Why Politics often ignore Evidences or *Much Ado About Nothing*

Analysis of the policy decisions on Tokyo Olympic Game through Blame Game and Administrative Techno-populism

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1. Introduction

Moving from the argument that theoretical frameworks for understanding administrative reforms need to be updated according to the new context where reforms are taking place, this paper aims to shed a light on a new framework concept that can be used to understand some contemporary administrative reforms: administrative techno-populism.

Administrative techno-populism can be defined as administrative reforms and actions resulting from popular and techno-elite pressures that push

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policy makers to change existing administrative patterns, in order to satisfy mainstream claims against several practices existing within institutions and/or the bureaucratic and political class.

This framework concept is useful to better understand how the relationship between politics and policy is changing. As a matter of fact, a new political style based on instantaneity, short-termism, mediatisation, sound-bite and political distrust is influencing policy outcomes that are becoming part of the populistic narrative. In these terms, a new vicious cycle for administrative reform is potentially rising, where populistic politics influence decision-making and policy processes shaping dysfunctional or incomplete administrative reforms.

From a methodological standpoint the author uses an illustrative case study strategy (Yin, 2009); more specifically, after describing the context and defining populism and administrative techno-populism, the author uses the framework of analysis integrating elements of the administrative techno-populism for understanding reforms and reform attempts. The case of Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG) under the current Governor and its contradictory decision-making on various reforms will be analysed.

The paper will focus on the following elements: the main roots of twenty-first century populism; the main features of administrative techno-populism; the Tokyo Government and its reform attempts; the relevance and topicality of administrative techno-populism from a lesson drawing perspective; some preliminary remarks concerning the relationship between administrative techno-populism and administrative reforms.

2. Administrative Techno-populism

In the twenty-first century democracy, changing are very fast both in

political organization and institutional reforms. Liberal democracies are dealing with the insurgency of counter-democracy movement (Rosanvallon & Goldhammer, 2008) that are contesting the missing aims of prosperity and security promised by democratic politicians of traditional parties. It is possible to observe five different trends that are characterizing liberal democracies in the last decade. Although the specific changes in the political environment have varied considerably from one EU state to another (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011: 163–168) certain trends have been internationally rather widespread:

1. Mediatisation, that means increasing of media pervasiveness, reporting more quickly, aggressively and full time, is changing political leadership and parties opening to new forms of participation and governance (Schillemans & Pierre, 2016).
2. Populism is transforming the way political consensus is obtaining (Moffitt & Tormey, 2014). The personalisation of politics, in the sense of media portrayals of governments and politics becoming more focused on individual characters and their foibles, and on clashes between personalities, rather than with policies and programmes. Electoral volatility has increased and party loyalty on the part of citizens has declined in the last decade and the result has been that new parties springing up and party competition is becoming more complex and multi-lateral. Furthermore, fewer opportunities for ministers to gain popularity by announcing major new welfare state programmes – governments have been more concerned with managing the existing welfare state or, in the more recent period of austerity, trimming it back. These are inherently rather unpopular tasks that are feeding up popular discontent.
3. As Flinders (2014) pointed out the gap between citizens' expectations

and politicians capacity in providing public services and delivering results is spreading and it is propelling dissatisfaction against politics among voters.

4. Verticalisation of power is increasing moving towards a presidentialisation of the executive power (Webb & Poguntke, 2013) as "institutional consequence" of political personalization, mediatisation and political party decline.
5. As an effect of global market spreading, government and policymaking has been progressively depoliticised throughout a process of "Europeanization" by shifting power in key areas like monetary policy, competition law or climate change to European Union and international technocratic, expert bodies or committees (Flinders 2014; Pollitt, 2014). This is happening because a global market set global issues that have to be managed at global, not national stage. This has been also a method to insulate policy from short-term populist pressures.

Despite the literature on the topic is wide, there's a missing chapter in the transformation of democracy in the twenty-first century. This research's aim is to fill this void in the literature considering the relationship between these five trends and administrative-institutional reforms with a focus on the Italian case. The political transformations has created the environment for the insurgency of an "administrative populism", a concept that explain how new forms of politics are influencing administrative reforms. The complex interplay between political changes and institutional development deserves to be explored in order to trace the main features of administrative populism, assessing the impact of populistic and leader-centred time on public administration.

The mainstream literature focuses on input politics and ignores output politics, which is problematic, because citizens are increasingly involved

in new forms of political participation that are more orientated to the output side, rather than the input side, of politics. Most of the literature concentrates on input politics and reduces the output side to questions about whether administration is efficient and effective. From this perspective, scholars need to turn their attention to output politics and the role that citizens can, and do, play in that process. There is not a univocal correspondence that goes from politics to policy, but the relationship is reversible because politics shapes policy and vice versa. As Bang's works (2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2011) explained, in the post-modern politics there's a transition from politics-policy to policy-politics, which he associates with the increased complexity, risk and reflexivity that has emerged with the transition to late-modernity. In the politics-policy mode, the focus was on the demand-side of politics or input politics. In contrast, policy-politics focuses on the supply-side, or output politics, concentrating on how political elites from the public, private and voluntary sectors are networking in order to produce and deliver the policies wanted by the more reflexive individuals characteristic of late modernity. For Bang then, the old politics was an input-based politics, while the new politics is an output-based politics.

The theoretical framework used explains the all-round relationship between the new democratic politics and its impact on administrative reforms. For this reason, the work operationalizes this conceptual framework considering a specific case study: the Tokyo Government and its contradictory decision-making on reforms under the current Governor, which the author participated in and observed directly.

2.1. The fuel of populism: civic culture, mediatisation, de-politicisation and leadership. A threat for institutional reforms

In this section the author analyses why and how populism is spreading

in the political landscape of liberal democracy and it is becoming a common trait of the contemporary public debate. The author considers particularly four aspects: changing of civic culture and increasing of political distrust, mediatisation of politics, *de-politicisation process* and the rising of a simplified and *leaderistic style*. Before assessing the impact of populism on institutional reforms and public policies and analysing the insurgency of institutional populism we have to consider the process with which populist message is shaping politics in the mature democracies.

In the late modernity political culture of liberal democracies has changed, but the traditional institutions and process of democratic politics have arguably failed to adapt in ways that acknowledge or respond. The civic culture of advanced democracies appears to have changed in ways that suggest the erosion of popular support and the emergence of a "critical citizen" (Flinders, 2015). The civic culture has become not only more suspicious of political processes and institutions but also more individualised in its internal logic.

The concept of "liquid modernity" developed by Bauman (2000, 2005, 2006) can help us to better understand this transformation and its consequences. Bauman considers the erosion and hollowing out of those once solid social reference points that allowed people to make sense of the world and their place within it. From the role of religion to the notion of a job for life, to the existence of tight local communities to the emergence of the "precariat" (Standing, 2011) whose job and position in life is inherently precarious due the demands of the market for flexibility and mobility. This focus on liquidity has a link with the erosion of social capital theorized by Putnam (1993) that is to say limited trust in government and lack of a democratic political culture. As Flinders (2015) highlights "the dominant political culture is no longer one in which individuals either trust or join

political institutions". This doesn't mean citizens hate politics or does not engage in public debate, quite the opposite with social media development, but the nature of the engagement has become more focused, fast and often works through non-traditional channels. Levels of political literacy and political trust seems to have fallen among large parts of society and the civic culture seems to have become "anti-political" or "post-political". In this scenario, apathy, distrust and sense of loss has created a fertile political environment for those who wish to gain consensus and benefit from the politics of pessimism.

Furthermore, another element that is feeding up populism is the *de-politicisation process*.

According to Flinders (2014) de-politicisation is a concept that "*essentially refers to the denial of political contingency and the transfer of functions away from elected politicians*". Moreover, "*efforts to insulate decision-making process beyond the direct control of elected politicians or even place complete areas of policy beyond the reach of the state have become prevalent across the world*" (Roberts, 2011). De-politicisation has been theorized and fostered by think-tanks and pressure groups as a solution to both public policy and constitutional challenges and is described by the European Policy Forum (2000) as "*one of the most promising developments since the last war – the de-politicisation of many government decisions*" and by Flinders (2014) is described as "*the dominant model of the statecraft in the twenty-first century*". The consequence of de-politicisation for democratic politics is the rise of public distrust of political processes, institutions and politicians. This consequence is described and analysed by a wide literature[1] on institutional changes in the postmodern democracy like the "end of politics" (Boggs,

1) See: Pharr & Putnam (2000), Crouch (2004), Hay (2007), Norris (2011), and Mastropaolo (2012).

2000) or "Counter democracy" (Rosanvallon & Goldhammer, 2008). Such terms seek to identify and critique what is interpreted as the gradual marginalisation or closing down of democratic governance, due to the paradigmatic influence of neoliberalism's antipathy towards the state and the increasing influence of global market over national powers. As Flinders (2014) argues that de-politicisation is "*part of two stage shift*" because on one side there's the hollowing out of the national state functions and on the other side there's a declining interest of the public in public affairs and political affiliation. To conclude, de-politicisation represents a growing sense of disconnection between citizens and institutions and increase democratic anomie. This is an effect that propels the spreading of populistic politics.

The third element that nourishes populistic style in mature democracies is the process of *mediatisation*. In the usual understanding of the concept, *mediatisation of politics* means the diffusion of a specific media rationality in the sphere of the political. The thesis of the mediatisation of politics therefore assumes that media and politics are, at root, autonomous areas of action in an open society – which, if you will, is a further (often unspoken) premise of this approach (Kunelius & Reunanen 2012; Strömbäck & Van Aelst 2013: 342). Within communication studies, the inherent laws of media is called "media logic" (Mazzoleni 2008; Lundby 2009). The concept is based on the idea that media develop certain rules and routines in the production of public communication, with these rules being determined by a number of constraints: for example, by the cultural symbol systems that are needed to construct and communicate meaning; by the specific technology that is used to create and disseminate news; and, finally, by the self-understanding of media actors who shape the operational business of producing news. Within the interaction of these components emerges a particular "format" of media reality, which is assumed to give rise to an enormous shaping power for

thinking, communicating and acting in society (Altheide & Snow, 1979).

Therefore, *mediatisation of politics* is based on these three rules:

1. regularities of selection in the sense of the conscious choice of events, issues and states of the world for public information;
2. regularities of narration in the sense of typical patterns governing how media texts are narrated, structured and sequenced;
3. regularities of interpretation in the sense of recurrent and cross-theme patterns in the assignment of meaning and framing.

News media use such routines to select and present public affairs in such a way that they are attended to closely by the audience. Under such conditions, political communication by the media frequently has predictable properties, such as the focus on strong images, a preference for events rather than structures, the focus on people rather than on institutions or ideas, particular attention to conflicts and deviations from the norm, the interpretation of politics as a competition, etc. Mediatisation is a term used for the graded response to this media reality. It denotes on the one hand the extent to which politics is willing to engage in the media's reality. Marcinkowski & Steiner (2014) have denoted such phenomena of media resonance in practical politics as "simple" (first-order) mediatisation of politics, with the term describing a development in which the media – rather than parties, parliament or government– increasingly determine what is of general interest in politics, what counts as the adequate fulfilment of function, and which facets of politics are deserving public attention. Politics is mediatised to the extent that it has accepted the description of itself provided by the media as a valid orientation. Marcinkowski & Steiner (2014) speak of "reflexive" (second-order) mediatisation when political actors become so used to absorbing into their own repertoire of behaviour the attention rules practised by the media that they operate them on their

own. Reflexivity of mediatisation denotes the ability of politics to see itself through the eyes of others (the media) and to describe itself accordingly. In this respect, the concept defines the transition from a reactive to an active way of dealing with media logic. This can mean different things, from the habitual, almost unconscious adjustment by individual actors of their communication behaviour, to the creation by political institutions and organisations of structural measures to benefit conditions of media production. In the literature this is known as the adoption of media logic or the accommodation of politics to the media.

In the opinion of Crick (2005) "the spectre of populism haunts modern democracies". In a complex and liquid world, populists exploit the effect of mediatisation, political distrust and de-politicisation to offer simplistic political programme and fast solutions discourse.

This is a critical point. Populism tends to create simplistic interpretations of problems and then simplistic solutions, whereas meaningful responses will have to manage complexity and the fact that there are no simple solutions to complex problems. In this temporal friction between needs of the public and the inability of democratic government to satisfy them immediately laid the attack to traditional political parties by populistic movements. The populistic style is impatient with democratic procedures and bureaucratic times and seems to create enemies and denies the need to compromise. As Flinders (2014) highlights "*populism seeks to delegitimise mainstream democracy*". Whereas populists make a virtue of simplicity the mainstream parties acknowledge and have to deal with complex problems. To exploit this gap between simplicity and complexity populistic movement are expressive, direct and emotive and they cultivate public disenchantment with democratic politics. As Mudde & Kaltwasser (2013) point out populism is "A thin centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated

into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, the "pure people" and the "corrupt elite", ad which argues that politics should be an expression of the Volontégenerale (general will) of the people."

The last characteristic of populism is leadership. As Kenny and Pearce have noted it "*reflects the public desire for a strong transformational leader*" despite the general contempt versus the political class. As Painter (2013) have argued populism is a "challenger brand" within democracy in the sense that they seeks to change the way democracy works bypassing, under the guise of a charismatic leadership, procedures, organizations and compromises that are embedded in the liberal democracy. To conclude, populism seems to be a genetic trait of postmodern liberal democracy as Crick (2005) has written "*populism is indeed a spectre haunting of democracy from which it is hard, perhaps impossible, to escape entirely in modern conditions of a consumption-driven society and a populist free press*".

So far, it is obvious that the case in question can be well explained with this framework, since it perfectly share all characteristics typical to administrative techno-populism.

2-2. Administrative reforms between Europeanization and populism

Reforms are often defined as changes or improvements of what is wrong, corrupt, or inadequate. Despite, the term reform may enclose different meanings, it regards something that may introduce a change with desirable benefits (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000). Furthermore, administrative reforms mean "deliberate" (Boyne et. Al., 2003) and "conscious" (Dror, 1976; Leemans, 1976) activities, which attempt to fix the problems of the public sector (Schacter, 2000). These changes may affect structures and processes for achieving measurable improvement in services or noticeable changes in the relationship between institutions of the state and the citizens (European

Commission, 2009).

Nevertheless, administrative reforms may be differentiated between first-, second-, or third-order changes (Hall, 1993; Halligan, 1997: 19). Accordingly, the first level means the adaptation and fine-tuning of existing practices. The second level refers to extents in adoption of techniques, while the third level concerns with sets of ideas that comprise the overall goals of the public administration. Hereafter, Pollitt & Bouckaert (2000) explain that the source and the nature of the pressures will largely determine the level of reform that is both required and feasible. Indeed, the pressures may start from the broader level – national to global forces – and move the change with a top-down process towards the institutional framework up to the primary work level.

From a theoretical and analytical point of view, reforms may be identified and explained according to several perspectives and models (Braga, 2015). Hence, reforms have very distinctive features according to the context in which they are embedded. Accordingly, models for understanding the reforms represent knowledge tools especially for public managers and professionals, because they show simplified pictures of the changes taking in place and they describe the main forces able to tow or restrain changes (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000).

As administrative reforms occur at different levels, in our research we focus on the changes into the institutional framework. According to Lynn (2001), the institutional framework is the level of governance that is concerned with the establishment of governing relations, or broad strategic alignments at the public choice/legislative level[2]. Hereafter, the present research highlights the central role that the context plays in administrative reforms[3]. The analysis of the context of administrative reforms represents a meaningful way for understanding what constraints and obstacles the

reforms may face, regarding both the administrative system and the socio-economic development. Our analysis takes into account the drivers that affects the elite decision-making and the content of the reform package, while it does not consider the implications on the implementation process nor the results achieved.

However, the context is always in rapid evolution and new drivers like Europeanization of public policies and populism play a greater role nowadays.

Europeanization represents an "incremental process" (Ladrech, 1994: 17) by which domestic policies becoming increasingly subject to European policymaking (Börzel, 1999: 574). This process influences member states' policies in a variety of areas, but it also impacts administrative and institutional structures[4] (Windhoff-Héritier, 2001). Therefore, according to Radaelli (2003: 30), Europeanization is a "*processes of (a) construction (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU decisions and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities,*

2) According to Lynn (2001), the institutional framework considers the relationships between 1) legislators and stakeholders, 2) legislative level and executive level (authorities that manage public agencies), and between 3) executive level and the management level of public agencies and programs.

3) Accordingly, "*it became prominent to analyze the factors related to the political and economic context, because multiple reforms are often implemented at a time*"(Braga, 2015: 9).

4) This is the case of the 2011 EU letter to Italian Government, in which the EU asks for new and more effective measures about Italian public sector personnel (e.g. part-time jobs, redundancy working schemes) and transfer/ reassignment of personnel from Province governments to Regional or Municipal governments.

political structures and public policies".

For understanding the consequences of Europeanization on administrative reforms, we need to point out that 1) Europeanization is a process which generate power (Saurugger & Radaelli, 2008), and 2) Europeanization explains the link between the politics and the policies. Although there are two opposite forces – the pressure from EU and the resistance of member states for not losing autonomy – Europeanization process expands the power on both sides. Particularly, we refer to political legitimacy as a dimension of power. Actually, political parties may take advantage from EU pressures to create legitimacy for domestic policies which has been already defined (Kallestrup, 2002). In this sense, political legitimacy may unbalance the weight of the political system (box E) and affect the perception of the desirable administrative reforms of the elite decision-making (box J). Accordingly, Europeanization of public policies produces more effects on policies than on politics[5] (Saurugger & Radaelli, 2008: 216).

Thereafter, the relationship between populism and administrative reforms has been rarely discussed in academic literature. However, it is important to understand how populism affect the change which reformers want to introduce.

First, populism affects the process of selecting the desirable reforms, by assigning more power (or a "strong voice") to the citizens through the populism movements. In this case, the top-down process of reforms – discussed by Pollitt & Bouckaert (2000) – become both a top-down and

5) In this present research, since the case has nothing to do with EU policies and/or politics, the effects of the Europeanization on the public policy is not in question. However when it comes to populism in general, Europeanization plays an important role. For example, in order to examine the theme of Europeanization and political parties, see Ladrech (1994, 2002).

bottom-up process where the elite (directly) and the citizens (indirectly) select the desirable reforms.

Second, by considering the Pollitt & Bouckaert (2000) model of reforms, populism rises inside the political system and it is the result of the pressure from citizens and the party political ideas. Thence, populism may also be pushed by chance events, scandals and disasters, where a negative event creates greater disaffection or protests by the citizens.

Third, populism can have two main and opposite effects on the administrative reforms. Populism can "ignite reform or reaction" (Packer, The New Yorker, September 7, 2015), by creating the conditions for pushing the change from a bottom-up initiative. However, European Central Bank Director Mario Draghi claims that "*growing popular support for these movements* [populisms] *could delay what it views as necessary reforms*" (Financial Tribune Daily, May, 26 2016). If political forces act on behalf of the populist movements and political forces are often less reform-oriented, populism may cause a delay on the essential structural reforms[6].

Therefore, even if populism can ignite reforms, those reforms may not be the one the government needs at that time. Despite the populism movements, the elite still has the fundamental role of selecting the feasible reforms, according to the macroeconomic variables and the priorities of the government.

Although and obviously the Europeanization discourse does not apply to the case of Tokyo Metropolitan Government, its various reform attempts in the last two years share all elements characteristics to administrative techno-populism, thus the case could perfectly analysed through the

6) Regarding the required structural reforms, Luis de Guindos, Minister of Economy of Spain, claims that populism is "*the biggest challenge and enemy of structural reform*" (see IMF Survey Magazine: Policy, April 15 2016).

framework, combined with the Blame Game framework.

3. Blame Game as Analytical Framework for Administrative Techno-populism

In order to analyse the reason why various attempts of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government under the current Governor failed, despite their potentials, the paper employs blame game framework explored by Hood (2011).

Hood explored in his "The Blame Game: Spin, Bureaucracy, and Self-Preservation in Government" (2011) the three strategies of institutions to avoid blame; presentation strategies, agency strategies, and policy or operational strategies. He notes that one of the fascinations of blame avoidance is that it "is capable of being discusses at all levels, from abstruse philosophical analysis of the nature of responsibility to everyday conversations on the bus or in the bar that swap battle stories about the frustrations of dealing with big organizations whose systems and structures seem to be carefully designed to make ordinary human communication with them as difficult as possible"; however, the importance in relation to public administration is that "blame avoidance is a way of linking together three things that normally live in separate academic boxes in these fields, namely the way that public organizations and programs are structured, the way the world of spin and public opinion works, and the politics of the standard operating routines to be found in the world of public services and government. Blame avoidance is a way of bringing the analysis of all these normally separated elements to a single point, and also of linking the behavioral or institutional analysis of how organizations work or individuals behave with ideas about how things ought to be (deontology, for the

professionals)" (Hood, 2011).

While agency strategies deal with all the attempts officeholders and organizations make to deflect or limit blame by creative allocation of formal responsibility, competency, or jurisdiction among different units and individuals (Hood, 2002a: 16) and aim to craft organograms that maximize the opportunities for blame-shifting, buck-passing, and risk transfer to others who can be placed in the front line of blame when things go wrong or unpopular actions are to be carried out. Delegation is a favourite agency strategy for high-level officeholders, so that technical advisors, regulators, or executive supremos can take or at least share the blame when things go wrong. Delegation is also an agency strategy open to the middle-level players, because putting all the responsibility for potentially blame-attracting decisions onto the frontline players can be a way of taking the heat off themselves (Hood, 2011). According to Hood, there are four types of agency strategies, blame avoidance through delegation, through defensive reorganization, through partnership working, and through "government by the market".

In explaining delegation or "moving-the-target" approach, Hood cites a Japanese case, given by Hiwatari (2000: 129–133) in his account of the break-up of Japan's once all-powerful Ministry of Finance in the late 1990s. Hiwatari argues that the break-up is better understood as a product of blame-avoidance manoeuvers among rival political parties over the passage of unpopular measures to bail out collapsed banks at public expense than as a product of interest-group pressure, the ministry's incompetence, the party-political colour of the government, or other factors. That is because the break-up occurred when the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was either in coalition with other parties or ruling as a minority government, and the reorganization was a way for the other parties collaborating with the LDP

in the unpopular bank bailout policy to claim credit for bringing about a new regime and to avoid blame by distancing themselves from the regime that had brought about the bank failures. Hood argues that reorganization of the type discussed by Hiwatari is commonly found in government. When services are exposed to high levels of blame, reorganization and changes of names and titles offer one way of confusing potential blame makers and distancing the current regime from the previous one.

Policy or operational strategies comprises the various attempts by officeholders or institutions to avoid or limit blame by what they do or how they do it. Policy or operational strategies work on either or both of those dimensions, by choosing the course of action that minimizes likely blame, by reducing the chances of avoidable losses occurring, by reducing the chances of blame being detectable, or at least by showing that agents did all they reasonably could have done to foresee and prevent those losses. Hood points out that "policy strategies for blame avoidance turn out to be everywhere once you start to look for them, though it would hardly be surprising if examples of being careful turn out to be more plentiful than examples of being good".

Hood classifies policy and operational strategy again into four categories; protocolization, herding, individualization, and abstinence. Protocolization or sticking to the rules might be one of the most frequently used operational strategy to avoid blame in the case of airport policy as would be illustrated later; however in some periods, abstinence was also observed among various stakeholders.

Examining various theories, Hood notes that "an arrow theorist might expect to see ever-growing use of agency, presentational, and policy strategies for blame avoidance. A circle theorist, by contrast, might expect blame avoidance to be more of a constant-albeit taking different forms as

technology opens up or doses down strategic options, as new variants are invented and older ones become too familiar to be credible. The evidence is too fragmentary to allow us to firmly dismiss either of these theories. But it seems likely that both arrow and circle processes are at work in blameworld". He points out that "blame avoidance approaches seem to be frequently mutating into new forms as technological and social invention produces new weapons for organizations and individuals to use in their efforts to fend off blame. But there is also evidence for growth in the number and influence of presentational staff at the top of government in several countries and for a worldwide growth in semi-independent regulatory bodies for utilities and for some other functions". These notions certainly apply to the case in question.

Finally, Hood explains how cultural worldviews link to variations of blame-avoidance strategy (Hood, 2011; 143–145). "In a hierarchist worldview, blame attaches to those who do not follow the rules, do not follow established procedures, or do not pay attention to established expertise. In an egalitarian worldview, blame attaches to those who ignore popular opinion or do not have group support. In an individualist worldview, blame attaches to those who are considered personally inept or maladroit, and failure will be attributed to lack of individual ability. In a fatalist worldview, blame outcomes will be capricious and hard to predict, not necessarily following any clear social logic". He notes that "this analysis implies that top bananas will find blame avoidance hardest in egalitarian social settings, while those at the organizational front line (and many of those in the fourth world, outside the organizational apparatus of government and public services) will find blame avoidance hardest in individualist settings. The middle-level institutional players are likely to find blame avoidance hardest in hierarchist settings (where they can be caught by organograms and rules created by

those above them), and those in the fourth world, of civil society, are likely to find blame avoidance hardest in a mixture of individualist and fatalist settings, where system blame is either pervasive or difficult to assign".

Hood summarizes that hierarchist societies or organizations seem likely to be most attuned to policy strategies emphasizing protocolization, because in that sort of cultural setting the way to avoid blame is to be able to show that whatever is done follows the appropriate rules or good practice certified by recognized experts. The delegation forms of agency strategy are also likely to have an impact in a hierarchist setting, since fine distinctions between different types of organizations or officeholders will count for something in such contexts. As for the presentational approaches, the best fit of the winning-the-arguments variety will be those that appeal to the judgments of technically qualified authorities following the correct procedures or best practice guidelines at any given time.

Egalitarian societies or organizations, by contrast, seem likely to be most attuned to policy strategies emphasizing herding (group modes of decision-making such as collective cabinet solidarity and its equivalent in many other organizational settings) and agency strategies emphasizing partnership structures, popular consultation, or both.

For the individualist worldview, the agency strategy that seems most likely to resonate is that of government by the market. When it comes to policy strategies, he notes that, we can expect blame individualization to figure large in such a cultural setting, with a sauve qui peut approach overriding any kind of solidarity. From an individualist perspective, those who operate or consume services are expected to be able to make complex risk judgments for themselves and live (or die) by the buyer beware principle.

Fatalists are generally not likely to see blame as avoidable except by luck

or chance. If there is any preferred policy approach for fatalists, it would perhaps be the abstinence approach (on the grounds that whatever you do has a chance of attracting blame, so it is perhaps best to do as little as possible). Fatalists are likely to set little store by agency strategies, but a context of continuous chaotic reorganization and redeployment of people is perhaps most likely to fit into a fatalist worldview insofar as they create conditions in which everyone can shuffle off blame on the grounds that they do not really understand the structures in which they are operating and that whoever was here today will be gone tomorrow.

Given these elements and explanations of Hood, the paper now explores the Italian reforms from agency, policy and operational strategies in its cultural settings.

4. The Case: the narrative

The current TMG Governor Koike, who took power in the spring 2016, persuaded a series of reforms which gained high popularity; they became to be associated with concepts, typically used both by populist movement, indeed she won the election as an independent candidate, appealing to floating voters and campaigning against the traditional parties and TMG technocrats, such as 'reduction of waste', 'renovating bureaucracy', "making procedure open and transparent" to hit the existing ruling class, and to reduce its power as veto-player against administrative reforms.

Paradoxically, while the Ishihara Administration (1999–2012) was also populist administration, he delegated most of the decision-making to the TMG technocrats, while he continued to "announce" political fights against the national government, thus the TMG technocrats never really lost power; indeed, they gained power against national bureaucracy during those days.

The following governors also delegated most of the decision-making to the TMG bureaucracy, thus the technocrats enjoyed their power until recently. Thus the very first strong committing Governor has been a big threat to the TMG technocrats. Her style, teaming up with a group of outside consultants, consists of former McKinsey consultants, academics, and lawyers, instituting a TMG Reform Headquarter, and making herself the head of it, was quite new and populistic, but gained strong consensus among Tokyo residents and media.

In autumn 2016, when she announced a series of revision of infrastructures programmed for the Tokyo Olympic Game, her popularity was at the height. The outsider team, nominated by the Governor and mostly former McKinsey consultants, academics, and lawyers, working together with the technocrats, calculated the building and maintenance costs of some of the facilities and concluded that the facility for boat competition (Umi no mori) and the pool for swimming competition (Aquatics centre) had unsustainable cost issues as well as environmental issues, among others.

The team proposed several options, including one to reallocate the boating facility in Tohoku area and one to reuse the existing facility in nearby Saitama Prefecture, not only calculating cost for renovation and maintenance cost after the Game, but also forecasting the possible usage of the facilities by the athletes and sport-enthusiasts. The Tohoku option initially gained major support by population and politicians of Tohoku region, which was heavily hit by the 2011 East Japan Earthquake and was looking forward for a big investment as positive international image, while the Saitama option was much cheaper than the others, although there are some environmental risk as well as security issues. Alternatives were proposed with prediction of construction and maintenance cost as well as social and economic impact to the territory. Media covered the whole process step by step; population

was enthusiastic about the transparency of the discussion and loved the idea of comparing three options.

However, after the hard work and heated national debate, the Governor opted for no-change. Thus, indeed, much ado about nothing. The population started to express the disappointment towards the Governor. The decision of the Governor was taken under international and national pressure, while she was struggling with the local assembly, which majority was in the hand of the opposition.

Regarding the swimming pool, the major question was the seats required for the spectators. For the Olympic facilities, there are various IOC requirements, but they do not specify if they should permanent structure of an ad hoc structure. After running several simulations, the team calculated that the permanent seats of 20,000 would never been fully used after the event, making the astronomical maintenance cost difficult to justify. Thus the advisory team came up with the alternative plan with 8,000 permanent seats and the resting 12,000 as provisional seats. In this way, the facility could have become a useful legacy for citizens' general use as well as national and regional competition hub.

The Governor met regularly the media and informed the progress of these revisions, which were followed nationwide. There were high expectations even from outside Tokyo toward this style of governance. Suddenly, however, the whole revision stopped without apparent reasons. There were, however, pressures from national government as well as from IOC. Many administrative stakeholders, even those of the designated prefectures, opposed to the revisions, fearing backlash. At the end of the day, all calculations were ended in vain. All remained as initially programmed.

There are several other minor facilities which undergo the revision

process, but all alternative proposals with positive evaluation were not approved and all turned back to the lass attractive, the more expensive, and the more problematic original proposal.

In the following sections, the case would be analysed by the two frameworks introduced ahead.

5. Analysis of the Case through Blame Game

Through the late reform attempts of Tokyo Metropolitan Government, it is possible to find some common elements among their agency strategies. According to Hood, agency strategies deal with all the attempts officeholders and organizations make to deflect or limit blame by creative allocation of formal responsibility, competency, or jurisdiction among different units and individuals (Hood, 2002a: 16) Delegation is a favourite agency strategy for high-level officeholders as well as the middle-level players, because putting all the responsibility for potentially blame-attracting decisions onto the frontline players can be a way of taking the heat off themselves (Hood, 2011). Indeed, delegation to decisions of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and national politics has been one of the very common strategies exercised by the Governor as well as public managers of related departments in the TMG.

Among four types of agency strategies pointed out by Hood, the case clearly shows preference on blame avoidance through delegation, through defensive reorganization, and through "government by the market" to a certain extent. Delegation to IOC decisions and national politics is the most frequently used strategy, while various reorganizations of the TMG could be considered as defensive reorganization to avoid blame. Indeed, the continuous changes of departments and divisions, with their reorganization

and renaming, have made it difficult to identify the responsibilities, while their changing relationship between the State made it extremely difficult to guarantee accountability of these related institutions.

The fact that financial reasons were always the real driver of the reform can be interpreted as "government by the market" strategy. While the other strategies focused more on blame avoidance, this strategy was employed to build consensuses, leaving decisions to the market, more precisely not making decision until the market had been created.

At policy and operational level, using the four categories of Hood (protocolization, herding, individualization, and abstinence), the case can be mainly understand through protocolization or sticking to the rules. Overwhelming laws and regulations, not only at the national level, but also at international as well as local level have made adequate reforms impossible. All public stakeholders hide behind the existing laws and regulations to avoid blames and responsibilities. Many implementation failures can be also understand through protocolization. Individualization can be observed especially among top political level. The fact that several successful events have been identified by strong political engagement of the current Governor confirms this tendency. She made herself not only accountable for those projects, but also responsible and liable.

The above analysed blame avoidance strategies used in the reform attempts of TMG fit also to the culture explanations explored by Hood. According to his analysis, in a hierarchist worldview, blame attaches to those who do not follow the rules, do not follow established procedures, or do not pay attention to established expertise and this seems to match the case.

Using the summary of Hood, that the hierarchist societies or organizations seem likely to be most attuned to policy strategies emphasizing

protocolization, because in that sort of cultural setting the way to avoid blame is to be able to show that whatever is done follows the appropriate rules or good practice certified by recognized experts, the Italian reform case is clearly an example of hierarchist society and organizations. He also noted that the delegation forms of agency strategy are also likely to have an impact in a hierarchist setting, since fine distinctions between different types of organizations or officeholders will count for something in such contexts. This case, indeed, can be best explained through this setting.

6. Discussion: Tokyo Metropolitan Government reform attempts as administrative techno-populism

For the analysis of the context and the administrative reforms, Tokyo Metropolitan Government can be considered a typical case for the rising of administrative techno-populism for several reasons.

First, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government has been institutionally and financially stable organization, despite the electoral, thus political turbulences, characterised by the coexistence of new and old actors which has determined the normalisation of negotiated change without any veritable transition to a new stable system (Bull & Rhodes, 2007).

This system dealt with all three 'global' crises that have shaped the world since 2007–2009: the financial, the economic, and the fiscal crisis, although these have not hit the TMG with the same proportions that they have manifested themselves on the global stage. The three crises since 2008 (financial, economic and fiscal) have thus to be added to the contemporaneous political and party system crisis, which is the outcome of the unsolved 'negotiated transition' (Bull & Rhodes, 1997, 2007) that emerged as the state of affairs in Japan first in 1993 with the birth of

Hosokawa Administration with his newly created party, Nihon-Shinto, or Japan New Party (Tokyo Governor Koike was one of the politician joined the foundation of this party in question and was elected as member of the parliament that year) and 2009 with the very first opposition party (Democratic Party of Japan, DPJ) in government (until 2012). While former Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara, a novelist turned right wing populist politician, who governed Tokyo from 1999 to 2012, was one of the first generation of right populist politicians and despite, or maybe because of, his attitude and announcements, was popular and governed Tokyo for quite long (three terms and resigned during the fourth term for his personal reasons) and (considered) successful because of his delegation to TMG technocrats, while the following two Governors were forced to resign during their terms because of private scandals. Thus, TMG has four "crises" running simultaneously (political, fiscal, economic, financial) that combined with social changes fostered by media-logic have created the environment for the raising of populism and discredit of political institutions.

As mentioned, in this context, the reform attempts of the Governor Koike, who took power in the spring 2016, gained a high symbolic significance, and it became to be associated with concepts, typically used both by populist movement (she won the election as an independent candidate, appealing to floating voters and campaigning against the traditional parties) and TMG technocrats, such as 'reduction of waste', 'renovating bureaucracy', "making procedure open and transparent" to hit the existing ruling class, and to reduce its power as veto-player against administrative reforms. Paradoxically, while the Ishihara Administration was also populist administration, he delegated most of the decision-making to the TMG technocrats, while he continued to "announce" political fights against the national government, thus the TMG technocrats never lost power; indeed,

they gained power against national bureaucracy during those days. The following governors also delegated most of the decision-making to the TMG bureaucracy, thus the technocrats enjoyed their power until recently. Thus the very first strong committing Governor has been a big threat to the TMG technocrats. Her style, teaming up with a group of outside consultants, consists of former McKinsey consultants, academics, and lawyers, instituting a TMG Reform Headquarter, and making herself the head of it, was quite new and populistic, but gained strong consensus among Tokyo residents and media.

In autumn 2016, when she announced a series of revision of infrastructures programmed for the Tokyo Olympic Game, her popularity was at the height. The outsider team, working together with the technocrats, calculated the building and maintenance costs of some of the facilities and concluded that the facility for boat competition (Umi no mori) and the pool for swimming competition (Aquatics centre) had unsustainable cost issues as well as environmental issues. The team also proposed several options, including one to reallocate the boating facility in Tohoku area and one to reuse the existing facility in nearby Saitama Prefecture. Regarding the swimming pool, the major question was the seats required for the spectators. For the Olympic facilities, there are various IOC requirements, but they do not specify if they should permanent structure of an ad hoc structure. After running several simulations, the team calculated that the permanent seats of 20,000 would never been fully used after the event, making the astronomical maintenance cost difficult to justify. The Governor met regularly the media and informed the progress of these revisions, which were followed nationwide. There were high expectations even from outside Tokyo toward this style of governance. Suddenly, however, the whole revision stopped without apparent reasons. There are pressures from national government

as well as from IOC. Many administrative stakeholders, even those of the designated prefectures, opposed to the revisions, fearing backlash. At the end of the day, all calculations were ended in vain. All remained as initially programmed.

Furthermore, in analysing the crisis' impact on reform, it is possible also to include the dynamics of the "two level game" played by national policy; makers at home and in the international organizations (Putnam, 1988). During the past decades, international organizations and foreign pressures have played an important role in administrative reform processes, providing national policy makers with the pressures and the legitimacy necessary to launch ambitious reform initiatives. Japan has implemented administrative reforms inspired by the NPM principles and stimulated by the international organizations as well as foreign practices. Yet, like all late comers to NPM-lead reforms, the Japanese reformers have adopted a different mix of initiatives and, above all, their implementation was shaped by the specific institutional and cultural context that has determined different results. The TMG was one of the first local governments to fully embrace NPM principles in the Nineties; however at the same time, has been a unique organization in Japan, the only prefecture with positive fiscal balance and manages a budget of middle-sized country (with about 14 trillion Yen annual budget, indeed, equivalent of Sweden). Thus even the reforms announced all typical recipes of NPM, TMG has never really keen on cutting the cost or improving the efficiency.

Again, the party system breakdown opened a window of opportunity for reforms, which were exploited by technocrats in government. An articulated programme of NPM-driven reforms invested all the fields of the bureaucratic apparatus. Yet, this resulted in an "implementation gap" as the unfavourable political and institutional context determined the low

reforming capacity of governments. The multiple crisis of 2008 highlighted structural gaps of administrative framework mining its legitimation. Technocratic and populistic pressure reached its peak in 2011, while the opposition government struggled to manage the East Japan Earthquake and the following Fukushima Crisis. The combination of technocratic and populistic pressure forced further governments (conservatives back in power) to manage various situations in fragmented ways. The policy outcome has been unsatisfying at both national and local levels. That was the time of populistic Governor Ishihara still in power, followed by other populistic Governors appealing against traditional party system.

The case of the TMG brought the author to introduce the concept of administrative techno-populism. Administrative techno-populism can be defined as administrative reforms and actions resulting from popular and techno-elite pressures that push policy makers to change existing administrative patterns in order to satisfy mainstream claims against several practices existing within institutions and/or the bureaucratic and political class.

This framework concept is useful to better understand how the relationship between politics and policy is changing in contemporary times. As a matter of fact, a new political style based on instantaneity, short-termism, mediatisation, sound-bites (Peters, 2014) and political distrust is influencing policy outcomes that are becoming part of the populistic narrative. The leading public policy theorist Theodore Lowi (1972) posited the startling possibility that policy caused politics, rather than the reverse causal pathway generally assumed by which politics determined policy. Therefore, a political relationship is determined by the type of policy at stake, so that for every policy there is likely to be a distinctive type of political relationship (Lowi, 1964). Such a framework "reaches to the very

foundation of democratic politics and the public interest" (Lowi, 1972). In these terms, a new vicious cycle for administrative reform is potentially rising, where populistic politics influences decision-making and policy processes shaping dysfunctional or incomplete administrative reforms that, subsequently, reinforced technocratic pressure by international organizations on the nation state as well as populistic turmoil against political parties and institutions. Furthermore, administrative reforms became double-face "illusionary tool": on the one hand they give a fast answer to techno-populistic pressure in order to satisfy the demand of political change by the public and supranational institutions. On the other hand they collide with low reforming capacity and implementation gap that characterized Italian administrative traditions and policy paradigm.

7. Conclusion and Further Research

The reform attempts of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, especially those related to Olympic Games, have been strongly influenced by the IOC and national politics, and this tendency can be explained using blame avoidance at various institutions and at various levels.

Since the paper analyses only one case of the reform attempts of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, the analysis is rather limited. The future research would extend to the policies and strategies, which involved more stakeholders and have rather complex decision making as well as implementation structure, not necessary those of Tokyo, but of various national and local governments, and would contribute better to the discussion of strategies of various levels and their relationship to policies, analysing more in details all the stakeholders, including the citizen. More attentions should be paid on political actors, since the individuals as well as

groups of politicians played important role on the decisions of the reforms.

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