The seeds of the modern conception of 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 – are as old as modernity itself.

But now, having largely fallen out of fashion in recent decades, Technocracy is for various reasons beginning to 'return' – both as a subject of scholarly analysis and as an actual and expanding potential system for the globalised, top-down, post-democratic and digitally-powered management of populations, on the basis of full-spectrum surveillance, Big Data, and possibly a controlled shift from a monetary- to a resource-based economic system in the name of 'sustainable development'.

The focus of the conference, given this, is on a multi-disciplinary exploration of the following contention: that recent developments in digital technology and the consolidation of a global communications infrastructure, in the context of the wealth-and-power concentrating activities of a global 'superclass' and corporate sector, are on the verge of making older dreams and visions of an all-encompassing and post-democratic system of Technocracy realisable.

John Rawles once observed that 'the politician, we say, looks to the next election, the statesman to the next generation, and philosophy to the indefinite future.' How, then, shall we set the time horizon for a sober scientific debate? We believe that any temporal dimension towards the future might be relevant here: from short-time 'instrumental' projections to the further – and bolder – extrapolations of technē/technik in societal milieu. To put it directly: Where are we now? How did we get here? What comes next? What is the endgame?

Since technological innovations cut 'across the spheres of the biological, the physical and the digital' we welcome genuinely critical contributions (papers, suggestions for panels, etc.) from scholars working in any discipline relevant to the discussion. Possible topics might include, but are by no means confined to, the following:

- History of Technocracy: From Saint Simon and Comte, via Taylorism and Technocracy Inc., to the Trilateral Commission and technetronics, and more.
- Big Tech, Surveillance Capitalism and 'Instrumentarian' Power: Behaviour modification and manipulation of the user at the screen interface; the attempt to 'automate' user responses; the effects of this young users in their formative years?
- Social Physics: Big Data paternalism? Herding/hiving the public mind? Non-reflexive, conformist publics?
- Cambridge Analytica and Since: Big Data-based interventions in electoral processes; 'nudge' and political persuasion?
- The Rise of Populism: The 'return of politics'/revolt against technocratic governance?
- Internet of Things/Bodies and Social Credit: The normalisation of continuous full-spectrum surveillance? A Chinese-style social credit system in the Western democracies? Digital authoritarianism and its ramifications.
- Covid-19 and Social Control: Health mandates, 'vaccine passports' and ID2020 – a glimpse into the future? The emergence of the bio-security state?

- The 'Great Reset' and the World Economic Forum: How are we to understand the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution'? Bio-tech convergence and transhumanism as social control vectors?
- Eugenics/Population Control in Technocratic Thinking: From the Rockefeller Foundation and H.G. Wells to Prince Charles and Bill Gates.
- Science Fiction Technocracies: in literature and film, from Brave New World to Black Mirror and points between. Prophetic visions? 'Predictive programming'?
- Education: Expansion of screen- and other tech-based distance learning, gamification, continuous data-mining of pupils and students for Big Data and machine learning?
- Military Technologies for 'Cognitive Warfare': Civilian and social applications? Neuroscience and neurotechnologies for defence and national security. Fourth-generation warfare against domestic populations as well as military opponents? Mind-hacking?
- Digital Technocracy and the State: data/algorithmic sovereignty, non-state actors between digital utopianism and digital dystopianism, regulatory regimes and their (un)fulfilled promises: from techno-libertarianism to techno-realism, the 'Technopolar Moment.' How technology shapes politics/policies and how politics/policies shape technology?
- Normative/ethical appraisal: technocracy and the judiciary system, digital divide, algorithmic bias, predictive policing, the "black box" problem, algorithmic decision making and the "complexity monster" (space, time, human complexity), a design for ethical technocracy (responsibility/negligence, explainability/transparency, accuracy, security, auditability, fairness, privacy). Relevance of the search engine manipulation effect (SEME)?

The above topics shall lead to publication of a special collection of articles in an edited volume.

Conference details
- Conference dates: September 28-29, 2023.
- Submission deadline: May 31, 2023.
- Following review, we will inform of successful proposals by June 15, 2023.
- Conference registration and payment deadline: July 15, 2023.
- Final program circulation: September 10, 2023.
- Full Paper submission deadline: September 15, 2023.
- Conference fee: 169 Euro (Regular fee) / 119 Euro (Junior scholars)*

Panels will aim to accommodate authors at different stages of their career to allow inclusive and stimulating exchange of ideas.

The conference will take place at the Jagiellonian University, Faculty of International and Political Studies, 4 Reymonta Street, Krakow, Poland. The building is wheelchair accessible. Conference rooms are equipped with Windows 11 laptops, Wi-Fi and projectors. If you'd have any extra issues (equipment, dietary needs, schedule preferences, etc.), please feel free to put them in the registration form.

*A limited number of fee discounts will be available for Junior scholars: MA degree holders, PhD candidates, and scholars who obtained their PhD in 2020 or later. Those inclined to apply in such a category are kindly asked to check a suitable box in a registration form. Both applications – regular and reduced – will be assessed on a merit basis by a review panel.

Keynote Speakers

Matthew B. Crawford

He studied physics as an undergraduate, then did a doctorate in the history of political thought at the University of Chicago. He is a senior fellow at the University of Virginia's Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture. His books, translated into ten languages, could be described as philosophically informed cultural criticism, often with an historical angle. The erosion of individual agency and collective self-government under technocracy is a recurring theme.

Martin Libicki

He holds the Keyser Chair of cybersecurity studies at the U.S. Naval Academy. In addition to teaching, he carries out research in cyberwar and the general impact of information technology on domestic and national security. He is the author of a 2016 textbook on cyberwar, Cyberspace in Peace and War, as well as two others commercially published books, Conquest in Cyberspace: National Security and Information Warfare, and Information Technology Standards: Quest for the Common Byte. He is also the author of numerous RAND monographs, notably Defender's Dilemma, Brandishing Cyberattack Capabilities, Crisis and Escalation in Cyberspace, Global Demographic Change and its Implications for Military Power, Cyberdeterrence and Cyberwar, How Insurgencies End (with Ben Connable), and How Terrorist Groups End (with Seth Jones).

David Lyon

He is a former Director of the Surveillance Studies Centre at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. Educated at the University of Bradford UK, Lyon has been studying surveillance since the mid-1980s. A pioneer in the field of Surveillance Studies, he has produced a steady stream of books – translated in to 18 languages – and articles, starting with The Electronic Eye (1994). The latest is Pandemic Surveillance (2022). He has led several large collaborative research projects on surveillance, with research funding totalling almost $8 million. His work has been recognized in Canada, Switzerland, the USA and the UK with a number of fellowships, prizes, awards and an honorary doctorate.

Alex Thomson

He is Commissioning Editor at UK Column (ukcolumn.org). He was an intelligence officer at GCHQ from 2001 to 2009, specialising in the South Caucasus, where he had previously lived and worked. He lives in the Netherlands and has been a UK Column News correspondent since 2014, researching and commenting on European politics, security and intelligence affairs, constitutional matters, and religious and conscientious liberty. As a conference interpreter, he works freelance for diplomatic organisations and international legal bodies.