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**Performance Measurement
as a Policy Instrument**

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The rise of government by indicators, by figures may reveal a new wave of rationalisation organised by the state in the classic Weberian sense. Contemporary forms of government are marked by the rise of indicators, measures and new metrics to compare, certify, codify and evaluate. In many countries, performance measurement has become one of the symbols of the transformation of governance. The paper aims to show how performance indicators are a particular type of policy instrument that increases competitive pressure within societies even if that cannot be analysed only in terms of neoliberalism.

Keywords: policy instruments, indicators of performance, reshaping of the state, governance, rationalisation

The instruments of the performative state

As the great political scientist Christopher Hood puts it in the phrase ‘Welcome to the ranking world’, and in the delights of what Paul Henman analyses as the ‘Performance State’ in the introduction, measuring, quantifying, evaluating have become massive activities in the contemporary world. Once again, Max Weber was correct; those activities reflect relations of domination alike in the private and the public sector.

The rise of government by indicators, by figures may reveal a new wave of rationalisation organised by the state in the classic Weberian sense. Many papers in the special issue bear witness of this trend. On the other hand, the state is not only performative, it’s also performed. In other words, the state (together with large firms), is a massive quantifier and producer of measures and ranking. But the state is part of a globalising world. The state is also increasingly being quantified, measured (Lemoine, 2016, Fourcade, 2016). In the neo marxist or neoliberal account, the contemporary state (the Schumpeterian globalising workfare state as once suggested by Bob Jessop (2002) is mobilising society for generalised economic competition. One account of neoliberalism is the idea of the disciplining of the state by private sectors measures, metrics and indicators, rating agencies with the use of financial indicators. The performative state might be the result of those transformations.

There are many ways to think about the transformation of states, from the interdependence with capitalism, to the rise of neoliberalism, the transformation of violence and war, the rationalisation of state organisations, the impact of democratic pressure, the role of migration (King and Le Galès, 2016, forthcoming). Contemporary forms of government are marked by the rise of indicators, measures and new metrics to compare, certify, codify and evaluate. In many countries, performance measurement has become one of the symbols of the transformation of governance. Various groups of scholars inspired by Foucault, Weber, Bourdieu, the sociology of science and technology, the sociology of quantification and management studies, have documented the rise of measurement, and quantification, for instance Michael Power with his classic book *The Audit Society* (1999).

Several schools of thought have developed to make sense of this transformation and importance of measurement of performance and quantification. Historically, the development of statistics, measures and categories was associated to the development of the modern state (Porter 1995). Even more incisively, sociologist and statistician Alain Desrosières has developed critical thinking about the making of the metrics of the state to rationalise, 'Seeing like a state' (Scott 1998). In his classic book on *The politics of large numbers* (2010), Desrosières makes a compelling case showing the relationship between the rise of statistics, of various measurements and the increasing role of the state over time. In Europe in particular, the state was the master of measure, of categories. In order to make the society legible (Scott 1998), the modernist state used all sorts of census, measures and calculations in order to prepare the war, to mobilise populations, to tax, in other words, to govern its territory and population as Foucault eloquently put it. Foucault's insight was precisely to decentre the analysis of the state in order to show different modes of *étatization* of society; that is, the use of new technologies and dispositifs. In Britain, the group of critical scholars within business schools that started the journal *Accounting, Organization and Society* produced a wealth of incisive analysis and criticism of performative instruments. Nowadays, US cultural and economic sociology is developing a whole range of understanding processes associated with forms of measurement, valuation and evaluation (Fourcade, 2012, Lamont 2012). The paper aims to show how performance indicators are a particular type of policy instrument that increases competitive pressure within societies even if that cannot be analysed only in terms of neoliberalism. It starts by showing how the policy instrument approach has been elaborated in relation to Weber and Foucault. It then shows how policy instruments such as indicators of performance are central to the restructuring of states.

Policy instruments and technologies of government

Together with Pierre Lascoumes, and later with Charlotte Halpern, I have suggested that the rise of policy indicators should be analysed in terms of policy instruments, They are a concrete modality of exercising power revealing the structures of domination in the Weberian sense. Over the past decade, reflection on

policy instruments and on public policy instrumentation in particular has shaped debate and fuelled in-depth discussions in relation to the rise of managerialism, forms of neoliberalism, and the production of data associated with new technologies (Hood and Margetts, 2007).

The contributions in our book *Gouverner par les instruments*, published in 2004 and the 2007 special issue of the journal *Governance* sought to contribute to the policy debate. At the time, public policy – which falls within political sociology – was dominated by approaches that centred on stakeholders, ideas and institutions. We thus shifted our focus to the technologies of government. Social scientists studying the state and government have long taken an interest in the issue of technologies of government, including its instruments – Weber and Foucault, for instance.

Michel Foucault took up this subject in his own way and pointed out the importance of what he called the “technical procedures” of power – that is, “instrumentation” – as a central activity in “the art of governing” (Senellart 1995). In a 1994 text, he formulated his program for the study of governmentality as an approach that

does not revolve around the general principle of the law or the myth of power, but concerns itself with the complex and multiple practices of a ‘governmentality’ that presupposes, on the one hand, rational forms, technical procedures, instrumentations through which to operate, and, on the other, strategic games that subject the power relations they are supposed to guarantee to instability and reversal (Foucault, 1994).

Foucault contributed to the renewal of thinking on the state and governmental practices by shunning conventional debates of political philosophy about the nature and legitimacy of governments, devoting himself instead to their materiality, their policies and their modes of acting. In his reflections on the political, he put forward the question of the “statization of society” – that is, the development of concrete devices, instruments, practices functioning more through discipline than constraint, and framing actions and representations of all social actors. He then refers to the contribution of the cameral sciences, to show the basis of his approach.

It was in the late 1960s that Foucault, in the context of his work on political liberalism, turned his attention to the writings of the cameral sciences (Foucault, 1988). This science of police – that is, of the concrete organization of society – took

shape in Prussia in the second half of the 18th century; it combined a political vision based on the philosophy of *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment) with principles that claimed rationality in administering the affairs of the city (Senellart 1995). This current in rationalist thought was gradually displaced by “populationist concern for the happiness of populations”, combining dimensions of public order, well-being and culture. In classical political philosophy (for example, Jean Bodin’s 16th-century work), there was an important separation between the attributes of sovereignty and the administration of everyday life. In contrast, from the late 17th century, there was a search for unity in the exercise of power, and these two dimensions came to be gradually integrated. Thus, the cameral sciences were the melting-pot of contemporary public policies. In his argument, Foucault distinguishes three stages in the development of this type of knowledge (1998) an initial stage of critical utopia, where the conceptualization of an alternative model of government enabled implicit criticism of the monarchical regime. He refers to Louis Turquet de Mayerne, who, in 1611, envisaged the development of a specialization of executive power – “police” – to look after both the productivity of society and the security of its inhabitants. He saw this as a fourth “major function”, alongside the classic attributes of the royal prerogative: the judiciary, the army and the exchequer.

A second stage took shape at the beginning of the 18th century, when the general movement towards rationalization was applied to the royal administration by some of its officials, who were concerned for better efficiency. Various treatises made proposals for bringing order to the forest of royal regulations, and devoted themselves to the tasks of listing, classifying and categorizing in order to foster the organization of public policy. One of the most famous in Europe was written by Nicolas Delamare, who published his *Traité de la police* in 1705. According to him, “happiness (that is, ‘individual security and prosperity’) is a requirement for the development of the state”, and it is the responsibility of the political to achieve this objective.

Finally, a third stage was marked by the creation, mainly in Germany, of *Polizeiwissenschaft*, a more theoretical approach, which also became an academic discipline. Foucault’s reference work here is Johann Von Justi’s *Elements of Police* (1756), which proposed principles for action in “taking care of individuals living in society” and aimed to “consolidate the citizen’s life with a view to fostering the state’s

strength". Training academies were developed. These welcomed the future civil servants of Prussia, Austria and Russia, who were to promote various administrative reforms in their countries. This current of thought spread more widely throughout Europe, and is viewed as having inspired some Napoleonic reforms of the executive.

This view, focused on the cameral sciences, led Foucault to clarify his thinking on analysis of the political. First of all, he pointed out the importance of differentiating between *Politik* and *Polizei*. This distinction is important, since "*Polizei*" has its own dual political rationality. One rationality is that of aim – the aim of expressing the interdependence between the productivity of civil society and the state's strength. This is complemented by a rationality of means, viewing religious faith and love of sovereign or republic as insufficient for the construction of the collective. This second rationality must be filtered through concrete practices relating to security, the economy and culture (education, health, trade, the arts, etc.), which are just as much essential tasks of the state. For him, the central issue was not the democratic or authoritarian nature of the state; nor did it relate to the essence of the state or to its ideology, factors which legitimize or fail to legitimize it. He looked from the opposite end of the telescope, taking the view that the central issue was that of the statization of society – that is, the development of a set of concrete devices, practices through which power is exercised materially. Foucault proposed to analyse "practical systems" (1998). That is, not to consider societies as they present themselves or to question the conditions that determine these representations, but rather to apply himself to what they do and the way they do it. This led him to propose a study of the forms of rationality that organize powers. Finally, in analyzing practices, he stressed that the exercise of discipline was at least as important as constraint. Contrary to the traditional concept of an authoritarian power functioning through handing down injunction and sanction, he proposed a disciplinary concept that was based on concrete techniques for framing individuals, allowing their behaviors to be led from a distance.

The legacy of this thought has been remobilized, in the contemporary period, to account for changes in modes of government/governance. Focusing on policy instruments is a way to link sociological analysis of forms of rationalization of power to the public policy tradition that is looking at new linkages between public authorities and economic and social actors in an internationalized context, for means of

regulation and for the reshaping of the state. It is therefore argued that the study of policy instruments and processes of instrumentation is crucial to any investigation of the reshaping of the state or of public policy change.

Instrumentation of public policy and reshaping of the state

The dynamics of growth of the state during the 20th century were accompanied by the development and diversification of public policy instruments and by the accumulation of programs and policies in the different sectors where the state intervenes. Perhaps more surprisingly, processes of reshaping the contemporary state have been accompanied by a new wave of innovations relating to these instruments, notably but not exclusively in recently expanded areas of public policy, such as policies on risk (environmental risks, health risks, etc.), the regulation (statutory or otherwise) of the market, building infrastructures, running utilities, and state or welfare state reforms.

In addition to the question of who governs – as well as who guides, who directs society, who organizes the debate about collective aims – there is now the question of how to govern increasingly differentiated societies. States are parties to multinational regional logics of institutionalization (for instance the EU), to diverse and contradictory globalization processes, to the escape of some social groups and to economic flows, to the formation of transnational actors partly beyond the boundaries and injunctions of governments. Within the EU, for instance, the state no longer mints coins, no longer makes war on its neighbor; it has accepted the free movement of goods and people, and a supra-national central bank. Enterprises, social mobilizations and diverse actors all have differing capacities for access to public goods or political resources beyond the state – the capacities for organization and resistance that, in the 1970s, brought out the theme of the ungovernability of complex societies (Mayntz 1993). This literature has reintroduced the issue of instruments, through questions about the management and governance of public subsystems of societies and policy networks.

The proliferation of actors and coordination instruments in an ever-increasing number of sectors has brought out a new paradigm: “the new governance”, or “new negotiated governance”, in which public policies are less hierarchized, less organized

within a sector demarcated or structured by powerful interest groups (for example, urban policy, environmental policy, new social policies or the negotiation of major infrastructures) – at the risk of denying the interplay of social interests and of masking power relations. Over and above deconstructing this issue (as well as the limits of government and failures of reform), research into government and public policies has highlighted the renewal of public policy instruments either for the development of depoliticized formulas in “the new governance” or through fostering powerful mechanisms for the control and direction of behaviors (Hood 1998).

On the basis of the British case, even constant modification of instruments can be seen as significant, in that this obliges the actors to adapt all the time, “running along behind” instruments that are constantly changing in the name of efficiency and rationality. This instrumentalization of the instrumentation considerably increases the degree of control by central élites and marginalizes the issue of aims and objectives even further – or at the very least, euphemizes them. From this angle, public policy instruments may be seen as revealing the behaviors of actors, with the actors becoming more visible and more predictable through the workings of instruments (an essential factor from the point of view of the state’s élites) (Power 1999).

We deliberately focused our research programme on the practical aspects and material elements of these activities and on representations. Put differently, we focused on instruments, tools and devices as originally highlighted by management sciences and by the sociology of science and technology. These studies led to a comprehensive review of the intermediaries of collective action which were enhanced and occasionally accorded an agent status that was partly autonomous and oriented stakeholders’ behaviour. This approach has gradually spread to different fields within the social sciences. Beyond the sociology of science and technology, the approach is today used to analyse markets, capitalism, business and different forms of collective action linked to government.

We used the instrument approach to more fully grasp public policy as empirically, our attention had been drawn to the significance of instruments and of public policy instrumentation in many sectors (urban, environment, Europe, finance, etc). Instruments are not only highly effective in tracing change (jostling history, revealing discrete scenes), they are also among the variables that explain the

dynamics observed such as the production of new expertise or the renewal of coalitions.

We thus distanced ourselves from three widespread assumptions: the technical neutrality of instruments; their indifference to political strategies; and fascination with instrumental innovation. Our perception of instruments as specific types of institutions was based on the premise that instruments make it possible to focus on changes in the relationship between the governing and the governed, as well as on the various forms of managing complex societies.

The proliferation and overlapping of instruments was particularly discernible in a number of sectors in recently expanded areas of public policy such as health and environmental risks, market regulation or State reform fields. Nevertheless, many other fields in which state intervention had been a longstanding practice in specific sectors such as education, housing and transport were also marked by similar developments and the rise of indicators in particular. Based on this first phase, *Gouverner par les instruments* enabled us to define the concepts of “instrument” and “instrumentation”. It also made it possible to develop a typology of the forms of political relationships structured by instruments, in line with different forms of legitimacy (see table 1), and to propose empirical tests.

For us a *policy instrument* is a device that is both technical and social. It structures specific social relations between public authorities and those it is addressed to, according to the representations and meanings it conveys. *Instrumentation* refers to the set of problems posed by the choice and use of instruments (techniques, methods of operation, devices) that allow government policy to be made material and operational.

A number of researchers have since used the instrumentation framework to enhance policy analysis (Halpern and al... 2014). The emphasis placed on instruments has contributed to discussions on policy change and innovation, on the emergence and resolution of conflicts, and on the phenomena of inertia, resistance and restructuring. These studies have confirmed the relevance of debate on the strengths and weaknesses of the ‘policy through instruments’ approach to explain phenomena observed empirically. Our initial perspective of instruments proves deeply perceptive due to the transformation of political regulation and the restructuring of the state, and has also made it possible to associate them to studies

on the exercise of power. By using this approach in a systematic and comparative manner to explore the relationship between instrumentation and the modes of government and governance in Europe, we have tested the solidity and limitations of this category of analysis. We have also reflected on the modalities of its operationalisation and demonstrated how and within what contexts using particular types of instruments can be beneficial or not.

Performance indicators have massively increased over the last two decades, as several papers of this special issue are showing. Based upon our emphasis of political regulation, the use of indicators of performance may be seen as an alternative to classic instruments such as taxes or legislation or agreements, charters and other instruments of negotiated governance. Those performance instruments allow the imposition of objectives and competition mechanisms and exercise strong coercion. The government does not trust the actors, and may pretend to avoid direct negotiation. The search for effectiveness or efficiency relies upon incentives and a metrics of performance that is supposed to guide the action of actors. They have to adapt, to face those competitive pressure...or be sanctioned. That relates to an understanding of state as performance enhancer, aiming towards the strengthening of competitiveness, but also a state that is classically creating the categories of action, stabilising representations of problems, indicating priorities. As Espeland and Sauder (2007) emphasised, processes of commensuration lead to rankings, new hierarchies. Those hierarchies and indicators of performance may be national or increasingly beyond the nation state. As mentioned, in economic terms, in matter of education, health or environment, states are more and more ranked and performed by transnational organisations.

With my colleague Alan Scott (2010), I have argued that the use of policy performance indicators should be analysed as a “new bureaucratic revolution”¹, to use the words of Max Weber, transforming the forms of the exercise of power in both private and public organisations. We tried to show how the strength of institutional

¹ Weber used the term “bureaucratic revolution” to characterize the ways in which individual conduct is changed “from without” by altering the conditions to which they must adapt. In his analysis, bureaucracy as a revolutionary force stands opposed to the other great revolutionary force, charisma.

change and how the public sector imitates the private, that is, how the state initiates and implements a parallel approach to the one pioneered in the private sector in steering and governance. In other words, in line with Weber, we argued that on the one hand, state policies precede the extension of the market and development of capitalism and, on the other, that the state then imports or imitates the way large-scale enterprise is organized into its own practices. Instead of accepting the understanding that state and market are opposed, it seems worthwhile to us to reconsider the notion that they are interdependent, a classic sociology theme for conceiving of how the social order is formed and how actors' behavior is rendered predictable.

Performance measurement as a form of state rationalisation

There are of course many ways to conceptualise the state (Leipfried and al.. 2015,). Ongoing conceptual debates about the nature of the state and what constitutes statehood are both intimidating and fascinating. Among other things, as a working classic definition, the state might be seen as a set of institutional apparatuses, bureaucracies and organisations developed to increase the capacity of the state to control and govern a given territory to penetrate and organize social life.

The state itself is increasingly differentiated. It seems to be a series of enmeshed agencies, organizations, flexible rules, and negotiations with an increasing number of actors. Public policy is characterized by ad hoc or contingency arrangements and enmeshed networks, by the random, by a proliferation of actors, multiple aims, heterogeneity, cross-linking of issues and changes in the scales of reference geographies. The capacity for direction of the state is subject to challenge; it seems to be losing its monopoly, is less the center of political processes or of conflict regulation hence the importance of measurement to rationalize.

The contemporary question of measurement and quantification is part of the agenda of state restructuring. In Western Europe and in the US, empirical research points to different, sometimes contradictory directions about transformations of the state. A large body of research has also tried to identify state failures. The contemporary debate about the state, very much influenced both by comparative political economy research and by the governance question, tends to focus on the

question of capacity (King and Le Galès, forthcoming 2016). State activities, from measurement to policies, have become an essential feature of state restructuring.

In the late 1990's, Crouch and Streeck (1997) joined an increasing number of scholars who pointed towards decreasing capacity of the state to govern society. The argument is well known: globalisation trends, however contradictory they might be, may give a role to the state to force the adaptation of society but they also make society more difficult to govern because of the rise of exit strategies of firms and economic flux in particular. The hidden secret of the state was therefore one of a growing inability to govern society, to tax, to implement decisions. This scholarship developed a new research agenda based upon classic questions associated to governance and government alike: not just who governs but how governments and various actors involved in governance processes operate. This is not a new idea. Foucault in particular made the point about the importance of shifting patterns of governmentality and the theme was central for Rose and Miller when they started their long term research program on the same phenomenon (2008).

Political economy scholars, emphasising the role of the globalisation of capitalism, have even more developed the idea of the powerless state in economic terms or at the very least of the state heavily constrained by financial markets, the strategy of large firms or globalised exchanges. In a recent contribution to this debate, Streeck (2013) has precisely underlined the fiscal crisis of the state.

By contrast many scholars also pointed out, at the same time that state operations, public policies were expanding in new spheres (Levy, 2006). States have become more intrusive or have developed new policies in matters of education, gender, discrimination, environment, but also security, defense and surveillance. New bureaucracies are developing in the field of auditing and control to change the behaviour of individuals through mechanisms of sanctions and rewards. In terms of relations between states and markets, neo Marxist, Polanyian and neoinstitutionalists have for long stressed the fact that markets were sustained by State activities, policies, ideologies and finances. As Levy rightly documents (2006), the rise of market making activities and policies has become a notable feature of state elites more influenced by neoliberal ideas. In Britain for example, both the Thatcher and the New Labour governments were characterised not only by privatisation and the introduction of market mechanisms in the public sector, but also centralisation, and a

stronger and more authoritarian state (Gamble, 1993, Faucher-King and Le Galès 2010). In the US, a whole series of research emphasised the same apparently contradictory patterns (Jacobs and King, 2009).

All this is often put forward as the triumph of NPM or of the neoliberal bureaucratisation of the state or demonstrating the hegemony of some neoliberal governmentality². This is part of the story, but one may suggest a different argument: the reconfiguration of the state is explained by the need to overcome policy failure, to rationalise, to find new ways to ‘penetrate’, to orientate society (Mann, 1984), to discipline, to recover capacity to govern, to change behaviour. New ways have evolved to impose coercion, to rationalise, to discipline society, that give rise to the regulatory state.

From the Sociology of Science to Social History, from Economics to Management, taking instruments and instrumentation into account often prompts reflection on broader issues such as the functioning of markets, the rationalisation of action, the shifts in capitalism, the renewal of the modes of domination, the triumph of neoliberalism and/or of new public management and depoliticised policy routines.

Quantification and/or neoliberal governmentality?

Focusing on instruments and on public policy instrumentation from the outset has enabled us to engage in dialogue with the sociology of numbers, indicators, quantification and standardisation. These studies on numbers and statistics, quantification audits (Power, 2009), standardisation, commensuration (Espeland and Sander, 2008), benchmarking and rankings comprehend instruments as technologies of government that associate knowledge and power. Clearly, measurement and quantification are not neutral. They result from conflicts and struggles that revolve around definition. They produce outcomes and create new social spaces or institutions. The calculation methods associated with these technologies of government create new inequality metrics (Desrosière 2014). In the introduction of his recent book (2014), Desrosières brought to the fore this new momentum:

² Neoliberalism is a serious issue. But Mitchell Dean (2014) eloquently makes the point about the overblown use of neoliberalism

There have emerged new instruments and new procedures that can be described as the politics of numbers for some or the politics of large numbers for others (that is, involving the law of large numbers and its convergence properties). On one hand is quantification, within the meaning of transforming words into numbers: accounting results, performance indicators, policy evaluation and ranking, and benchmarking. On the other are probabilistic econometric models, evidence based policy, and profiling of “individuals at risk” selected through the observed frequency of microsimulation procedures that lead to changes among populations based on stochastic models.

This momentum can be interpreted in terms of the long-term process of rationalisation. Nevertheless, by interpreting Foucault from a constructivist perspective (and leaving aside all constraints), a large number of researchers pursuing governmentality studies have focused on the analysis of new forms of domination by attempting to highlight the forms of neoliberal governmentality using devices and instruments (Rose and Miller 2007). Do all these instruments define neoliberal governmentality? This is what British studies, predominantly marked by the Thatcherite revolution, have sought to study. In their book, Dardot and Laval (2013) characterise the new globalised neoliberal ideology as a combination of the ground rules applying to contemporary capitalism and the state’s exercise of power. They argue that this ideology continuously steers individuals’ behaviour for the benefit of the market society. All the instruments previously mentioned by Desrosières can thus be considered as the tendency of contemporary states to strengthen the market society, by a strong mobilisation of the instruments that structure competition, performance and sanctions.

Evaluations and audits can both be decisive neoliberal policy instruments whose aim is the formation of market societies. Nevertheless, our analysis is somewhat different. The neoliberalisation of the State – at least over the last thirty years – has undoubtedly been a general trend in the changes observed in many countries, France included. This has resulted in the adoption of a few specific instruments that have focused on measurement in particular. However, let’s break away – at least for the moment – from the relative determinism of these authors.

First, a large part of the quantification or the strengthening of the spirit of managerialism does not fall under neoliberal dynamics. The logic of the rationalisation of activities, including through measurement and quantification, has a

long history. Observable changes in the instrumentation and logic of rationalisation are sometimes linked to the development of new technologies such as computers or communication. Contemporary policy studies have shown that policy often fails, and that the impasses in public regulation have been behind the introduction of new instruments. Instrumentation in terms of cooperation (contracts) are at least as important as instrumentation in terms of norms, standards or indicators that seek to re-orient collective or individual actions. Finally, the dynamics of quantification and classification are also at work, independently from the state, and at its margins arguably driven by different rationalities. A number of social movements have developed practices and instruments and participated in evaluation. Consumers and service users in the health and environment sector in particular, aided by social networks, have prompted the development of ranking to lift the veil of ignorance, confront authority, challenge the opacity of professional practices, hold the authorities accountable, and maybe build trust (Jeacle and Carter, 2011).

Quantifying approaches go well beyond neoliberalism and it can be difficult to distinguish between the different logics at work. The emergence of managerial practices classified under the term “new public management” can also be explained by the strategies of bureaucratic elites struggling to regain their capacity to inspire action (Bezes 2007). Reinforcing bureaucracy and rationalisation is not necessarily linked to neoliberalism; this does not exclude one specific type of neoliberal instrumentation. Does this neoliberal rationality govern the world? Many forces push in this direction but resistance is equally strong. Describing all these transformations as “neoliberal bureaucratisation” as many authors suggest therefore seems to be a generalisation that obscures diverse processes. The papers in this special edition rather support this argument.

Conclusion

Policy instruments such as performance indicators are most of the time likely to have an impact, but how they are used and the resistance they meet can change everything and transform them. Focusing on instrumentation makes it possible to avoid the functionalist reification of instruments (the resolution of problems) and the limitations of constructivism (actors do not invent everything, all the time, and their trajectory often explains nothing of significance). Empirically, instrumentation involves

associating reflection on the development and choice of instruments with their implementation in order to identify their uses and understand their outcomes. There are products and instrumentation outputs in terms of the choice and selection of specific procedures of policy implementation through instruments, budgets, rules, norms and standards. But one may also identify outcomes observed over the medium or long term in terms of the (in) ability of policies to organise a policy field and influence social behaviour through conflict resolution, the allocation of resources, and the imposition of sanctions. In some cases, instrumentation thus acts as an intermediary variable, a structuring mechanism in the relationship between instruments and the structuring of public policy.

The more societies become complex, the more the rationality associated to measurement may be stressed and made visible. It may reveal collective process to define and implement policy goals or a new wave of illusion of rationality in order to feed the neoliberal beast and discipline society. The dynamics may reinforce some hierarchies between them.

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