ACCOUNTING AND DOMINATION. THE RISE AND FALL OF THE SPANISH SYSTEM OF INTENDANTS (1718-1724)

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VIII Encuentro de Trabajo sobre Historia de la Contabilidad.

Soria, 14-16 de noviembre de 2012.

\(^1\) With the support of ECO 2008-06052 / ECON and PAIDI SEJ-4129.
ABSTRACT

This paper has shown, until what point, the accounting is not neutral and could be “part” in the emergence or fall of a dominant discourse. The aim of this work is to understand the ways in which accounting could be modulated to be in favour of a dominant group of power or another group. For this aim, we have studied the settlement, implementation and fall of the *Instrucción de Intendentes* (Instruction for Intendants) of 1718 at Spain. For this paper we have drawn on primary sources from the *Archivo Histórico Nacional* (AHN) and the *Archivo General de Indias* (AGI).
1. Introduction.

The aim of this work is to understand the ways in which accounting could be used by different groups for domination purposes. Specifically, how accounting could play a double role on its relationships with the state; (i) on the establishment of power relations and (ii) as a way to resist and depose such dominant discourse from the government. The relationships between accounting and the state have been explored widely at accounting research. One of the most used approaches has been the Foucaultian frame on governmentality (Miller, 1990; Neu, 2000; Neu and Heincke, 2004; Neu and Graham, 2006; Sargiacomo, 2008; Kurunmäki and Miller, 2011; Yayla, 2011). Accounting has been specially considered in this frame given its ability to provide visibility, calculability and utility. That is, to render visible or, if it is needed, invisible, things and people (Miller, 1990; Sargiacomo, 2009; Yayla, 2011).

However, most of the accounting literature based on the Foucaultian frame has been devoted to explain the role of accounting at the enactment of the governmental programme over a population without focus on the resistance, which can play a key role. Resistance is more than a simple word for Foucault, as he stated:

“what I mean by power relations is the fact that we are in a strategic situation toward each other… there are always possibilities of changing the situation… if there was not resistance, there would be no power relations… So I think that resistance is the main word, the key word in this dynamic [of struggles among discourses]” (Foucault, 2007, p. 167; italics in the original).

Consequently, it is needed to consider not only the enforcement of populations by means of accounting, but also to bear in mind the role of accounting at the resistance. As McKinlay and Pezet (2010) asserted,
“[t]he task… is not to examine only the perfect, abstract programmes of government but, more properly, to follow the actors that establish the ‘context’, to pry into the micro-politics of the project, to establish the connection between different actors and their competing and complementary logics and practices” (p. 492).

According to this, the study of the governmentality is not to describe how accounting is implicated in the implementation of the governmental discourse, but how accounting helps the actors concerned in such process. That is, to study the dynamics of the governmentality as a process (McKinlay and Pezet, 2010; Kurunmäki and Miller, 2011).

For this aim, we have studied the settlement, implementation and fall of the Instrucción de Intendentes (Instruction for Intendants) of 1718 at Spain, which was enacted for the improvement of the Spanish wealth and, overall, for a better performance of the Royal Treasury by the collection of the taxes and the control on public expenses. Such Instruction was enacted by the king Philip V (1683-1746). This monarch supposed a change of dynasty at Spain from the Hapsburgs to the Bourbons in 1700 with a huge change in the way of governing that was highly influenced by the government of his grandfather, the French king, Louis XIV (1638-1715).

The Instruction for intendants was inspired on the French post of the Intendant, developed at the period of government of Colbert (1619-1683). This period has been studied previously as part of an example on the interrelations of accounting and the state (Miller, 1990). The frequency and accuracy of the issues asked for requesting was high and so, the king Louis XIV could assert that he managed the country by himself (Miller, 1990). The Spanish version defined the Intendants project as a system
used to manage the whole population at the distance, where accounting was a main technique to this development.

Differently from the case studied by Miller (1990), the Spanish one was not successful. The appointment of the intendants in 1718 was followed by a controversy of such system by the Spanish traditional apparatus of government: the Councils and its provincial supporters (corregidores). These councils had been governing in Spain for more than two centuries and were set up and supported by the Spanish nobility. With the new system the councils would lose the political power and authority that the Hapsburgs granted and that had still been operating until the Bourbons reached the Spanish Crown. The most of the complaints of the councils were leaded to a supposed inability of the intendants to manage themselves with “the numbers” and their ignorance on the bookkeeping. Thus, in 1724, a decree reduced the intendants commitment to control, exclusively, the wastes of the Army.

This case is also interesting due to the role of accounting in that short life of the intendants. The government, in the first moment, was agreeing about the benefits in terms of control over public finances, but it did not work properly (Kamen, 1964). Then it was discredited and finally removed (Orduña, 1997). At such process, the role played by accounting was relevant given that the implementation of the intendants resorted to accounting as a key issue; at the same time, resistance to the intendants was drawn on accounting reasons for their falling.

Being accounting embedded on programmes of government, it also share with them the notion that the programmes are “eternally optimistic but perpetually falling” (Neu and Heincke 2004, p. 180; see also Miller and Rose, 1990). In this sense, Miller and Rose claimed
“[t]he world of programmes is heterogeneous and rivalrous, and the solutions for one programme tend to be the problems for another. ‘Reality’ always escapes the theories that inform programmes and the ambitions that underpin them… Technologies produce unexpected problems… are hampered by underfunding, professional rivalries, and the impossibility of producing the technical conditions that would make them work” (Miller and Rose, 1990, p. 11).

In this way, as Malsh et al., (2010) considered, analyses are focused on the unexpected consequences of power through the discursive regimes.

Accounting, as part of such technologies of government, is perceived as “objective”; it can take part in the relations between individuals, groups and institutions (Carmona et al., 1997; 2002; Neu and Graham, 2006); and it is “translational in that it helps… to translate the abstract objectives of policy makers into concrete field-specific practices” (Neu and Graham, 2006, p. 49). Given this, as Rahaman et al. explain, “these same accounting procedures and vocabularies are “poly vocal” resources, in that they can be re-arranged and re-configured to challenge government constructions” (2007, p. 661). Accounting, thus, becomes an agent to improve the change on the discourses, to promote the dynamics of the discourses and enforces the role of the resistance that Foucault (2007) stressed.

Consequently, by this study we aim to contribute to literature expanding the ability of accounting in two meanings: i) as a support to the implantation of a new control system from a governmental point of view; and ii) as a reasoning to refuse, or to resist, such implantation. Beyond from Neu et al. (2006), the resistance not only blocks the new system but also changes the governmental discourse, and so, the proposals in governmental techniques based on accounting. In this setting accounting plays a main role, given its political, economical and social consequences. In this sense, the poly-
vocal ability of accounting can explain the reasons to the interchange of discourses, their dynamics and the role of resistance in the governmentality frame (Foucault, 2007).

For this paper we have drawn on primary sources from the Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN – National Historic Archive) and the Archivo General de Indias (AGI – General Archive of Indies). In the same way, we have used secondary sources to complete and verify the information supplied by the primary sources.

The rest of the paper is as follows. In the next section, it will be described and analysed the first attempts of introducing the intendants in Spain. The third section will study the 1718 Instruction. The fourth paragraph will analyze how the Intendants System were questioned and resisted by the Councils and its final falling. Finally, it will be pointed out some conclusions on the study.

2. The accession of Philip V and the first attempts at introducing the intendants system in Spain (1701–1718)

The appointment as king, at the beginning of 1701 of Philip, duke of Anjou, and grandson of the French king, Louis XIV, could be considered as an extension of the governmental programme of the king of France in Spain, an example of a “modern” government. Following the Foucaultian terms (Miller, 1990), this is, an

“ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form
of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security” (Foucault, 1991, p. 102).

Such term, first coined by Barthes in 1965 (McKinlay and Pezet, 2010) supposes the analysis of the government based on discipline and knowledge. It resorted to the raison d’etat, that is, “what now appears important is the knowledge and development of a state’s forces” (Foucault, 2007, p. 365). Everything is done based on such concept since long ago “[i]n the period of mercantilism and cameralism, the population-wealth couple was the privileged object of the new governmental reason” (Foucault, 2007, p. 365). As Kurunmäki and Miller (2011) pointed out, governmentality is the analysis of these forms of indirect government or acting on the behaviours of individuals with different ways of exercise of that governing upon the individuals.

Nevertheless, the ascension of Philip V as king of Spain did not suppose the immediate transfer into Spain of the French governmental system for two main reasons. The first one was because of the Spanish Succession War (1700–1715), where Austria, Portugal, and England declared the war on France and Spain, which meant a devastated country and economy (Lynch 1999). Secondly, because the appointed new king did not have any experience on government (De Castro 2004; Dubet 2008). Louis XIV was aware of this problem, and in different ways he provided advice to his grandson (De Castro 2004). However, the absence of knowledge of the new king disposed him to avoid decision making, resorting, thus, to other people at the government (Dubet, 2008).

Such knowledge "is thus central to these activities of government and to the very formation of its objects, for government is a domain of cognition, calculation, experimentation and evaluation” (Rose and Miller, 1992, p. 175; see also Miller, 1992). The improving and embracing of such knowledge produces a discourse: a set of linked
and historically confined ideas, embedded in texts, utterances and practices that concern procedures for finding, producing and demonstrating ‘truth’ (Foucault, 1991; Walsh and Stewart, 1993). Thus, governmental knowledge is implemented as discourses, or more precisely, political rationalities. Knowledge, so, is moulded in and assumes a political structure (Foucault, 1994a). The government resorts to knowledge, which so influences political practices and the governed population (Foucault, 1994b). Consequently,

“There were more than wishes or intentions. They were ways of representing a domain such that it could be treated as an object of conscious political calculation and intervention. Governmentality research highlights the importance of attending to these often highly abstract values and goals, the generalised aspirations and ideals that are mobilised and articulated by a wide range of regulatory agencies and policy designers as they seek to re-design organizations and their interrelations” (Kurunmäki and Miller, 2011, p. 222).

In the searching for such knowledge on government, the Spanish kingdom needed an advisor and so, for the improvement of the Spanish economy, Louis XIV chose Jean Orry (Dubet 2008). He was a businessman of humble origins that given his relationships with the government of Louis XIV, and his ample knowledge of economics and the Army, greatly increased his wealth and his influence on the French government (Dubet, 2008).

In governmental terms, the people who managed the political rationalities are known as experts (Radcliffe, 1999; Sargiacomo, 2008; Kurunmäki and Miller, 2011; Yayla, 2011). The experts formulate, and thus create, new problems for the government through problematization. The power of the truths that experts enclose in their discourses legitimates the solutions that they offer in order to solve the problems of the population
Such knowledge, in governmental terms, can be labelled as professional enclosures (Kurunmäki and Miller, 2011). Orry was one of the most notable experts of the Spanish government, and given his knowledge, he uncovered the problems on the Spanish financial crisis and showed his claims on the reasons of such crisis. As a result, Orry also showed how to solve the problems, sharing his professional enclosures with other experts at the Spanish government.

From the experts’ proposed responses to the problems emerge government programmes, or as Foucault pointed out, “sets of calculated, reasoned prescriptions in terms of which institutions are meant to be reorganized, spaces arranged, behaviours regulated” (1991, p. 102). Programmes are not simply formulations of wishes or intentions. As Rose and Miller (1992, p. 182) explained, “programmes lay claim to a certain knowledge of the sphere or problem to be addressed”, and this knowledge is used in the name of a particular theory that belongs to a discourse, to a particular group of experts. Programmes, then, make sense in terms of the political rationalities that support them (Miller and Rose, 1990).

The programme of Orry considered, firstly, the need to improve the control over the incomes and proposed changes in the way of collecting taxes, in the main suggesting that the government could abolish the system of separate offices collecting the different taxes, in which corruption was common (Dubet 2008, 2012), and revert to just one single office of the Royal Treasury.

The other main problem was the government system, which was based on three main councils: the Council of the Indies, which dealt with the South America colonies; the Council of the Royal Treasury, which handled tax collection and expenses; and the Council of Castile, focused on laws and regulations issued by the king (Domínguez 1990). The councils, ancient organisations that advised the Spanish king in his royal
decisions, had dominated the government for more than two centuries and were composed by the Spanish nobility more concerned with their personal interests than with the state aims (Dubet 2008). Orry shared the idea that the council members exhibited “an extreme inexperience, without any knowledge or practice of the foreign countries – and many even had none of their own nation… How can they be accurate State ministers?” (Cardinal Portocarrero², quoted in Dubet 2008, p. 81). The councils reached government processes and also had spread corruption through other public institutions.

One of such institutions was the provincial governors (corregidores), who were appointed by the Council of Castile and were responsible for the provincial management on justice, taxes, and police. Like the council members, the provincial governors were more focused on their personal interests than on the well-being of their provinces. In most of cases these posts were bought, sometimes at a high price, so that only people of high economic and social status could occupy them (Dubet 2008; see also Domínguez 1990). In fact, from the point of view of many observers from France, the provincial governor system was one of the most corrupt institutions of Spain (Corona and Armillas 1990).

Governmental programmes are accompanied by the calculations and language of accounting (Robson, 1991; 1992). In this context accounting has played a central role considering the ability of the matter to be defined as numerical, monetary calculations and techniques that intervene in the relations between individuals, groups and institutions (Carmona et al., 1997; 2002; Neu and Graham, 2006). Also, accounting can distribute due to that it mediates at the relations of individuals. Finally, it is representational “in that accounting brings home distant knowledge to centres of

² The Cardinal Portocarrero was the Primer Minister of the king Philip V during the first years of his kingdom (note of the authors).
calculation” (Neu and Graham, 2006, pp. 49-50). Hence accounting is “translational in that it helps... to translate the abstract objectives of policy makers into concrete field-specific practices” (Neu and Graham, 2006, p. 49). The programmes become useful because accounting language creates the images needed to control the population ruling it out (Robson, 1992). For these reasons, also, accounting gives value to rules (Hopper and Macintosh, 1993). Accounting becomes so, a technology of government, to take into practice that discourse which developed the governmental programme (Miller and Rose, 1990).

To make sense of the technologies of government as part of government activity, accounting literature has been supported on the ideas of Latour (1987), who offers a connection of governmental programmes and technologies of government through the concept of action at a distance (see, e.g., Rose and Miller, 1992; Robson, 1992; Álvarez-Dardet et al., 2002; Carmona et al., 2002; Baños et al., 2005; Sargiacomo, 2008, Yayla, 2011). By watching over distant places and persons, powerful actors can successfully enrol and mobilise persons, procedures and artefacts in the pursuit of their goals. The information about population flows to centres of calculation, where “[e]vents must be mobilized and accumulated... aggregated, compared, compiled and calculated about” (Rose, 1991, p. 676). Accounting “provides a form of knowledge that may have a greater potential for action at a distance than many others. The quantities of accounting inscriptions by no means entirely secure the legitimacy of accounting as a measure of value” in control terms (Robson, 1992, p. 685). Accounting plays a key role as a means of controlling individuals through the management of information, creating a powerful tool in the hands of the governments.

In our case, Orry proposed that Philip V should move from a government system based on provincial councils to one centred on ministries, like the one of Louis XIV in France (Dubet, 2008, 1012). The ministers should have a Vía Reservada (reserved, direct and
quick channel of communication) with the ministers of the government in Madrid, leaving the councils without their authority and power along the Spanish territory (De Castro, 2004).

In the same way, to gain control over the resources, Orry also projected introducing the French system of intendants at Spain. However, this project was stopped in 1706; he was, suddenly, asked to return to France. The intendant project would go on again, in 1711, by the Count of Bergeyck (De Castro 2004; Pérez 2006). Bergeyck was another expert in governmental terms (Radcliffe, 1999). He had been a member of the Army and had played a key role some years before in extending the French system of intendants into the Netherlands. There he had been appointed as general superintendent, and had reached a high reputation as expertise in economics and taxes (Dubet 2008). From the government, he claimed on the control over the Army, due to the still alive Succession War, being so legitimised to take decisions. Bergeyck took up the Orry’s idea about intendants but only to control the Army. In 1711 several superintendents\(^3\) were appointed in different regions along the Spanish borders in which the war was still virulent and where, in many cases, the absence of resources had leaded the soldiers for extorting the population. The superintendents’ tasks included

“[T]he control and authorisation of the distribution of goods to support the troops, not only food and equipment, but also the regular salaries... They also had to receive the treasurers’ accounts every three months and send a copy to the Royal Treasury minister... they were also entrusted with making periodic visits to inspect all villages and other places and reporting on their situation to the king” (Orduña 1997, p. 51).

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\(^3\) The main difference between a superintendent and an intendant was that the first had authority over all public incomes, and it was operating only until the finishing years of the Succession War (note of the authors).
But the problems regarding the public finances were still alive and so, in 1718, a new Instruction, named Instruction for Intendants, should be promulgated.

3. The Instruction for Intendants of 1718

In 1718, the Royal Treasury minister, the Marquis of Compuesta, informed the Prime Minister, Cardinal Alberoni (1664-1752), about the advisability of introducing the system of intendants in Spain, following the French model:

"[T]hat in France [the intendants] were introduced over great opposition, yet they have gone on with a great profit. That the Intendants, in my opinion… if they are good, you have some guards or spies that warn about what is happening in the provinces" (Marquis of Compuesta, quoted in Kamen 1964, p. 374; italics added).

He also described the ability of the French intendants to collect taxes, to impart justice in minor cases, and to prevent violence among the troops through an efficient salary distribution system (Kamen 1964). The intendants in France had also authority over police and finances. Their performance was quite good, as Miller (1990) pointed out. At the Spanish case, interestingly, the application for the Spanish intendants were only a part of a bigger system of control: "The idea [of] the Intendant, an accountant and a paymaster, set up in each province like a small tribunal of the Royal Treasury with… direct connection to the General Treasurer, seems admirable" (Marquis of Compuesta, quoted in Kamen 1964, p. 375).
As it can be extracted, the experts at the government of Philip V would resort to their knowledge in order to define the problem about the resources of the government (Miller and Rose, 1990). Such problem would be solved resorting to a solution which had been successful at France, the intendants, and also to accounting. The centralization of the Accounting Office in one single department in Madrid and the ability of accounting to be used for exerting action at a distance (Rose, 1991) was the solution proposed by the experts at the government for the public finances. Accounting numbers, thus, were calculated and managed to represent the reality through a single Accounting Office which mould them to represent distant places (Robson, 1991; 1992).

The person appointed to develop the Spanish version of the French intendants was José Patiño (1666-1736), a businessman, who started with some contracts for the Army supplies, was appointed as superintendent with a successful performance at such post (Orduña, 1997, Dubet, 1012). “His management [in such post]... excelled given his efficacy and because of this he became a model of what the superintendents of the Royal Treasury and the Army should be” (Orduña, 1997, p. 58). Given his knowledge on the problems of the public finances and his experience as superintendent, he was “the governmental expert” (Radcliffe, 1999) to develop the governmental programme about the intendants considering the Spanish status quo of the moment.

The Instruction for Intendants was enacted on 4th July, 1718. Intendants were to be “people of standing, authority, and zeal, flair, and other characteristics corresponding to this serious appointment” (Instruction for Intendants, AGI, Indiferente General, box 1714). A list of the new intendants for all the Spanish provinces was published on 26th July, 1718. Some had previously been superintendents in the Army. Others came from the councils or were public servants of the General Treasury (Kamen, 1964). Their responsibility was the collection of the taxes. Thus, the Instruction says that “[e]very
three months you will check the accounts of the treasurers and you will send a report to
the superintendent of the Royal Treasury” (AHN, Consejo de Castilla, Ingresos, box
6549). From the first moment, their role was linked to the governmental programme by
controlling the incomes and taxes, and, therefore, quite related to the accounting.

In this way, it was reinforced the role of accounting as a main way to reach the
governmental objectives (Miller and Rose, 1990; Neu and Graham, 2006). Thus, it can
be showed how, from the experts knowledge, accounting was a part of the solution on
the problem on the public finances. Experts, in this sense, resorted to accounting in
order to develop their governmental programme (Sargiacomo, 2008). It is remarkable
how accounting was used to translate an expert’s idea into reality (Neu and Graham,
2006). In this way, the Instruction also implied changes in the Royal Treasury offices:

“I have also ordered that in one General Treasury Office should be all the
products that belong to my Royal Treasury… with one General Treasurer
in each province, and adding [to this last] one Paymaster… and also [I
have ordered] that a main Accounting Office be established in each
province… in such a way that... the uniform and consecutive
correspondence of one and another with the General Treasury Office…
[can document] always the amount distributed and the amount that exists,
in order to manage those possible economies” (AGI, Indiferente General,
box 1714; italics added).

Thus, the provincial accountants supported the performance of the intendants.
Accounting was highlighted in this governmental programme as a key issue. The role
of accounting conferred it a high responsibility and authority. Accounting from that high
post at the government developed power and knowledge at the same time (McKinlay et
al., 2010).
In similar ways to the French case (Miller, 1990) the Spanish intendants were entrusted in justice, government finance, and police. The intendant had to report on the public finances to the Council of the Royal Treasury and on justice to the Council of Castile (arts. 9 and 27, Instruction for Intendants, AGI, Indiferente General, box 1714). The intendants could also use the Vía Reservada (reserved channel) to directly inform to any minister about cases needing special attention (art. 6, Instruction for Intendants, AGI, Indiferente General, box 1714). The intendants also could make decisions in minor judicial processes, improve measures to obtain peace in the villages, and expose cases of judicial abuse.

As for treasury matters, the Instruction for Intendants ordered that the intendant should be responsible for the collection of all the public incomes except the salt and tobacco taxes, which were managed by others agencies (Orduña 1997) but on which the intendant had to report, for the better management of the collection of public incomes (art. 15, Instruction for Intendants, AGI, Indiferente General, box 1714). Concerning the taxes collected directly by the Royal Treasury, the Instruction said, “[y]ou will watch carefully over the accuracy of the collection… and over the unselfishness and neatness required of [government employees]” (art. 9, Instruction for Intendants, AGI, Indiferente General, box 1714).

In relation to those taxes collected and managed by private businessmen, it was stated: “[y]ou will be careful that, at the agreed time, the administrators will attend… to give to you the coffers with those debited [taxes], of any class… the managers will inform you every week… in order to give timely orders against debtors” (art. 10, Instruction for Intendants, AGI, Indiferente General, box 1714). Finally, the intendants were also to be responsible for the collection of the taxes on the nobility, which had not been collected by the previous provincial governors (De Castro, 2004).
Since this moment, this activity was not performed by the *corregidores*, who had been in charge of the collection of such taxes until that moment (art. 18, *Instruction for Intendants*, AGI, *Indiferente General*, box 1714). From such change could be extracted interesting ideas, as the intendants were technologies of government and essential features for the accounting assembly of the governmental programme for the control over the public finances. Interestingly, accounting resembles the governmental programme that improved it (Sargiacomo, 2008). The exclusion of the *corregidores* due to their belonging to the Councils and out of the ministries knowledge made clear the role that the intendants should play.

The state’s ability to protect and increase social welfare becomes the acid test for any government in terms of achievement and means (Foucault, 2007). The growth in the state’s administrative knowledge of its population – census, mortality, education, productivity – becomes both a source of knowledge about welfare and a measure of the efficacy of specific state interventions and governmentality in general (McKinlay and Pezet, 2010).

From a Foucaultian point of view, the main target of the governmental programmes is the population, in the sense that it must be managed, so it must be known. Thus, the management of the population must be leaded to improvements on their wealth and health; welfare, in short (McKinlay and Pezet, 2010). For reaching such purposes, accounting supports the governmental activity resorting to the mechanisms and artefacts that make reality visible and quantifiable. Accounting, in short, comes to help to such aim by “render behaviours visible, calculable and abstract knowledge possible. In turn, this allows for the possibility of managerial intervention” (McKinlay and Pezet, 2010, p. 491).
The Instruction for Intendants considered the welfare of the population and it resorted to accounting for, firstly, construct knowledge on the population and then to manage it. In this way, the term ‘police’ embraced, first, making a detailed census of individuals and properties for each village in the province (art. 38, AGI, Indiferente General, box 1714); drawing up a map of the province detailing all the villages, woods, rivers, bridges, roads, and mills (art. 39, AGI, Indiferente General, box 1714). Secondly, ‘police’ also meant the improvement of the welfare of the population by dividing cities into cuarteles (neighbourhoods) of 50 houses each and appointing a neighbour as watchman to look after the peace in his neighbourhood (art. 40, AGI, Indiferente General, box 1714). Also, welfare meant the recruitment of vagrants and petty delinquents into the Army; or obliged them to forced labour (spinning cotton or silk) (arts. 41 and 42, AGI, Indiferente General, box 1714); and also pursuing counterfeiters, arresting them, and reporting to the government (art. 59, AGI, Indiferente General, box 1714).

Third, police entailed economic supervision also for the welfare of the population: improving factories and cattle farming, exempting businessmen from paying taxes in the early years of their enterprises (arts. 43 and 46, AGI, Indiferente General, box 1714), as well as upgrading roads, bridges, boarding houses, and inns, and cleaning the cities (arts. 48, 49, 50 and 52, AGI, Indiferente General, box 1714). They also controlled the village seed banks (to which the farmers had to repay seeds at harvest) (art. 60, AGI, Indiferente General, box 1714). The intendants were entrusted on the improvement of factories, farming, agriculture and infrastructures. This aim should lead to a growing up of the wealth of the population and, so, to an improvement of the public finances.

As part of such vigilance over the welfare of the population, the intendants had to report every fortnight on the harvest prospects for each village in the province, labelling
the future harvests as short or plentiful and specifying the harvest needed to maintain each village (art. 56, AGI, Indiferente General, box 1714). Consequently on the main economic sector of the Spanish economy on those days, and so, the main source of public incomes, the intendants were used as centres of calculation to manage information and to take decisions by resorting to the productivity of the land (Robson, 1991; 1992). In this way, the representational ability of accounting was used by the government to know at first hand about the distant knowledge (Neu and Graham, 2006).

Concerning to the management of the Army, the Instruction for Intendants explained that “if you were appointed as an Army Intendant, you would be in charge of the supplies, economy, and policing in general terms of the Army” (art. 68, AGI, Indiferente General, box 1714). Half of the articles of the Instruction for Intendants related to control over soldiers’ wages, the distribution of food, and control over supplies furnished by Army contractors. As Patiño was superintendent of the Army, he did not forget the control of the Army developed previously by Bergeyck, which leaded to a better performance.

4. The fall of the Intendants System (1718–1724)

The most of the literature on accounting studies grounded on governmentality has agreed that the exercise of the power from the government can be made by many and, overall, soft ways, being accounting a main support for this power, given its visibility and ability to be transferred (Preston et al., 1997; Jeacle and Walsh, 2002). Accounting, thus, could be used for political purposes given its special ability for calculations and supposed “neutrality” and “objectivity”. In this way, accounting, by itself, is political with organizational, economical and social consequences for the
context that surrounds it (Neu, 2000; Rahaman et al., 2007; Sargiacomo, 2008; 2009; Malsh et al., 2010; Kurunmäki and Miller, 2011; Yayla, 2011; Jacobs, 2012).

The dynamics of change and power relations at the government are indissoluble. Based on the knowledge, the actors of the political arena should be changed due to the prevalence of different discourses at different moments in the timeline (Foucault, 2007). Consequently, dominant political discourses can be contested and questioned, changing the balance of the power relations in a society. This made that Foucault stated that: “if there was not resistance, there would be no power relations… So I think that resistance is the main word, the key word in this dynamic” (2007, p. 167; italics in the original). Given that accounting belongs and performs power relations, it is also implicated in struggles and resistance of discourses. At resistance, the programmes of government tend to be part of such struggles:

“[t]he world of programmes is heterogeneous and rivalrous, and the solutions for one programme tend to be the problems for another. ‘Reality’ always escapes the theories that inform programmes and the ambitions that underpin them... Technologies produce unexpected problems... [Those] are hampered by underfunding, professional rivalries, and the impossibility of producing the technical conditions that would make them work” (Miller and Rose, 1990, p. 11).

Thus, accounting, as part of such technologies of government and a key issue for the knowledge that inform the governmental programmes, should be used for “the eternally optimistic but perpetually falling programmes of government” (Neu and Heincke, 2004, 180).

However, literature has devoted scarcely to the practical study of resistance in such relations. Findlay and Newton (1998) claimed on the imbalance of Foucaultian studies
more leaded towards surveillance and self-control and not to resistance. As Armstrong pointed out, little attention has been paid “in the ‘governmentality’ studies to resistance and the material practices of power” (1994, pp. 42-43). In this way, it emerged some critiques to governmental studies on accounting. A main one is that, in the most of the cases, the governmentality literature did not look on the impact of the innovations over the population. That is, governmentality is supposed to deny the possibility of other discourses to act (McKinlay et al., 2010). For instance, at the acknowledged paper by Miller and O’Leary (1987) on the development of standard costing and scientific management in the thirties, McKinlay et al. stated that “there is no sense of reversal, hesitancy or dissent in the onward march of Taylorism: the account is far too rationalist” (2010, p. 1017; see also Neu and Heincke, 2004).

Many of the governmentality informed papers stop their analyses at the programmatic level, leaving without voice to the rest of the process of implementation (McKinlay and Pezet, 2010; Malsh et al., 2010). For this reason,

“the governmentalists neglect, first, the complex translation of abstract programmes of governmentality into local meanings and actions. Second, the governmentalists leave no space for new forms and cultures of grassroots resistance, whether individual or collective” (McKinlay and Pezet, 2010, p. 493).

In this way, the analysis of the governmentality, in Foucaultian terms, should lead to focus not only on the “programmes of the powerful but to their operation and to the manifold ways that individuals, groups and populations absorb, comply and resist these projects” (McKinlay and Pezet, 2010, p. 494).

To some extent, the answer has emerged as a research trend on the role of accounting in domination relationships between governors and governed. Thus, in spite of the
targets of accounting at government, it can be understood in a different way and so opened to question in a high level that can make it do not work (Miller and Rose, 1990). For example, Neu et al., (2006) explored the implementation of financial reforms at Latin American countries and they concluded that “even when the introduction of new accounting and accountability mechanisms are attempted, other important field participants… can partially block the introduction of financial reforms” (Neu et al., 2006, p. 72; see also Rahaman et al., 2007).

The first complaints against the intendants system (11718-1719)

From the beginning, the intendants' existence and usefulness were questioned. One of the most annoyed institutions due to the intendants was the Council of Castille. In this sense, all the intendants were appointed at their posts by the government, while many posts at the administration or government at the provinces were sold for a price (see above). These last posts had allowed maintaining relationships between members of the Councils and provincial members on the government in some cases with corruption (Ibáñez, 1986; Orduña, 1997). Following McKinlay and Pezet (2010), the emergence of the new governmental system of the Spanish state also gave the way to the emergence of opposed voices.

As a response to the intendants, the Councils constructed their own programme by resorting, mainly, to a discourse of the maintaining of the status quo previous to the intendants system. The power conferred to the intendants supposed the needless of some institutions linked to the Councils as the corregidores and also an improvement on the role played by the ministers at the government (Ibáñez, 1986; Orduña, 1997). In this way, the Councils focused in the knowledge and problems that could be associated to the intendants. Thus, they problematised on the intendants posts and people (Rose, 1991). The discourse of the Councils was stated on various supposed “damages”
caused by the intendants and the solution that they proposed was, of course, the extinction of this recently established institution (Orduña, 1997).

For example, as part of their authority, intendants could be informed on justice. Therefore, intendants could delay or change the judgment of provincial tribunals; naturally, the judges complained to the Council of Castile (Orduña 1997; De Castro 2004). So, in 1720 the Council of Castile, in its turn, complained to King Philip V that

“continuous experience has showed, unhappily, that [the intendants] have applied their efforts to assuming a jurisdiction that the king has not granted, trying to persuade everybody in their provinces that they have a supreme authority, of a higher hierarchy than the rest of the tribunals and judges… It would be hard to find an intendant that, at any time, has gone personally to visit his province” (AGS, Gracia y Justicia, box 348).

Thus, “leaving aside that they are not useful to the state, the Council considers them as harmful, and as a serious damage to the Royal Treasury” (AGS, Gracia y Justicia, box 348; italics added). Thus, the Council “points out to the king that none of the high aims that led the Royal interest of the king to create these appointments have been reached” (AGS, Gracia y Justicia, box 348). As it can be stated, the Council of Castile, resorting to the discourse of the maintaining of their status, described the problem (Rose, 1991) caused by the intendants (the delay at the Justice and the cost to the Royal Treasure) and the programmes of government (Rose and Miller, 1992) based, mainly, on the restitution in their post of the previous people. As Foucault (2007) pointed out, the political discourses are not static, but dynamic, and so, they are changing their role at the power relations continually. In this sense, the Councils did not overlook the intendants. But the king and the government in that moment disagreed:
“I cannot consider as advisable the suppression of the intendants, and so, the Council will propose a new redaction for Chapter 2 of the Instruction for Intendants [which referred to the intendants of justice] and also the Council will consult to me on any other chapter of this Instruction” (AGS, Gracia y Justicia, box 348).

In the same resolution the government also ordered the creation of a committee comprising three members of the government to verify such proposed changes. The product of this committee was a document that concluded:

“[The Council] says that none of the aims that led to the enactment of these claims have been reached. The opposite, partly, is true... [The Council] says that [the intendants] have aimed only to expand their jurisdiction and make clear that they were above the province tribunals. This generalisation, again, is not true; a minor thing has happened in the case of two or three intendants and, because of this, one was admonished, and the rest were advised.... [The Council] says that the intendants have not made the visits required by the Instruction... This can be solved by ordering them to make such visits” (AGS, Gracia y Justicia, box 348).

However, the government ordered a cut in the intendants’ authority over justice at the beginning of 1721 – in practical terms, giving the intendants no authority over cases in the provincial tribunals (Kamen 1964; see also Orduña 1997). This cut supposed a break in all the system for the control over the public finances. As it can be stated, the resistance can appear in different ways (Neu et al., 2008) and it can block the introduction of changes (Neu et al., 2008; see also McKinlay and Pezet, 2010).
The fall of a definitive supporter: Alberoni (1719)

A key fact in the history of the intendants implantation was the fall, in 1719, of the Prime Minister, the Father Alberoni. Alberoni had enjoyed great power in the government of Philip V, even had a codicil, a document signed by the king giving him “the privilege of spending all the money... needed for secret expenses... without any accountability to the Tribunals of [the] Royal Treasury” (De Castro 2004, p. 333). The codicil also gave him full authority in any issue regarding the Royal Treasury, Navy, or war (De Castro 2004). For granting such confidentiality on the use of the public resources Alberoni decided the appointment of the General Treasurer, who allowed him to dispose for the money of the king without any control (De Castro 2004).

Unfortunately for the intendants system, Alberoni surpassed his authority to make several payments, in the name of the Royal Treasury and without the approval of the king, to “purchase” his promotion to cardinal. This abuse, together with the opposition of other European countries to Alberoni, due to his ambitions, leaded Philip V to expel him from Spain in 1719 (De Castro 2004). His fall also brought down all his internal allies. Hence, the Marquis of Compuesta, minister of the Royal Treasury, was replaced by the Marquis of Campo florido (1667-1726) in the same year (De Castro 2004).

Two main consequences are extracted from this replacement. Interestingly, behaviours inside the government, which were not in accordance with the political programme, were expelled from the government. This was logical for the maintenance of the discourse. In this sense, experts that fuel the discourse and political programmes (Rose, 1991; Rose and Miller, 1992) cannot show divergent behaviours from that of the discourse. Accounting appears as supporting a higher change, due that the absence of
accountability for the Cardinal was used for his replacement in the government. Therefore, in this way, accounting was used, not for blocking (Neu et al., 2006), but for changing the government.

Secondly, the new governmental members had another discourse from that of the former ones. Thus, the new members of the government supposed the entrance of new experts that feed up a new discourse and so, a new political programme, showing, thus, the enclosure of the new experts. As Kurunmäki and Miller (2011) pointed out that “such enclosures are not fixed and are subject to contestation,” (p. 222). The new minister belonged to the Council of Castile and was the president of the Royal Treasury Council. Given such belonging a new discourse came into the government, with new implications for the control system of the public resources (Miller and Rose, 1990; Neu and Graham, 2006; Neu et al., 2008). The discourse followed by Campoflorido was far from that of Compuesta, being more closed, due to his provenance, to that of the Council of Castile.

Following his discourse, the new Minister promptly ordered an inspection of the public finances and fired the General Treasurer because of a supposed “great disorder” found (De Castro 2004, p. 341). This “disorder” resulted partly from the covert activities of Cardinal Alberoni, and partly from the hard tasks required to the new provincial accountants, which delayed their reports to the General Treasurer (De Castro 2004).

The abolition of the Intendant System (1721-1724)

In March 1721, following a Campoflorido’s advice, the king abolished the system of provincial accountants and restored the previous system supported by the councils (De Castro, 2004). In this way, the accounting system implemented by the reformist ideas
of Orry, Bergeyck and Compuesta was blown up due to the change of discourse. That is, because of the change of the experts. Interestingly, accounting was moulded for the reformist control system and was used as a resort to erase this system that it engendered (Miller and O’Leary, 1987). It should be pointed out how accounting changes and acquires a chameleonic feature (Sinclair, 1995). Being so, accounting appears “in line” with each discourse (Neu et al., 2006) as well as “new and fresh” for each new discourse which emerges.

According to the new governmental programme, the intendants were asked to “prepare a detailed balance of accounts, values, and cash within each province. In the same way, an order was sent to the paymasters stopping all payments except those to soldiers” (Ibáñez 1986, p. 15). Without the provincial accountants, the intendants had not the support to enforce the collection of taxes or ways to verify payments (Ibáñez 1986; see also De Castro 2004; Pérez 2006). The absence of provincial accountants, centres of calculation in Latour terms (Robson, 1991), due to the change of discourse and governmental programme (Miller and Rose, 1990) it were almost impossible those tasks for the intendants. The intendants system became “a strange accounting” inside a new discourse, far from it, and so, it made difficult to perform their activity (Neu et al., 2006).

At the end of 1723 the Council of the Royal Treasury published an overwhelming report on a supposed “chaos” in the collection of taxes in the kingdom, proposing solutions for that “chaos”. The Council blamed the intendants: “some due to omission, the most for their ignorance on these matters and some others due to their greed, will not develop such solutions but, moreover, they spurn or reject them” (AGS, Secretaría y Hacienda, box 85, emphasis added). That is, the governmental discourse of the Council, expressed in terms of the experts of the Council of the Royal Treasure, described a
supposed “chaos” in the collection of the public finances and focused on the role, ability and attitude of the intendants as “the problem” (Rose, 1991).

Thus, the Councils governmental programme resorted to accounting technologies to reprimand the intendants, in the same way as the governmental programme resorted to accounting technologies, vocabularies and practices to impulse them. Accounting became, in this way, a chameleonic feature (Sinclair, 1995), or in other words, accounting technologies, vocabularies and practices were poly-vocal, allowing, so, to accounting to be a key part of the dominant or resistant discourse (Rahaman et al., 2007).

As might be expected, such assertions reached the king, who ordered that the Royal Treasury minister, Campoflorido, should investigate these matters. This report could not have been worse for the intendants. For example, regarding to the intendant of Cataluña, one of the most important regions of Spain, the report concluded: “It is not convenient to maintain this public servant in this office, nor any other in which there could be cash, given the scant trust that we can have in him on that kind of matter” (AHN, Estado, box 749). As for the intendants of Andalucía and Valencia, another two regions of Spain, Campoflorido explained, that “for the job that they are doing they must be useless, given that they do not know any accounting, the main task of their jobs” (AHN, Estado, box 749, italics added). With regards to the intendant of Extremadura, which it was important for being border with Portugal, it was said that “[he] is a virtuous man, but he does not know anything about his job” (AHN, Estado, box 749). These are only a few examples about the skills of the intendants. Therefore, Campoflorido, going on his report, concluded that:

“so bad are those people appointed for such relevant matters for the King…[that] in order to reach security and good choice it is needed to
resort to skilled people, with demonstrable practice and experience in the profession... it is impossible to reach a correct accounting, nor good use of the Royal Treasury, if the person does not know what the Royal Treasury involves” (AHN, Estado, box 749, emphasis added).

Campoflorido finished his report by proposing, new candidates for the intendancies. Logically, most of these candidates were members of the Council of Castile, former corregidores, or members of the Royal Treasury Council (Ibáñez 1986). However, such candidates never received their appointments; instead, the government, by a decree dated on 19 July, 1724, ordered “that... those Intendants Offices of provinces where there are no troops should be extinguished” (AGS, Dirección General del Tesoro, Inventario 24, box 271). Thus, the intendants system was abolished after only six years since their enactment.

As it can be seen, the Councils discourse, now leaded by the knowledge supported by the Minister of the Royal Treasure, resorted, among others, to the lack accounting and accountability capabilities of the intendants as “the problem” of the intendants systems. Therefore, the poly-vocal feature of accounting (Rahaman et al., 2007) was used as a resort for the end of the intendants adventure.

5. Conclusions

This paper has dealt with the Foucault concept on governmentality. This frame has been used widely at accounting literature, with a growing branch of research in this area (McKinlay and Pezet, 2010). However, in spite of the knowledge engendered by such research line, it has been considered scarcely as a mean to resist a dominant discourse that discipline entire populations (see, i.e., Miller and O’Leary, 1987;
Sargiacomo, 2008; Yayla, 2011), being, in this way, a critical voice for the
governmentality studies (Armstrong, 1994; Findlay and Newton, 1998; McKinlay et al.,
2010).

From this rationale, this paper has resorted to study the emergence and fall of a
governmental institution at the first quarter of the 18th century, as it is the attempt of
implantation of the intendants system in Spain. The reasons to understand such
emergence and the fall can be found in the dynamics of governmental discourses that
allowed for the change of such institution (Foucault, 2007). As Neu and Heincke (2004)
stated, programmes of government did not perform for ever, nor should the resistance
be perpetually as so. Thus, there is a change of governmental programmes that allows
for the dynamics of discourses (Miller and Rose, 1990).

This study has showed how the rise of the intendants was based on a specific and well
defined governmental discourse that was problematical with the management and
tcontrol of the public finances. In this discourse, accounting played a key role that
leded to the programme considers accounting, with the control, two of the main
resorts for the improving of the public finances. However, the poly-vocal ability of
accounting to play at the dominant and at the resistance discourses, leaded to the
resistant discourse to resort to accounting and control leaks at the intendants system to
abolish it (Rahaman et al., 2007).

The resistance to the governmental discourses should be showed in all of cases, given
that, as McKinlay and Pezet (2010) claimed, there must be space for new forms and
cultures of grassroots resistance, whether individual or collective. At such space,
accounting has been shown to be a main tool for the uprising of the resistant
discourses for the functioning of the dynamics and change of governmental discourses.
Thus, we have seen, as Miller and Rose (1990) explained, programmes of government
are “eternally optimistic but perpetually failing” (Neu and Heincke, 2004, 180), being accounting a non neutral, but moreover, a main partner in the emergence or fall of a dominant discourse.


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