberal era revealed significant challenges and threats to democratic values. Economic globalization and corporate influence have posed formidable obstacles to the democratic nation-state, undermining its capacity to effectively represent and protect the interests of its citizens. The reduction of the welfare state and the erosion of national sovereignty have further contributed to the vulnerability of democratic processes and institutions. The thesis also investigated the risk of democratic degeneration into technocracy under neoliberal influence. The concept of technocracy, with its depoliticization and reliance on expertise, presents a potential transformation of decision-making processes. While technical expertise can enhance problem-solving capabilities, the delegation of authority to unelected technocrats raises concerns about democratic participation, accountability, and legitimacy. The concentration of decision-making power in the hands of a select group of experts challenges the principles of political equality and inclusivity. In light of these findings, it is evident that neoliberalism and technocracy pose significant threats to democracy. They erode democratic processes, diminish political representation, and undermine the voice and agency of ordinary citizens. The increasing influence of market forces and technocratic decision-making limits the ability of democratic systems to address social inequalities and promote the common good.

To safeguard and revitalize democracy, it is essential to critically evaluate and challenge the dominant neoliberal ideology. This entails reimagining democracy as a participatory and inclusive system that values social justice, equality, and the public interest. The role of civil society, grassroots movements, and public engagement becomes paramount in countering the erosion of democratic values and ensuring the accountability of decision-makers.

In conclusion, this thesis argues for a reevaluation of neoliberalism and technocracy in the context of democratic governance. The criticisms raised throughout the study highlight the need for a more

balanced and inclusive approach that places the well-being and agency of citizens at the forefront. By addressing the social inequalities and power imbalances exacerbated by neoliberalism and the potential pitfalls of technocratic decision-making, we can work towards revitalizing democratic processes and preserving the core values of democracy.

In light of this, I believe that the advent of neo-liberalism as a hegemonic theory has had a decisive weight in transforming democracy as it is understood in its original sense, as neo-liberal political-economic theory has consistently devalued the core values and principles on which democracy is based. The values transmitted by the neo-liberalists have had a huge influence in eroding principles such as representation, participation and equality. In addition, neo-liberalism has played a primary role in creating the socio-political conditions necessary for the formation of a technocratic style of government, which, marrying perfectly with the ideas of free markets, de-regulation and privatization, has had an easy ride in becoming a widely accepted style of governance. Although democratic degeneration into technocratic governments is not yet a typical feature of modern Western democracies, in my view the path has been laid. The increasing reliance and reliance on technology and techno-rational discourses in contemporary societies, coupled with the loss of importance of political ideologies, have certainly influenced the establishment or otherwise the rise of technocracy as a style of governance accepted by the majority of citizens, who do not care about the degeneration of the democratic political process as they are content with the improvements achieved in problem-solving and efficiency.

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RIASSUNTO.

Questa tesi indaga il rapporto tra neoliberalismo, democrazia e ascesa della governance tecnocratica, in particolare concentrandosi sull'erosione dei processi e dei valori democratici nelle società contemporanee.

Cercherò di analizzare lo sviluppo storico, i principi ideologici e le caratteristiche cardine del neoliberalismo, evidenziando il suo impatto sulla governance democratica. Lo studio esamina le sfide che la democrazia affronta nell'era neoliberale, tra cui l'erosione dei valori democratici, le minacce alla partecipazione e alla rappresentanza politica, oltre che la potenziale trasformazione della democrazia in tecnocrazia. Indagherò inoltre l'aumento delle disuguaglianze sociali, la concentrazione del potere tra le élite economiche e la marginalizzazione dell'interesse pubblico come conseguenze negative del neo-liberismo. Viene inoltre esaminata l'influenza della globalizzazione economica e del potere delle imprese sui valori democratici, nonché l'impatto di fattori quali il sempre maggiore finanziamento di privati alla politica, la riduzione dello Stato sociale e l'erosione della sovranità nazionale sulle istituzioni democratiche. La tesi si conclude esaminando il rischio di trasformazione della democrazia in tecnocrazia sotto il neoliberalismo, analizzando le implicazioni per il processo decisionale democratico, la partecipazione, la rappresentanza e la responsabilità. L'obiettivo generale della mia analisi è fare luce sull'erosione dei processi democratici e sottolineare l'importanza di proteggere l'interesse pubblico e i valori democratici di fronte alle influenze neoliberali e tecnocratiche.

In primis è necessario comprendere le cause che hanno portato all'ascesa del neo-liberismo come ideologia egemonica su scala globale. Il neo-liberismo è definito come un sistema di credenze politico-economiche che promuovono la libertà individuale e i diritti di proprietà privata in un quadro di libero mercato e di minimo intervento statale. A partire dagli anni Settanta si è assistito a uno spostamento globale verso il neo-liberismo, che ha portato ad una sempre maggiore implementazione di politiche di deregolamentazione, privatizzazione e ritiro dello Stato dal ruolo di promotore del welfare sociale. Il neo-liberismo ha assunto la forma di discorso dominante all'interno della società, con sostenitori che occupano posizioni sempre più influenti nei ruoli decisivi nell'istruzione, nei media, nelle grandi imprese e nelle principali istituzioni statali e internazionali. Le origini del neo-liberismo risalgono all'indomani della Seconda Guerra Mondiale, quando gli Stati miravano a creare un nuovo ordine mondiale per prevenire crisi economiche e conflitti geopolitici. Il compromesso tra capitale e lavoro portò alla nascita del "liberismo incorporato", che prevedeva un'economia mista, basata sull'incentivazione di sistemi di welfare e

interventi statali per ridurre la disoccupazione e portare ad una crescita economica esponenziale. Tuttavia, questo sistema ha iniziato ad incrinarsi alla fine degli anni Sessanta a causa delle crisi economiche e dell'opposizione tra la democrazia sociale e gli interessi delle grandi imprese. In questo contesto il neo-liberismo si è affermato grazie al sostegno di influenti circoli accademici, in particolare dell'Università di Chicago, e think tank strettamente connessi con le istituzioni e le aziende strategiche nazionali. Nel 1973 l'esperimento cileno, scaturito dal golpe militare di Pinochet che rovesciò il governo (socialista) democraticamente eletto, divenne un modello per le successive politiche neo-liberiste in Paesi come la Gran Bretagna sotto la Thatcher e gli Stati Uniti sotto Reagan. Le politiche implementate da questo sistema di governo comprendevano in primo luogo la liberalizzazione del commercio, le privatizzazioni delle aziende a partecipazione statale, la deregolamentazione ed una pronunciata austerità fiscale.

Decisiva nell'ascesa del modello neo-liberista è stata la crisi petrolifera degli anni Settanta, che ha fornito un immenso potere finanziario agli Stati produttori di petrolio e ha portato alla circolazione di capitale in eccesso a livello globale; le banche d'investimento di New York cercarono dunque sbocchi redditizi per gli investimenti, con conseguenti prestiti ai Paesi in via di sviluppo. Tuttavia, questo sistema ha portato anche ad una crisi del debito, a causa dell'applicazione di riforme neo-liberali ai paesi in via di sviluppo attraverso istituzioni come il FMI e la Banca Mondiale, che agivano (non direttamente) a nome degli Stati industrializzati, specialmente gli Stati Uniti, per esportare il sistema capitalista neo-liberale sul panorama mondiale.

L'ascesa della teoria neo-liberista alla fine del XX secolo ha avuto un impatto significativo sulle politiche economiche e sociali implementate dai paesi che hanno fatto propria tale teoria. Come detto, il neo-liberismo enfatizza il libero mercato come mezzo per raggiungere la crescita economica e la prosperità, sostenendo fortemente la riduzione del ruolo dello Stato nell'economia e la promozione dell'impresa privata. All'interno di questo quadro va, inoltre, aggiunto il concetto di individualismo, che è un valore fondamentale dell'ideologia neo-liberale, il quale enfatizza la libertà, la scelta e la responsabilità individuale rispetto al processo decisionale collettivo e al benessere sociale. Come conseguenza della situazione economica sociale degli anni Settanta, il neo-liberismo è emerso come risposta alle minacce percepite all'ordine sociale capitalista, con Friedrich von Hayek e la Mont Pelerin Society che hanno svolto un ruolo cruciale nell'affermazione del pensiero neo-liberista a livello teorico ed accademico. La Mont Pelerin Society, guidata da Walter Lippman, mirava a contrastare le teorie che mettevano in discussione lo stato di diritto, la proprietà privata e il mercato competitivo. Il neo-liberismo si allineò ai principi dell'economia neoclassica e si oppose alle teorie interventiste di pianificazione centralizzata. La teoria ha cercato di affermarsi allineandosi ai valori della dignità umana e della libertà individuale, considerati fondamentali dopo

la Seconda Guerra Mondiale. Il neo-liberismo ha guadagnato terreno tra i politici negli anni '70, in quanto gli molti di loro ritenevano che l'intervento pubblico fosse il problema principale della crisi. Come accennato precedentemente le politiche chiave sostenute dai pensatori neoliberali includevano deregolamentazione, privatizzazione e misure di austerità. La deregolamentazione mirava a rimuovere le norme governative sulle imprese per favorire un mercato più efficiente e competitivo. La privatizzazione prevedeva il trasferimento della proprietà e del controllo dei beni e dei servizi statali al settore privato per migliorare l'innovazione e l'efficienza. Le misure di austerità comportavano la riduzione della spesa pubblica e il ridimensionamento dei servizi pubblici per dare priorità alle politiche orientate al mercato e promuovere la crescita del settore privato. I critici sostengono che le politiche neo-liberali hanno esacerbato le disuguaglianze e minato i programmi di welfare sociale, sostenendo che la forte deregolamentazione abbia contribuito alla crisi finanziaria del 2008, per esempio, e che la privatizzazione possa portare a un aumento delle disuguaglianze e dell'esclusione. Le misure di austerità, invece, sono state accusate di avere un impatto negativo sui servizi pubblici e di peggiorare le condizioni di vita, in particolare delle comunità emarginate. Il successo del neo-liberismo nell'attuazione di queste politiche può essere attribuito, oltre che al favorevole contesto politico-economico, al suo allineamento con i valori sociali comuni del tempo, in particolare la libertà individuale. La teoria infatti considera la libertà individuale come un valore fondamentale che guida la politica sia nel campo economico che sociale, enfatizzando l'autonomia individuale, l'autodeterminazione e l'idea che ogni persona possa essere responsabile del proprio successo. Il valore dell'individualismo è considerato essenziale per il progresso economico e la ricchezza, in quanto favorisce la concorrenza e l'innovazione, ed i neo-liberali sostengono tale aspetto, affermando che la concorrenza di mercato e l'iniziativa individuale siano vantaggiose per la società nel suo complesso.

Tuttavia, le politiche neo-liberali e i valori su cui si basano sono stati criticati per l'aumento delle disuguaglianze economiche, la concentrazione del potere e della ricchezza e l'emarginazione dei gruppi più deboli dal contesto sociale. La concentrazione del potere nelle mani di pochi individui può inoltre avere un serio impatto sul processo democratico, minando la natura rappresentativa e popolare del processo decisionale ed implementando politiche che aumentano la disuguaglianza sociale e che comportano la concentrazione del potere tra pochi attori sfociando in una profonda marginalizzazione dell'interesse pubblico. Il neo-liberismo tende a favorire gli interessi del settore privato rispetto a quello pubblico e ne consegue la privatizzazione dei servizi pubblici e l'indebolimento delle istituzioni democratiche con serie implicazioni per la giustizia sociale e i diritti umani, poiché le comunità emarginate vengono spesso escluse dalle considerazioni del processo decisionale. Le politiche che conseguono da questo processo politico hanno contribuito

alla crescita delle disuguaglianze sociali ed economiche, in quanto, tendenzialmente, privilegiano le classi più ricche e trascurano i bisogni le classi povere. L'enfasi sull'individualismo e sulla responsabilità personale ignora le disuguaglianze strutturali e ostacola la mobilità sociale, rispecchiandosi nella concentrazione di ricchezza e potere tra pochi individui e società, aggravando ulteriormente le disuguaglianze sociali e minando i diritti dei lavoratori. Un'altra caratteristica neo-liberista è l'emarginazione dell'interesse pubblico, in quanto si tende a privilegiare gli interessi del settore privato; ciò porta alla riduzione del settore pubblico ed ad un indebolimento delle istituzioni nelle politiche economiche. Inoltre, si è assistito ad un declino della qualità dei servizi pubblici e a una diminuzione della capacità dello Stato di regolamentare e far rispettare le leggi che promuovono l'interesse pubblico, minando il processo democratico ed erodendo la fiducia nelle istituzioni democratiche.

Per quanto riguarda il quadro teorico-concettuale, la concettualizzazione neo-liberale della democrazia è stata influenzata dalle idee di Hayek e privilegia le forze del mercato e la libertà individuale rispetto al ruolo centrale ed all'intervento dello Stato. I neo-liberali, infatti, sostengono che la democrazia dovrebbe servire come mezzo per raggiungere la crescita economica e proteggere i diritti di proprietà privata, spesso a spese del benessere sociale e dell'uguaglianza.

Nel corso della tesi esploro l'erosione dei valori democratici nella società contemporanea e i pericoli che minano il processo democratico, in particolare in termini di partecipazione e rappresentanza politica, partendo dal presupposto che la democrazia è un sistema politico in cui il potere è detenuto dal popolo, attraverso rappresentanti eletti. È caratterizzata da elezioni libere ed eque, dallo Stato di diritto, dalla tutela dei diritti individuali e da un sistema di pesi e contrappesi che funzionano per evitare la concentrazione del potere nelle mani di un solo corpo istituzionale. I pensatori neo-liberali criticano la democrazia rappresentativa per l'eccessivo potere conferito al governo, che è percepito come una minaccia per la libertà individuale e per l'efficienza economica. Sostengono limiti non negoziabili alla democrazia rappresentativa e propongono un sistema basato sullo Stato di diritto per salvaguardare la libertà individuale. "The Constitution of Liberty" di Hayek suggerisce un quadro istituzionale diviso in tre branche, con la Corte Costituzionale Suprema che esamina la costituzionalità delle leggi, con l'obiettivo ultimo di subordinare il potere governativo al potere legislativo, cercando di sostituire il governo delle persone con il governo delle leggi, enfatizzando l'importanza delle norme e dei principi stabiliti e applicati dai giudici. I teorici neo-liberali sostengono che le leggi dovrebbero proteggere l'interesse generale piuttosto che favorire gli interessi privati di una maggioranza elettorale.

La governance democratica deve affrontare delle sfide importanti nel contesto dell'egemonia neoliberale e della globalizzazione economica. Nel corso dell'elaborato analizzo le difficoltà che i

governi incontrano nel regolare l'attività economica e nel perseguire gli obiettivi di benessere sociale a causa dell'interdipendenza delle economie nazionali e della crescente influenza delle multinazionali. L'influenza degli interessi aziendali sulla politica democratica è aumentata, con politici e partiti che fanno sempre più affidamento sulle donazioni e sul sostegno delle imprese. A facilitare ciò, il fatto che il neo-liberismo e la globalizzazione sono interconnessi: infatti la globalizzazione ha facilitato la diffusione dell'ideologia neo-liberista e delle politiche che privilegiano il libero mercato e il commercio. Se da un lato però la globalizzazione ha promosso la crescita economica, dall'altro ha esacerbato l'erosione della governance democratica e ha portato alla concentrazione di ricchezza e potere nelle mani delle multinazionali.

Inoltre la governance democratica ha subito un importante declino come conseguenza del fatto che nel mondo globalizzato sono emersi sistemi e processi di governance con tratti privatistici e oligarchici. Le identità nazionali sono minacciate e il potere dello Stato nazionale è eroso dalla globalizzazione economica, dall'aumento dei flussi di informazione, dalla frammentazione culturale e dalla formazione di identità multiculturali. Ne consegue l'erosione dello Stato nazionale democratico, accompagnata dall'ascesa di istituzioni e regimi internazionali e transnazionali, che favoriscono l'influenza e il potere decisionale degli attori privati rispetto a quelli pubblici.

Le multinazionali hanno acquisito un maggiore potere e influenza sui processi decisionali dei governi, comprese le politiche relative alla tassazione, alla regolamentazione e agli accordi commerciali. Le risorse finanziarie delle imprese consentono loro di finanziare campagne politiche, di esercitare pressioni sui funzionari governativi e di controllare i media, plasmando l'opinione pubblica e dando priorità ai loro interessi. Le imprese hanno anche acquisito il controllo sui beni pubblici attraverso la privatizzazione, spesso privilegiando i profitti rispetto ai bisogni dei cittadini e ostacolando gli organi istituzionali che cercano di responsabilizzarle.

Il crescente potere delle imprese ha minato i principi della democrazia, come la rappresentanza, la responsabilità e la trasparenza, sollevando preoccupazioni sull'erosione delle norme democratiche e sulla necessità di una forma di democrazia più inclusiva.

Il neo-liberismo, con la sua enfasi sui liberi mercati e l'intervento limitato del governo, ha rimodellato il panorama politico globale negli ultimi decenni. La privatizzazione dei servizi pubblici, la riduzione dello Stato sociale e la crescente dipendenza dai finanziamenti privati nelle campagne politiche hanno portato a uno squilibrio di potere e influenza a favore delle élite imprenditoriali e delle imprese, compromettendo la rappresentanza di interessi diversi e limitando l'impegno dei cittadini.

L'influenza del denaro in politica ha creato una situazione in cui i candidati con notevoli risorse finanziarie hanno un vantaggio sproporzionato, mettendo in ombra le voci e le preoccupazioni dei

cittadini comuni. Il finanziamento della politica, dunque, perpetua le disuguaglianze rafforzando le disparità esistenti in termini di ricchezza e potere, poiché i ricchi donatori si aspettano un ritorno sui loro investimenti. Questo può portare a una cultura politica che privilegia la raccolta di fondi e la ricerca di donazioni rispetto alle esigenze della popolazione, creando un distacco tra i funzionari eletti e i loro elettori. Inoltre, l'aumento del finanziamento della politica contribuisce anche alla percezione della corruzione da parte dell'opinione pubblica ed erode la fiducia nelle istituzioni democratiche. Quando viene percepito che il denaro determina i risultati politici, i cittadini possono mettere in dubbio l'equità del sistema e diventare disillusi, portando a una diminuzione della partecipazione politica.

Le politiche neo-liberali hanno anche provocato una riduzione dell'accesso all'istruzione di qualità, all'assistenza sanitaria e ai sistemi di sostegno sociale, poiché lo Stato si è ritirato dal suo ruolo di fornitore primario di questi servizi. Questa disparità di accesso ai servizi essenziali ostacola la partecipazione politica, in quanto gli individui e le comunità emarginate incontrano ostacoli nell'esercizio dei loro diritti e nel coinvolgimento significativo nel processo politico, del quale non si sentono parte integrante. L'erosione delle infrastrutture pubbliche e delle reti di sicurezza sociale indebolisce ulteriormente il governo democratico e limita la rappresentanza di voci e interessi diversi. In aggiunta, le politiche neo-liberali spesso privilegiano gli interessi dei mercati globalizzati e del capitale internazionale rispetto alle comunità locali e agli attori nazionali, minando la sovranità nazionale e i processi decisionali democratici, poiché le politiche sono influenzate da potenti istituzioni finanziarie internazionali e multinazionali. L'autorità decisionale può allontanarsi dalle istituzioni democratiche, portando a una perdita di autonomia per gli attori nazionali e diminuendo la partecipazione dei cittadini alla definizione delle politiche che influiscono sulla loro vita. Nel complesso, l'influenza del neo-liberismo sulla politica elettorale e sui processi decisionali rappresenta una minaccia significativa per la partecipazione e la rappresentanza politica. Mina i principi di uguaglianza, equa rappresentanza e governance democratica, concentrando il potere e l'influenza nelle mani delle élite economiche, limitando l'impegno dei cittadini ed erodendo la fiducia nelle istituzioni democratiche.

L'ascesa del neo-liberismo ha avuto un impatto significativo sulle strutture di governance in tutto il mondo, ridisegnando il rapporto tra Stati, mercati e società e portando alla potenziale trasformazione dei sistemi democratici in modelli tecnocratici, dove il potere decisionale è sempre più concentrato nelle mani di esperti tecnici piuttosto che di rappresentanti eletti. La comprensione della tecnocrazia nel contesto del neo-liberismo è fondamentale per comprendere le dinamiche di cambiamento della governance democratica contemporanea.

L'idea di tecnocrazia, intesa come teoria di governo, è nata all'inizio del XX secolo e si è iniziata ad affermare durante la Grande Depressione. Alla propria base questa idea pone la convinzione del legame armonioso tra tecnologia e sviluppo civile, con l'obiettivo di eliminare la corruzione politica e le strutture economiche obsolete, promuovendo al contempo la razionalità amministrativa e la tecnologica. La tecnocrazia suggerisce come principio cardine che gli esperti tecnici dovrebbero plasmare la società al posto di politici e imprenditori.

Il concetto di impiego della tecnologia per migliorare il benessere umano può essere fatto risalire a diverse opere storiche, come la "Città del Sole" di Tommaso Campanella e la "Nuova Atlantide" di Francis Bacon. Ad ogni modo è stato Henri de Saint-Simon a proporre la prima forma pura di tecnocrazia, immaginando una società guidata da specialisti tecnici che sostituiscono le istituzioni politiche. Un altro peso decisivo l'hanno avuto le teorie di Max Weber sulla burocrazia, che sono servite come base per la comprensione dei fenomeni tecnocratici, sottolineando l'avanzamento verso un'amministrazione razionale-legale nelle società moderne.

La tecnocrazia va oltre la dimensione amministrativa e comprende élite estremamente competenti sia all'interno che all'esterno della burocrazia statale; si fonda, infatti, in una mentalità secondo cui gli specialisti tecnici, grazie alla loro autorità scientifica, dovrebbero informare i processi decisionali. Questa prospettiva permea la sfera pubblica, suggerendo che la deliberazione pubblica può essere suscettibile di deformazioni tecnocratiche, privilegiando principi epistemici come la conoscenza, la competenza e la verità rispetto alla contrattazione politica che è un principio fondamentale della democrazia. La tecnocrazia non è limitata a una classe sociale o a un'élite specifica, ma coinvolge una gamma diversificata di individui che contribuiscono con le loro conoscenze specialistiche ai processi decisionali. Questo gruppo, noto come tecnostruttura, comprende pianificatori politici, economisti, ingegneri e altri esperti che forniscono informazioni critiche per il funzionamento delle istituzioni contemporanee. Il modello tecnocratico riduce l'autorità dei politici, relegandoli a un ruolo secondario nel processo decisionale, che si basa su un'amministrazione razionale che sposta la funzione dello Stato dall'imposizione di interessi attraverso decisioni arbitrarie a un'amministrazione completamente razionalizzata. L'obiettivo del governo tecnocratico è quello di creare uno "Stato tecnico" basato sulla gestione scientifica, che cerca di depoliticizzare le questioni sociali e di eliminare la politica dallo Stato e dal sistema politico. L'impatto della tecnocrazia sul processo decisionale democratico comprende proprio la depoliticizzazione e l'ascesa di figure esperte in ruoli decisionali all'interno della sfera pubblica, con l'obiettivo di sfidare il tradizionale processo di contrattazione democratica, favorendo l'analisi e la pianificazione scientifica rispetto alle considerazioni politiche.

Enfatizzando il dominio degli esperti e delle conoscenze tecniche nel processo decisionale, privilegiando l'efficienza e la razionalità rispetto al processo politico di compromesso, la tecnocrazia porta alla depoliticizzazione, dove il processo decisionale politico diventa avulso dalle norme e dalla partecipazione pubblica. Nell'analizzare il legame tra neoliberalismo e tecnocrazia, è importante evidenziare la loro comune enfasi sull'efficienza e sulla razionalità, nonché il loro potenziale di danneggiare i processi democratici e di privilegiare le considerazioni economiche rispetto alle preoccupazioni sociali. Le tattiche di depoliticizzazione includono la depoliticizzazione istituzionale, la depoliticizzazione basata sulle regole e la costruzione delle preferenze attraverso la comunicazione e l'ideologia. Questo processo trasferisce i poteri decisionali dalle cariche elettive ad arene esterne, dipinte come neutrali e obiettive, che sminuiscono il ruolo dei politici e l'impegno dei cittadini. Il passaggio a un processo decisionale tecnocratico, depoliticizzato, è valutato come antipolitico, anti-ideologico e antidemocratico, in quanto si basa su amministrazione e competenze scientifiche. L'influenza degli esperti nella formulazione e nell'attuazione delle politiche è cresciuta, spinta da fattori quali il cambiamento degli incentivi per i politici eletti, la complessità della società, i progressi tecnologici e l'evoluzione delle nozioni di buon governo. Se da un lato la tecnocrazia offre efficienza e soluzioni razionali, dall'altro pone delle sfide ai principi democratici come la rappresentanza, la responsabilità e la partecipazione.

Come detto, l'ascesa della tecnocrazia mette in discussione i tradizionali processi decisionali democratici che pongono l'accento sui rappresentanti eletti come principali responsabili delle decisioni. Si sostiene che i tecnocrati, con le loro conoscenze e competenze specialistiche, sono visti come figure autorevoli nell'affrontare questioni complesse, portando a una rivalutazione del processo decisionale democratico. L'influenza dei tecnocrati solleva preoccupazioni sull'uguaglianza politica e sulla diluizione delle voci dei cittadini nella definizione delle politiche. La tesi esamina anche l'evoluzione del panorama politico e il modo in cui i politici utilizzano gli approcci tecnocratici per mostrare l'efficacia ed evitare i rischi politici, esplorando la formalizzazione dei rapporti tra politici eletti e funzionari nominati, nonché dell'istituzione di agenzie indipendenti, come meccanismi di depoliticizzazione. Questi processi mirano a creare la percezione di un processo decisionale guidato da esperti e a proteggere i politici dal coinvolgimento diretto. Inoltre, si esplora le implicazioni della governance tecnocratica sulla partecipazione democratica, sulla responsabilità e sulla legittimità, sollevando preoccupazioni sulla potenziale erosione della legittimità democratica dovuta alla nomina di esperti come decisori e al percepito distacco dei tecnocrati dalle preoccupazioni dei cittadini. Viene inoltre affrontata l'importanza della trasparenza e della responsabilità nel processo decisionale e la necessità di affrontare pregiudizi e conflitti di interesse tra gli esperti. Per trovare un equilibrio tra competenze tecnocratiche e principi

democratici, si suggerisce di promuovere un maggiore impegno e partecipazione del pubblico al processo decisionale, di migliorare l'accessibilità delle conoscenze degli esperti e di istituire meccanismi di supervisione e responsabilità.

In conclusione, la tesi esamina il rapporto tra neo-liberismo, democrazia e governance tecnocratica. L'elaborato sostiene che il neo-liberismo, con la sua enfasi sulle politiche orientate al mercato e sulla libertà individuale, ha avuto un profondo impatto sulla governance democratica, ed è risultato in disuguaglianze sociali, concentrazione di potere e marginalizzazione dell'interesse pubblico. La globalizzazione economica e l'influenza delle imprese pongono una crescente sfida ai valori democratici e minano la capacità dello Stato nazionale di rappresentare e proteggere gli interessi dei cittadini. Inoltre, la riduzione dello Stato sociale e l'erosione della sovranità nazionale indeboliscono ulteriormente i processi democratici. La tesi esplora anche il rischio di degenerazione democratica in tecnocrazia sotto l'influenza neoliberale, evidenziando le preoccupazioni relative a partecipazione, responsabilità e legittimità. Il neo-liberismo e la tecnocrazia erodono i processi democratici, riducono la rappresentanza politica e limitano la capacità di affrontare le disuguaglianze sociali. La tesi conclude che il neo-liberismo ha trasformato la democrazia, svalutandone i valori e i principi fondamentali ed ha contribuito a creare le condizioni per l'emergere di una governance tecnocratica. La crescente dipendenza dalla tecnologia e dai discorsi tecno-razionali ha aperto la strada all'accettazione della tecnocrazia come stile di governo, nonostante i potenziali rischi per il processo politico democratico.