Introduction
Knowledge and democracy are two aspects of contemporary politics, often intertwined though basically rooted in different “spheres of justice” [Gilley 2016, quoting Rawls] and therefore logics, meanings, languages. From a normative point of view, the two concepts can be seen as opposite or, instead, complementary foundations for contemporary political power [Radaelli 1995]. Questions about what is the “good” knowledge may produce prescriptions about the relationship between knowledge and democracy as alternative sources of legitimacy [Lippi 2012]. At the same time, the complexities of governance settings and the uncertainties of the policy-making suggest focusing on the use of knowledge that is actually made by democratic governments. The empirical analysis of the use of knowledge can thus offer another view on the empirical facet of the relationship between knowledge and democracy. First, knowledge utilisation takes different forms and produces different outputs, visible in the professional activities of a number of policy advisors with different backgrounds and specialisations. Second, knowledge can be used for different purposes, so that policy-makers may recur to science to justify their conduct or to design better policies. Finally, knowledge conveyed through the work of policy advisors can prove to be a key ingredient of the policy process and of policy change.

Hence, this paper proposes to contribute to the discussion about the relationship between knowledge and democracy by questioning the public administration and public policy literatures on the empirical side of knowledge utilisation in specific democratic contexts. The paper will try to answer these questions:

• Who are the policy advisors and what is their role in the political system?
• What type of relationship do policy advisors have with other actors such as the political and administrative leaders of the government?
• How do they intervene in the policy process and what is their role in the policy dynamics?

The focus on the empirical facets of knowledge in the policy-making allows acknowledging the variety of forms of policy advice and reveals some tensions in the relationship with political and administrative leaders. The paper will try to discuss these issues by reviewing the most recent literature on internal advisory bodies, policy advisory systems, political and ministerial advisors, and policy advice as a specific policy work. More attention will be given to the relationship between policy advisors and the government, compared to studies more focused on the relationship with the parliament [Regonini 2012].
Who are the policy advisors? From individuals to policy advisory systems

To deal with the variety of usage of knowledge in the policy-making, scholars have tried to look not just at the features of policy advisors as individuals, but have started to describe their features as collective actors grouped into advisory bodies, such as policy advisory units in the public administration, ad hoc commissions, government agencies, groups of appointed staff, but also think tanks and international organizations.

The empirical manifestations of policy advice vary greatly according to the features of the socio-cultural context and to the national politico administrative context [Vesely 2016]. Though studies on policy advisors show a strong national characterisation, most of the research is on Westminster systems of government, in countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand [Craft and Halligan 2016]. This literature has developed by focusing on the policy advisory systems (PAS), and the internal advisory systems of the government in particular.

Traditional studies about this subject have been inspired from a market view of policy advise, pointing at different set of actors: the proximate decision-makers who consume policy analysis and advice; the knowledge producers in academia, statistical agencies and research institutes; and knowledge brokers who served as intermediaries transforming data into usable forms [Craft and Howlett 2012, 82; Craft and Howlett 2013]. Policy advisory systems (PAS) is the expression used by Halligan [1995] to identify the interlocking set of actors and organizations with unique configurations in each sector and jurisdiction that provides recommendation for action to policy-makers. Halligan describes PAS considering not only their location and formal proximity to the executive, but also the degree of control the government is able to act over them. He distinguishes three different types of location where the policy advice systems can be located: in the public service itself; internal to government; external to government. Both technical and political forms of advice are considered: significantly, political appointments are located separately from public administration (public service) or as internal to government departments.

The degree of government control seems linked to the stability of the advice: for example, government control is low in permanent advisory policy units and statutory authorities, whereas temporary advisory policy units in the ministers’ offices or in the Prime minister offices are subjected to higher governmental control (see table 1). The variety of advisory bodies is evident in the table, which give an idea of the great empirical variety of forms. Moreover, it suggests that the features of the different advisory systems depend also on the concrete functioning of the government (majoritarian or consensual; coalition or minority) and on the relationship inside and outside the government in a given politico-administrative system [OECD 2007].
Table 1 – Halligan’s classification of policy advice systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Government control</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public service</td>
<td>Senior departmental policy advisors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Statutory appointments in public service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal to government</td>
<td>Political advisory systems</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Permanent advisory policy units</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ministers offices</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Statutory authorities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First ministers offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>Parliaments (e.g. a House of Commons)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legislatures (e.g. US Congress)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private sector/non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trade unions, interest groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community organisations subject to government</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community groups</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confederal international communities/organisations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Federal international organisations</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Halligan, 1995

Following this line of reasoning, Schultz and van der Steen [2015] offer an analysis of different internal advisory systems in countries such as France, Germany, the Netherland’s, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The internal advisory systems of these countries are different in configuration (size), administration (financing), and composition (selection criteria). Still, each internal advisory system seems to fit with the type of state arrangement (unitary or centralised) and the type of executive (majoritarian or consensual). In France, the domination of political ministerial cabinets (composed of appointed civil officers and political staff) fits into a centralised structure of power; the large internal advisory system of Germany, instead, fits into the federal system where decision-making takes place especially at the subnational level and interest groups and experts have access to policy making; in Sweden, the advisory system is rooted in permanent commission that give advice also on the implementation at the local level. In the Netherlands, the advisory system composed of experts and ad hoc commissions fits with the consensual type of government and with the recent introduction of consultation practices. At the same time, the expertise-driven system of advice in the UK fits with the necessity of the majoritarian government to justify the policies with facts and knowledge [ibidem, 12].

Thus, the politico-administrative system of a country is able to affect the features of the PAS. Nonetheless, most of the research on policy advisory systems is on majoritarian systems, such as those of UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand [Craft and Howlett 2013]. By focusing on this specific type of politico-administrative system, we can appreciate how the type of internal advice may vary looking at different roles and activities.

In Westminster countries, policy advisory systems vary not just according to their location or proximity to government, but also according to the content of the policy advice. In particular, the influence of policy advice may change with the shifts in governance relations. Craft and Howlett [2012, 85-88] notice that the trend often labelled “from government to governance” has distributed influence both vertically – among different institutional actors of policy making – and horizontally – involving the stakeholders – and that this shift in governance arrangements has affected also policy advice. In a view of idealised models, the
authors describe this as a change from a “speaking truth to power” model of advice, where policy advice was concentrated inside governments, to a more fluid, pluralised and polycentric advice giving labelled as “sharing truths with multiple actors of influence” [Parsons 2004, Prince 2005], where the content and the forms of policy advise are diversified and actors engage in sense-making [Hoppe 1999] (see table 2).

Table 2 – Idealised models of policy advice [Craft and Howlett 2012, 86]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Speaking truth to power of ministers</th>
<th>Sharing truths with multiple actors of influence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus of policy-making</td>
<td>Departmental hierarchy and vertical portfolios</td>
<td>Interdepartmental and horizontal management of issues with external networks and policy communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background of senior career officials</td>
<td>Knowledgeable executives with policy sector expertise and history</td>
<td>Generalists with expertise in decision processes and systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of policy processes</td>
<td>Relatively self-contained within government, supplemented with advisory councils and royal commissions</td>
<td>Open to outside groups, research institutes, think tanks, consultants, politicians and virtual centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister/deputy minister relations</td>
<td>Strong partnership in preparing proposals with ministers, trusting and taking policy advice largely from officials</td>
<td>Shared partnership with ministers drawing ideas from officials, aid, consultants, lobbyists, think tanks, media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of policy advice</td>
<td>Casually and confident advice to ministers given in a neutral and detached manner</td>
<td>Relatively more guarded advice given to ministers by officials in a more compliant or pre-ordained fashion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of policy advice</td>
<td>Neutral Competence</td>
<td>Responsive competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public profile of officials</td>
<td>Generally anonymous</td>
<td>More visible to groups, parliamentarians and media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles of officials in policy processes</td>
<td>Confidential advisors inside government and neutral observers outside government</td>
<td>Active participants in policy discussions inside and outside government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Offering guidance to government decision-makers</td>
<td>Managing policy networks and perhaps building capacity of client groups</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: adapted from Prince, 2007: 179

In the latter model, the dispersed advisory capacity combines both technical, evidence-based knowledge and political viewpoints. Policy advisory systems as a whole becomes a complex web of policy advisors including the traditional public service, the political advisors appointed by the government and non-governmental actors, such as NGOs, international organizations and think tanks. In the “sharing truth” model of advice, as a matter of fact, internal advisors may provide at the same time a political-ideological type of advice and a technical-evidence oriented advice, and play brokerage and coordination roles to integrate different sources of advice coming from the inside departments and the outside of government [Malley 2000; Gains and Stoker 2011].

In such a fluid context, Craft and Howlett thus propose that the content of policy advice is more useful than the location of advisers to characterise the features of policy advice [Craft and Howlett 2012, 87-88]. They classify policy advice according to different content dimensions: the procedural vs the substantive type of advice, on the one hand; the short term/reactive vs the long term/anticipatory orientation of policy advice. In this way, they define four different types of policy advice: a pure political and policy process advice, performed in the short run by political parties, the legislative committees and the regulatory agencies, but also interest groups and policy analysts; a short term crisis advice, whereby the members of the executive, the executive offices and the political staff, and also external consultants, strategists and lobbyists give substantive advice; a medium to long term steering
advice, focused on the procedural aspects suggested by ministers and central or statutory agencies, and also by international organizations such as the OECD; an finally an evidence based policy advice, focused on the content of the policy inspired by statistical agencies, strategic policy units and permanent commissions, but increasingly offered on regular basis also by think tanks and academic advisors, and sometimes by citizens involvement and big data treatment (see table 3).

Table 3 – Policy advisory systems according to policy content [Howlett and Craft 2012, 91]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedural</th>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>Procedural</th>
<th>Substance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Pure” political and policy process advice</td>
<td>Short-term crisis and fire-fighting advice</td>
<td>Medium to long-term policy steering advice</td>
<td>Evidence-based policy-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political parties, parliaments and legislative committees (House of Commons, Congress); regulatory agencies</td>
<td>Political peers (e.g. cabinet); executive office political staffs</td>
<td>Deputy ministers, central agencies/ executive; royal commissions; judicial bodies</td>
<td>Statistical agencies/departments; senior departmental policy advisors; strategic policy unit; royal commissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As well as</td>
<td>As well as</td>
<td>As well as</td>
<td>As well as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal as well as external political advisers, interest groups; lobbying; mid-level public service policy analysis and policy managers; policymakers</td>
<td>Agencies, boards and commissions; crown corporations; international organisations (e.g. OECD, ILO, UN)</td>
<td>Think tanks; scientific and academic advisors; open data citizen engagement-driven policy initiatives/web 2.0; blue ribbon panels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term reactive</td>
<td>Long-term/anticipatory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Source: Craft and Howlett</td>
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</table>

This approach to policy advice suggests to look at the content of advice and at its shifts through time, in order to grasp the type of influence that policy advice exert on the politico-administrative system, on one side, and to the policy making in different sectors, on the other side. The studies reviewed so far do not offer a comparison of the forms of policy advice according to their content, but emphasize some common trends. For example, the diffusion and fragmentation of evidence-based policy-making is a remarkable phenomenon both in the Westminster countries [Craft and Halligan 2016] and in some European systems, such as in the Netherlands and in Germany [Schultz and van den Steen 2015; Hulstedt et al 2015]. The difficulties to compare policy advisory systems in different countries are also due to the different state and administrative models (unitary or federal, centralised or decentralised, career-based or merit-based) and to the temporally uneven path of reforms of public administration (for example, with the introduction of NPM principles or the decentralisation of the policy-making). Nonetheless, if we maintain the focus on the Westminster systems, some lines of tensions linked to the features of policy advice can be seen.

Tensions in the relationships with political and administrative leaders
The literature on policy advice in the Westminster systems highlights different tensions in the relationship of policy advisors with political leaders (ministers, prime ministers), on one side, and with administrative leaders (senior civil servants) on the other.
Policy advice depicts a system of interactions that is based on three poles that can relate to each other in very different ways (collaborative, gatekeeper and triangulated) as shown in the image below taken from Craft [2015, 138].

![Diagram of policy advice system](image)

As discussed below, accountability of policy advice to other political actors and responsiveness of public service to political mandate emerge as two key aspects in these relationships.

For example, in Westminster systems the relationship between the policy advice and the political leaders in the executive is strongly affected by personal trust [Connaughton 2010]. If seen as a “principal-agent” kind of relationship where informational asymmetries hold in both sides, the attitude of the principal/government and the concrete terms of the professional contract between the principal/advisee and the agent/advisor matter to the actual use of scientific knowledge¹. In more concrete terms, policy-makers may or may not translate the suggestions of the policy advisors in the decisions. Thus, ideational compatibility among adviser and advisee is considered central for advisory systems by Craft and Wilder [2015, 15], who have developed four archetypes of policy ideational compatibility based on advisory content (e.g. policy content and instruments), issue type (e.g. salience, complexity and temporality), advisory purpose (e.g. political, learning, instrumental procedural), and relational considerations (e.g. trust, capacity, influence, conflict). Besides ideational compatibility, the informal character of the relationship between the minister and the policy advisor may blur the lines of accountability in the policy-making process.

Nonetheless, the most critical relation remains between policy advisors and the leaders of the public services. Anglophone countries are traditionally characterised by the separation of the political and bureaucratic realms, by the dominance of the latter in policy processes, and by an instrumental and pragmatic orientation [Halligan 1995]. In this administrative system, then, policy advisors coming from the outside of public service (and partisan/political advisors in particular) are seen as a thread to the power of bureaucracy. This tension is described under two different labels: externalisation, on one side, and politicisation, on the other side.

Craft and Howlett [2013] describe how the priority accorded to internal officials in traditional policy advisory systems has been challenged by the use of external consultants

¹ I owe Gloria Regonini this passage on the informal relationship and the contract between the policy advisor and the government.
and commissions and by the increased participatory efforts. The result is the “externalisation” of policy advice outside traditional professional public service, with the involvement of many non-governmental actors such as NGOs, think tanks, and more or less professional advice from colleagues, friends and relatives [Eichbaum and Shaw 2007]. The diversification of policy advice is seen as an attempt by elected officials to secure greater political control and responsiveness over the administration. In a pessimistic view of this trend, the increased use of exogenous forms of advice would weaken the monopoly of advice by the public sector; moreover, public sector reforms promoting decentralisation would erode the public sector capacity to provide timely policy advice [Painter and Pierre 2005]. Instead, in a more optimistic view, the development of policy research communities outside government can enrich the public understanding and the debate on policy issues [Anderson 1996].

At the same time, Peters and Pierre [2004, 2] describe the politicisation of the civil service as the substitution of political criteria for merit-based criteria in the selection, retention, promotion, rewards and disciplining of members of the public service. This process may favour the diffusion of policy advice of more partisan and political content: this may include the political advice of appointed partisan advisors [Connaughton 2010; Eichbaum and Shaw 2007], and the advice given from more structured think tanks, which are linked or aligned to political parties. Clearly, the increase of political appointments is seen as a sign of politicisation and it is contrasted by the civil servants, who accuse political advisors to act as a filter between the senior officers and the minister. The increasing importance of political advisors in governments and the resulting tensions can be interpreted as a change from traditional politico-administrative relations, based on the separation of roles and on the primacy of the law (as in Weber and Wilson), to contemporary governance settings, where competition between politicians and bureaucrats turns into hybrid forms of relationship, where the guiding principle is the responsiveness to the political leadership (as in the roles models of Guy Peters or in the four ‘role’ images of Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman).

According to Craft and Halligan [2016], the attention to politicization and externalisation distract scholarly attention from the idiosyncratic path of change toward a de-institutionalisation of the policy advice systems in Westminster countries, expressed by the growing plurality of new advisory units and the professionalization of policy competence outside institutions. A clear dynamic in these countries is the decline of the public service as the primary source of advice and, more importantly, the erosion of public service policy capacity: also a trend of declining substantive experience on the policy issues in favour of more generalist (and political-oriented) forms of policy work has been noticed [Howlett et al. 2014; Tiernan 2011]. Nonetheless, the institutionalization of ministerial partisan advice differs in sequence, intensity, and tempo in the different countries [Eichbaum and Shaw 2010; Maley 2011; Craft 2016]. Another change has been the institutionalization of independent fiscal oversight agencies, which have added capacity and improved accountability, and which serve the Parliament [Halligan and Craft 2016].
Policy advisors in the policy-making: different views on policy analysis and knowledge utilisation

Policy advice is also shaped by the policy-making context and the dynamics of the policy-process. In the world of political science, public policies have a contested status, depending on the relevant view of the political process [Regonini 2001]. Following the classical Eastonian scheme, public policies can be seen as the outputs out of the “black box” of institutions, which impact on the society producing an array of outcomes, which in turn nurture the feedbacks from the society to politics. In these account, public policies are the tangible products of the political process (e.g. public expenditure, regulation, incentives, services, etc.) resulting from the processing of the inputs of the political system.

At the same time, scholars see policies as processes of value allocation: the definition of the policy problem, the interactions in the political arena, the use of different policy instruments are all relevant aspects of a public policy which distribute power among the different political, bureaucratic and societal actors [Lowi 1964]. When our attention is focused on public policies as processes and not just as outputs, public policy can be analysed looking at the different phases and activities, from problem definition to formulation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation. In all these phases, knowledge acquires a central role as one ingredient of public policy, thus shedding a different light on the relationship between science and politics.

This latter aspect has been discussed in the long-lasting debate about policy analysis and its use in democratic policy-making. When policy sciences first entered into the practices of US policy-making after WWII, Lasswell described it as the production and application of knowledge in policy (by mobilising the best research) and knowledge of policy (by showing to citizens how the policy-making evolve). According to Hoppe [1999], Lasswell offered a first democratic and pragmatic view of the relationship between science and policy, where knowledge and policy sciences are at the service of democracy. From that moment on, different views of the relationship between science and politics have been proposed (e.g. analyticcentrism and neo-positivism, post-positivism and relativism, and the argumentative turn in policy analysis), but the study of public policies has been informed to the idea of a rational use of knowledge at the service of democracy [Hoppe 1999]. Starting from Wildavsky [1979] famous “speaking truth to power”, whereby technical knowledge would help politicians in crafting better policies thanks to the acknowledgement of the consequences of their decisions, the idea that science have to be used for problem solving has been declined in different ways.

For example, Weiss [1979] emphasises the diversity of purposes in knowledge utilisation in public policy by describing different models or images: the knowledge-driven (basic research is used for practical action), the problem-solving (existing or commissioned research produces evidences used to clarify uncertainties), the interactive (policy-makers involves many actors providing information, including social scientists in the effort to make sense of a problem collectively), the political (using research as ammunition for a decision taken on other grounds), the tactical (when research is used for purposes that have little relation with its substance e.g. in bureaucratic politics), and the enlightenment (research make decision-makers sensitive to new issues). In this latter view, research as enlightenment affects policy
less through problem solving and social engineering based on value consensus, and more through research as social criticism, thus inspiring change in the long run [Weiss 1977, 544]. Later on, Linder and Peters [1990] contribute to the rationalistic tradition of policy analysis by promoting policy design as a distinctive area of inquiry for the study of policies, with their quest for a “conscious design”, which considers the need to understand the performance in relation to the appropriateness of the means and to the diagnosis of potential pitfalls, by the correct matching of tools, problems and goals. Often neglected in the years when “governance” and “globalisation” were central to political science, policy design is seen as a specific activity that overlaps different phases in the unravelling of the policy process, for the development of efficient and effective policies through the study of policy instruments and implementation, policy ideas and formulation [Howlett and Lejano 2013].

Similarly, evidence-based policy-making represents the effort to reform or re-structure the policy process, in order to prioritize evidentiary or data-based decision-making and avoid policy failures [Davies et al 2007]. This view of research as evidence-based policy making focus its attention on policy capacities, meaning all the issues associated with the government’s arrangements to review, formulate and implement policies within its jurisdiction [Fellegi 1996 cited by Howlett 2009a]. The literature on capacities is recently gaining momentum, especially for developing countries [Painter and Pierre 2005; Wu et al 2015]. It focuses on the analytical capacity of governmental and non-governmental actors to collect appropriate data and utilize it effectively in the course of policy-making activities. In particular, policy analytical capacity is composed of many aspects that go beyond research skills, such as the ability to communicate policy related messages to stakeholders or to integrate information into the decision-making stage [Howlett 2009a, 162-163]. At the same time, policy advisors perceive themselves in multiple roles (as advisors, analysts, communication officers, coordinators, directors, evaluators, researchers) and involved in very different policy tasks (department or agencies planning, issue tracking, legal analysis, briefing, networking, providing options and specific advice, undertaking research) [Howlett 2009b, 9-10].

Research on policy analytical capacity in countries such as Canada has also showed that the type of analytical capacities and professional skills vary in the different policy sectors, thus showing an uneven distribution of policy analysis capacities: evidence-informed methods are most used in health, welfare and education sectors, but at the same time, some departments and agencies – such as Finance – enjoy favourable circumstances, which allow them to practice sophisticated analytical techniques (such as cost benefit and cost effectiveness analysis, scenario analysis, financial impact analysis) [Howlett et al. 2014, 286]. Moreover, most policy workers inside and outside government engage also in process related tasks and activities [Howlett et al. 2014].

A similar approach on the empirical facets of policy advice and the actual use of knowledge in practice is fruitful as much as difficult to reply, for the lack of repeated surveys on policy advisors in other countries. Nonetheless, public policy scholars have focused in more abstract terms on the roles of policy advisors in the different phases of the policy process and in the dynamics of policy change, as discussed below.
Knowledge and policy advisors: what is their role in the policy process?
The use of knowledge in public policy has been studied in relation to some specific phases of the policy process. The use of scientific knowledge made by policy advisors emerges clearly during the policy formulation phase, when policy solutions are derived from the definition of the policy problem prevailing in the agenda. In particular, many scholars who study partisan/political advisors in the Westminster countries have noticed that their role extends beyond policy formulation and beyond the sheer use of scientific knowledge for evidence-based policy-making. For example, Malley [2000] emphasizes the different policy roles of partisan advisors in Australia: by crafting and managing of the agenda, they act on ideas’ generation; by linking ideas to government interests and policy opportunities, they move the process forward; by mobilising ministers and officials, they build political support in the cabinet; by bargaining with central agencies they smooth the procedural aspects of policy making; finally, they combine different aspects of policy roles. For Eichbaum and Shaw [2007, 101-103], in coalition and minority governments the most desired skills for ministerial advisors are the ability to network with agencies and other departments, the understanding of the processes of executive government, but also expertise in communication and media. Nonetheless, the most important skills are the ones in political negotiations and in policy evaluation and research.
Similarly, Connaughton [2010, 351-352] defines different ‘policy roles’ for partisan advisers in the Irish government according to their main activity in the policy formulation and implementation (pure advice or steering) and to the prevalent content of their communication (technical/managerial or political). The pure expert is the advisor who brings substantive expertise in a specific sector; the partisan is appointed on political bases and represents the ministers in political negotiations; the coordinator is involved in monitoring programs and liaising with government officials and stakeholder groups; while the minder is the political advisor who is in a close professional relationship with the minister and guards him against political and reputation harms.
Thus, professional advisors seem to do more than simply sharing knowledge. In particular, the literature highlights the functions of political advisors, focusing again on Westminster systems. Craft [2015] highlights the existence of an important “non-advisory” role of partisan advisors. He typifies four different activities of partisan advisers in the policy process (buffering, bridging, shaping and moving): these activities cover different phases of the policy process and involve the policy advice about the procedural aspect of policy-making and about the actual content of policy initiatives [Craft 2015, 145].
Though these classifications about partisan advisors may add some conceptual confusion, nonetheless they suggest that the use of knowledge expressed by policy advisors is very diverse and diffused in more phases of the policy-making than just in the formulation phase, such as in the agenda setting, in the implementation and in the evaluation phases. Policy sciences and policy advice have a crucial role, for example, in the evaluation phase, where the policy advisor should evaluate in a neutral way the effectiveness of implemented policies, offering policy advice according to three ethical and professional criteria: the independence (from the object of the study itself and from the commissioner of the study);
the methodological transparency; the replicability of the evaluation methods [Lippi and Morisi 2005, 236-243].

Moreover, the analysis of the dynamics of policy stability and change in policy subsystems and in different policy sectors has showed that the uses of knowledge vary also according to the specific policy-making context [Colebatch 2015]. In the analysis of policy change, Weible [2008, 619] has synthetized different uses of expert-based information in public policy. Learning, for example, focuses on the cognitive side of participation in public policy. This is in line with Weiss [1977] about the slow and indirect effects of the accumulation of science on decision makers’ beliefs on the causes of the problems and the preferred solutions. Instead, the political use of knowledge is when policy-makers use expert-based information to legitimize previously made decisions, even through the distortion or the selective use of information. Another political use of policy advice would be to support or legitimate existing policy preferences [Sabatier 1987]. Finally, the instrumental use of knowledge occurs when the policy making is directly affected by expert-based information, in a rational approach to problem solving where decision follows the research findings. Similarly, in UE policy-making knowledge can have an instrumental, legitimizing or substantiating role [Bosswell 2008]. In more general terms, the attention to knowledge and policy learning in the policy process has showed that power and knowledge can perform complementary function [Radaelli 1995].

Both the learning, political and instrumental uses of evidence clearly emerge in the different frameworks that try to explain policy change. For example, if one considers the effect of knowledge utilisation on policy change, frameworks such as the Multiple Stream Approach (MSA), the punctuated equilibrium approach, the social construction theory and the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) may be considered in more details, given the crucial role that information and expertise [Weible 2008].

First, knowledge can be used by a skilled policy entrepreneur to couple the three streams of problem, policy and politics in the MSA [Craft 2015, 141]. According to this approach to policy change initially developed by Kingdon [1995], the policy world is made of three independent streams: the problem stream is the one where the issue becomes relevant for the society and thus requires the intervention of the government; the policy stream identifies the array of possible instruments and solutions to be matched to a problem; the political stream corresponds to the relation of influence in the political system and the electoral timing. The process that brings novelty into the agenda setting and may lead to policy change starts with the opening of a policy window, an opportunity for the policy entrepreneur to couple at the same time a specific problem with an available solution that is supported by political forces in position of power [Zahariadis 2007]. In sum, policy participants use science both to identify problems and to evaluate ideas and solutions: in particular, the policy entrepreneur is interested in its solution to prevail and may often use ideas or evidences to shape agendas and policies for political gains [Weible 2008, 617]. So it can also happen that an actor who advices the government over some specific issues suddenly plays also the role of policy entrepreneur using its knowledge resources to affect the coupling process, or for instance, suggesting potential for ideational compatibility dynamics within the policy stream itself [Craft and Wilder 2015, 14].
Second, when policy change is conceived as punctuations [Baumgartner and Jones 1993], knowledge utilisation and policy advice can be used in different ways either to maintain the status quo or to promote radical change. The disproportionate use of knowledge is thus aimed at either creating or destroying a policy image and can affect the expansion of conflicts and the mobilisation of actors [Weible 2008, 618].

Third, the social construction theory describes the perception over the content and quality of knowledge as socially constructed phenomena, so that the use of expert-based information is used to reinforce or challenge social constructions of target populations and it is contingent on the composition of the political context, and the features as the scientific community with the prevailing social construction [Schneider and Ingram 1997, 150–188].

Forth, both Weible [2008] and Craft and Wilder [2016] discuss the uses of knowledge and the role of policy advisors in the light of the Advocacy Coalitions Framework, where different coalitions in policy subsystems are configured as group of people sharing the same beliefs and core values and prevailing in a specific policy subsystem [Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993]. In the advocacy coalition framework, policy change may happen when the beliefs of the components of the coalitions change, so that ideas acquire a central place in the framework. Policy advice may enter into the picture as is involved in the on-going process of sense-making and consensus formation during which interpretations of problems and potential solutions are discursively constructed [Craft and Wilder 2015, 12-13]. Knowledge utilisation can affect the belief systems from both the inside and the outside of a policy subsystem, as policy advice can be seen as a dialectical or even argumentative exchange [Fischer 2003; Majone 1989]. According to Weible [2008, 619], experts affect policies by slowly changing the beliefs of policy actors through policy-oriented learning [Sabatier 1987] and use knowledge to mobilize allies or to argue with opponents, both inside and outside the advocacy coalition. From another perspective, the partisan advisers should be conceived of also ‘as brokers or as “middlemen” between the social science, bureaucrat, and political decision-making worlds’ [Gains and Stoker 2011, 495], thus helping to transmit policy ideas.

These accounts of the policy change show that the use of knowledge may vary greatly depending on the policy-making context where public policies are put in place [Weible 2008, 619]. So thinking about policy advice as a specific function of the policy process could develop a neater conceptualisation.

**Policy advice as a type of policy work**

In this session, our attention will turn from knowledge utilisation in more abstract terms towards its conceptualisation as a function, meaning as a specific type of policy activity performed by the actors who have scientific knowledge as their main resource to affect the policy-making.

Policy advising is seen as an activity that aims to support policy-making by analysing policy problems and proposing solutions [Halligan 1995]. Even though this definition excludes the concrete management of project, the fulfilment of routine administrative task and the direct implementation of policy, the literature presented so far show a wider range of activities performed by individuals identified as “policy advisors”, including direction, negotiation,
evaluation and monitoring. Similarly, many actors who are not formally identified as policy advisors may offer proper advise. Hence, as policy advice can take different forms, one possible approach is to view it as a special kind of work performed during the policy process [Vesely 2016]. Vesely proposes to map the policy work space considering two dimensions: the orientation to values or to knowledge, on one side, and the direct or indirect involvement in the policy work, on the other, placing policy advice as a specific type of policy work that lays in between as a suggestion or the support for an action.

Figure 1 – Mapping policy advice as policy work [Vesely 2016]

Policy advice can also be seen as concrete outputs covering the analysis of problems and the proposing of solutions [Halligan 1995, 139]. In this sense, routinized practices and standardised policy advisory outputs can be considered good indicators of the specific type of policy advice. But again, what is the minimum empirical definition of policy advice? As activities such as research, communication and advising can be complementary to other professional policy works, a way to distinguish between different groups of actors is to consider not just the prevalent content of the policy work, but also the intensity of effort in one specific activity. In a minimal definition, policy advice can thus be described as a suggestion given to policy-makers to act that can be inspired by different criteria (political or technical; substantive or procedural), but whose boundaries are very difficult to identify [Vesely 2016].

So what? Final considerations on the empirical complexities of policy advice

The literature reviewed so far gives some very partial answers to the questions posed at the beginning. The only message that clearly emerges from this review is that the contemporary policy advisor is at the same time a novel Leonardo, the scientist who pursue innovation and knowledge, and the old Machiavelli, which uses the understanding of facts to guide the Prince in the midst of power. Public policy literature offers descriptions of different uses of knowledge and policy advice, focusing both on the different phases of the policy process and on the dynamics of policy change. From this body of literature, we can see that policy advice is used by governments in different ways: knowledge and scientific evidence are not only instrumental to craft policy design, but can also be used for political and tactical reasons. At
the same time, policy advisors can intervene beyond the formulation of public policy, so that policy advice of whatever content may be relevant in the agenda setting, implementation or evaluation phases. Nonetheless, if we consider policy advice as a specific type of policy work aimed at giving recommendations based on scientific knowledge or other types of expertise about the policy process (such as partisan advice on procedures and coalition building), we can see that policy formulation remains the main stage for policy advice. Indeed, policy advisor with formal roles in the executive can play an active role in other phases of the policy-making, but acting more as brokers or entrepreneurs that as knowledge producers.

The presence of policy advisors and the configuration of policy advisory bodies are more and more central to public administration. Even though the literature on policy advisory systems, ministerial advisors and partisan advisors is strongly developed only in Westminster countries, some commonalities emerge.

First, the institutionalization [Seymour-Ure 1987] or the stability of policy advice seems a crucial aspect for the type of influence of knowledge utilization in a specific country. If we imagine a continuum of policy advice outputs, ranging from ad hoc reports about specific policy issues produced by a think tank, to formal recommendations given on a regular basis by a permanent commission or agency, we can have a representation of advice offers with different degrees of stability. A stable advisory activity is more likely to be used by the government in the policy-making and can be nonetheless accessible to citizens, to make the policy process more accountable and transparent. At the same time, the stability of policy advisory bodies allows knowledge about the substance of a policy issue or about the procedural aspects of policy-making to be safeguarded. Episodic policy advice can instead be more difficult to be translated into the policy process, for a variety of reasons that ranges from the tone of the relationship with political and administrative leaders, to the coupling of the windows of opportunities, and to the possible vetoes inside the institutions about some specific policy content.

Second, the prevalent content of the policy advice (procedural or substantive) could reveal something more about the uses that the governments made of knowledge. If procedural advice is preferred by the policy-makers, this may suggest that the priority of the executive is to deal with vetoes and institutional constraints, and, thus, knowledge is used in a more political and tactic way; at the same time, when substantive policy content is often translated into decisions by the policy making, this might be the case that the government is more concerned with problem-solving. In this case, evidence-based policy-making can prove to be also more accountable, as it may inform about the methodologies and the limitation of the research.

On this basis, a novel classification of different types of policy advisors in policy-making can be attempted. In other words, different types of policy advice emerge if one considers the prevalent object of advice (content/evidence-based/technical vs procedural/ideological-oriented/political) and the continuity of advice (episodic/ad hoc vs continuous/permanent). When the advice is focused on the content of the policy and it is requested in specific moments to academics, policy advice configures as expertise. When the advice is on the content of the policy but is requested continuously, possibly to stable advisory bodies, the advice configures as scientific policy analysis. When the object of the advice is more related
to procedural matters or to political relationships, but is given as an ad hoc professional activity, policy advice configures as consultancy. Finally, when the content of policy advice is procedural and political, but given on regular basis as in the case of chief of staffs, the suggestion can be labeled as partisan advice. Expertise, consultancy, policy analysis and partisan advice can thus be considered as the main features or the types of the more general and slippery concept of policy advice.

Table 4 – Varieties of policy advice: a typology

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<tr>
<th>Advice on content</th>
<th>Episodic advice</th>
<th>Continuous advice</th>
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<tr>
<td>Advice on content</td>
<td>EXPERTISE as policy advice</td>
<td>POLICY ANALYSIS as policy advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice on procedure</td>
<td>CONSULTANCY as policy advice</td>
<td>PARTISAN ADVICE as policy advice</td>
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