Policy design policy instrumentation

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The paper is written by a sceptic about the importance of policy design in public policies, with a European /Latin America comparative experience about public policy, urban governance and state restructuring which led to research about policy instruments and policy instrumentation.

Back to Laswell or Simon there is no shortage of good work about policy design and myriads of conceptual discussions that, as always, sometimes make the discussion confused. After a period of lively debates and great papers in the 1980's, the theme was slowly sidelined in public policy analysis. At first glance, policy design appears as an exotic field of research particularly located in Canada, the US, Australia, Singapore. The amount of recent papers and books of the last few years is quite remarkable. Why not? After all some scholars rather emphasise policy implementation, decision or policy feedbacks, there is room for all. The question is rather, under which conditions policy design proves more fruitful to understand, explain the policy process and its outcomes. A group of scholars has particularly narrowed the question of policy design in terms of selection of instruments to solve policy problems in a conscious way. In comparison with public policy research, this literature is striking by the wealth of analytical papers, sometimes raising conceptual issues with a richness of diagrams, typologies or tables with arrows between different concepts. By contrast, most of the theoretical discussion remains elusive and the number of in depth empirical research rather disappointing.

The chapter criticizes the functionalist, depoliticized version of policy design but tries to identify good reasons to focus more on it. It suggests that in some cases, policy instruments have their own autonomy unrelated to policy design, hence the focus on different units of analysis.

Does Policy design matter?

Until the current revival of the policy design literature, the policy design framework was mostly a North American concern with sporadic echoes in public policy research in the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Italy, France, Northern Europe but also in Latin America.

It seemed to have little relevance for the various policy fields that were examined and compared in different European countries. Within the field of public policy, policy design also lost it appeal by contrast to the emphasis on policy implementation[2], policy feedback, the role of ideas, or arguments, policy paradigms, advocacy coalitions to various schools of constructivist scholars analyzing the role of ideas, the social construction of problems, cognitive framework to explain the transformation of public policy (Surel 1998). The policy design puts forward policies as a relatively well defined unit of analysis with clear goals. Within the European context, those elements were not

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[2] See paper by Guy Peters to show the limits of policy implementation

seen as major factors in the policy process or to explain policy change. Constructivists rather emphasised contingency. Different groups explained policy change in connection to cognitive and normative framework, for instance the rise of neo liberalism or European liberalism. Others like Christopher Hood worked on cultural frame or identified the blurring of goals and pressure on politicians leading tothe logic of blame avoidance (hood). Neo institutionalist identified norms, rules, standards (Hall). Europe is centre of world as far as public policies are concerned. The accumulation of policies over time and the rise of budgets (between 15 and 20% more public expenditure than in the US in relation to GDP) paved the way for a whole series of institutionalisation mechanisms, gradual change, (Streeck, Thelen, Mahoney, Thelen), veto points and subterfuge to by pass deadlocks (Heritier, 1999). The neo institutionalist framework led to numerous comparative classic studies of public policies and fine grain analysis of policy change based upon precise mechanisms undermining the instrumental and goal dimension of policy design (Pierson, 2000). Policy change was also understood in relation with changing scales (globalization, EU, cities, regions) and policy transfers or circulations. In most public policies, scholars identified policy change related to process of decentralisation that spread all over Europe or in relation to the europeanisation process. Models, receipes, financial incentives, consultants, policy think tanks were on the rise all over Europe to promote similar ideas. In many countries, from the environment policy to the economic policy, electoral change was only a small part of the explanation for policy change, often for particular salient questions (immigration policy) but even there, circulation, decentralisation and europeanisation were playing an increasing role. Dynamics of change were also related to the interactions between policies, increasing institutionialisation of policy domains, institutional creation to solve new conflicts (Fligstein, Sandholz, Stone, 2000). Others worked with Baumgartner and Jones on the exceptional large scale "agenda project" or understood policy change in relation to modes of governance, networks and regulations for instance in the Netherlands and in Germany at the urban, local or national level. Faced with the complexity of the policy word and the rise of the famous wicked problems, others followed the Sociology of Science and technology of micro analysis, assemblage, knowledge, innovation, sometimes policy design in particular in the fast growing innovative field of environment and climate crisis (Voss, XX, Jordan and Moore, 2020). Within Europe, the analysis of public policy is also often connected to either the restructuring of the state (King, Le Galès, 2017), modes of governance (as in the work of Renate Mayntz for instance), or democracy and governmental activities in the great American tradition of Lindblom, Schattschneider, Wildavsky, Lowi. In most of these lines of research, policy design did not appear as an important dimension.

Policy design by contrast is associated to the idea of purpose and planning. According to the Oxford dictionary, Design is "*The art or action of conceiving of and producing a plan or drawing of something before it is made. Purpose or planning that exists behind an action, fact, or object. A particular purpose or intention held in view by an individual*

or group. A plan or protocol for carrying out or accomplishing something. To design: Do or plan (something) with a specific purpose in mind. ».

The idea of design is connected to activities and a purpose, an intention, a rationality. After the fetishism of decision making, the emphasis on policy design sounded like another way to save the rational policy maker acting for the good of the people. By contrast, ample public policy research, comparative research in particular, has undermined this classic illusion, the linear dimension.

That caricatural presentation is only the point of departure of this literature. As mentioned by May (1992), Drysek original definition gives a nuanced understanding 'the process of inventing, developing and fine-tuning a course of action with the amelioration of some problem [in mind]' (I983, p. 346). More radically, constructivists' authors (Ingham Schneider, Bobrow Dryzek) stressed the role of politics, and the construction of categories, goals, targets. They provided a rich analysis of policy design related to a progressive political agenda. Developing this agenda, Linder and Peters stressed the agency and activities of policy makers. They were careful to bring forward the political dimension, the cognitive elements and to criticise the narrower policy science conception.

As signaled by Guy Peters XX or Mara Schneider XX), the rise of policy design in the 1980's was also a response to the influence of policy implementation and incrementalism that were taken as evidence of lack of effectiveness of policies but also as a justification for a decrease of governmental interventions argued by public choice scholars. Policy design studies might be read as an attempt to show the importance of public policies to change societies with an effort to look back about what has succeeded and failed. In the work of Ingham and Schneider, the emphasis on policy design seems to reflect an effort to design ways to improve societies, a progressive concern for the poor and for targeting policies to change societies. Their encompassing and stimulating conception of policy design sometimes runs the risk of covering the whole public policy process viewed through the public policy angle. In parallel to what happened in many domains of political science, questions were raised about the context for policy formulation or policy design for instance in the work of Peter May distinguishing between policies with or without a public (1992).

Within this research, the selection of policy instruments was seen as one element, usually not very important, within the activities of policy design or policy formulation as probably most precisely analysed in the work of Linder and Peters (XX). By contrast, it became central for a new set of papers of the last decade.

A narrow self referencing functionalist « second wave »

Over the last decade, a group of scholars have revived the interest for policy design through a number of publications, handbooks or even a new journal "Policy design and practice". M. Howlett in particular has published papers with eloquent titles such as "Tales from the crypt: The rise and fall (and rebirth?) of policy design » (Howlett Dejano 2013) or "From the 'old' to the 'new policy design: design thinking beyond markets and collaborative governance » (2014). Howlett and his colleagues have sketched a precise framework with some conceptual effort to characterise their approaches by contrast to earlier work while carefully emphasing how this conceptualisation is rooted in the work of the first wave « design is simultaneously noun and verb, outcome and process, but rather than treating design as simply a technocratic activity of finding the best output, it can also be seen to involve channeling the energies of disparate actors toward agreement in working toward similar goals.(Howlett Dejano 2012, p.360). In his 2014 paper, Howlett pays tribute to earlier work in precise ways but conclude (p.200) « many traditional ways of thinking about policy instruments and policy design are useful but out of date ». His main argument is not crystal clear though. He mostly argues two things : 1) that some earlier work was technocratic and has not taken into account the complexity fo the modern world and 2) that instruments are central in policy design hence the definition « Policy design involves the deliberate and conscious attempt to define policy goals and connect them in an instrumental fashion to instruments or tools expected to realize those objectives, Policy design, in this sense, is a specific form of policy formulation based on the gathering of knowledge of the effects of policy tool use on policy targets and its application to the development and implementation of policies aimed at the attainment of specific desired policy outcomes and ambitions (Howlett and Mukherjee 2014, p.3).

The most important move that will be central in subsequent publications is to concentrate on the selection of instruments, and mix of instruments as the key dimension of policy design. Howlett was involved in the famous Canadian research of the 1980's about policy tools that he remained interested in these. He reframed the political design agenda by focusing on policy instruments incorporating data and knowledge. As his colleagues put it « The most recent wave of design studies emphasize policy tools, and how they are bundled or combined in a principled manner into policy 'portfolios' or 'mixes' in an effort to attain policy goals (Bali, capano, XX 2019).

The second move of Howlett is to restate the narrow functionalist canon of one brand of policy science: "policy designers make 'conscious, intentional, and deliberate choices' to
implement the most effective and efficient policy design (Howlett 2014, 198) ». "The new design orientation in the policy sciences has placed renewed emphasis on

problem-solving and developing effective public policies ». (Bali and al. p.1). In his 2014 paper, Howlett laments the importance of the literature on governance, networks or globalization. He goes back to basics: policy makers make policies, they are rational actors aiming at solving problems. Of course, according to him, policies might be entangled with different level of government but at the end of the day the national level dominates where powerful policy makers are. They design policies by choosing instruments and mix of instruments based upon knowledge and data about their effectiveness in order to attain their well defined goal in an effective ways. In different papers, Howlett and his colleagues accumulate empty formulations that are never supported by evidence but sound like serious warning to policy makers : "The efforts of policy makers often have failed due to poor designs which have inadequately incorporated this complexity in policy formulation » Howlett, Mukherjee, 2017, p.17).

This functionalist agenda has become sophisticated as Howlett and his colleagues have used some results of the dynamic research on policy instruments to think precisely at policy design in terms of the search for "right mix of the instruments" to achieve a diversity of goals (Howlett and al.. 2014). Taking into account some criticism of the basic functionalist account of policy design and his focus on the complexity of the policy worlds, Howlett goes for the search and calibration of a mix of policy goals a and the multiplicity of goals. But of course, functionalism strikes back and Howlett cannot resist narrowing his search in terms of "the right mix" in order to achieve goals. Those who know, the policy expert can work on the congruence, the fit, the "right mix". How lovely! The narrow technocratic illusion reaching new heights! As usual, all this does make any sense. With exception "the right mix" does not mean anything if you do not think "for whom?", who will be the winners and the loosers?.

This supposedly « modern » policy design literature is firmly rooted in the technocratic tradition of the policy science although in more sophisticated ways. Howlett writes numerous papers where he will take into account in a superficial way either institutional change, the context, a little bit of globalisation, some developments on the sociology of knowledge, or discovers the importance of mechanisms long after it has become a central feature of social science. But at the end of the day, the new policy design literature remains profoundly functionalist and above all depoliticised. Even if the word "context" has progressively been integrated in the writing of prominent authors the question of policy design seems to be largely disconnected from the transformation of the state, the crisis of legitimacy of political elites and the rise of illiberal political systems, the climate crisis, increasing inequalities, the transformation of protest, collaborative governance of forms of political participation.
This literature is interesting because of its dynamism, a deep knowledge of the public policy field, together with a blunt reject of the social and political world. Those papers about "the new policy design" are noticeable because of the systematic literature review, the vast number of references that are covered. However, it is also mostly a

self referencing literature. Howlett is a formidable entrepreneur more or less editing four journals (including *Policy design and practice* and the online *Annual review of policy Design)*. The strength of those papers relies in their sophisticated analytical content, often with typologies, arrows and tables.

By contrast, two essential elements are missing. Firstly, most of these numerous papers are more or less never based upon serious empirical research. Cases might be mobilized as illustration. Howlett and his colleagues are not involved in research. Second, most of those papers have no theoretical ambition and rarely discusses or engages with theoretical work. For instance when Howlett mentions some of the work of neo institutionalist like Peter Hall's mobilization of instrument of Streek and Thelen 's five mechanisms of institutional change on is struck by the fact that 1) he does take into account that this literature is precisely undermining the intention of policy makers (see 1992 or Pierson 2002). Second, he is unable to document dynamics of institutionalization. Of course, policies may change in five ways like institutions, but the point is precisely that some instruments or policy mix may become more precise, more codified, engaged more actors, may stabilize the representation of some issues, ie may institutionalize thus orienting the public policy.

This group of scholars remain prisoner of a narrow world closely connected to policy makers and their interest, with little protest, no conflict, and a great role for public policy professionals that will give the good advice to rational policy maker because they know what a good policy design is, how to identify "appropriate means to solve a problem" (bali and al.. 1999). It's a wonderful world of expert discussing with expert in analytical terms. Policy makers love it and public policy scholars in this vein seem more serious that those involved in the intricacy of implementation and the dynamics of resistance, the doubts about policies are clear unit and the vagueness of most policy goals.

There are therefore three major flaws in this literature, the lack of serious empirical research, the lack of engagement with theory and the emphasis on the rational policy maker solving problems by choosing the right instruments ie a largely depoliticized conception of the worlds of public policy. In other words "The design literature defines 'policy designers' as rational and omniscient government officials and their advisory system (Craft and Howlett 2012; Craft and Wilder 2017; Howlett 2011; Howlett and Wellstead 2011) and remains vague about the political actors and coalitions who are often involved in designing and deciding upon the final policy output » Haegl sewerin schimdt 2020.

The point of this paper is not to trace recent developments and differences between different public policy groups or to revive Ted Lowi's sharp criticism of the policy analysis (1992). However, the "new policy design" literature is clearly aiming at providing the good receipts to policy makers. Giving good advice to policy makers is central in the agenda because if the policy design is good with the right mix of

instruments, then the policy will become effective. Although most of the public policy literature has ferociously shown time after time the limits of this linear rational way of thinking, those scholars 'legimitation does lie in engaging with public policy research but with the narrower field of a separate field of research where academics develop neutral analytical views to help policy makers make the right decisions to effectively attain their goal and solve problems. Without being a radical constructivist, the revival of the technocratic functionalist thinking about policies is rather disappointing. In this world with a lot of influence in public policy schools and MPA's, there is no such thing as critical debates, loosers and winners or power relations. One suspects too many scholars have spent too much time in illiberal regimes of Singapore or Hong Kong, with authoritarian political leaders and expert bureaucracies, admiring the effectiveness of policy makers without much concern for democracy, power structures or political alternatives. A radical constructivist is right to conclude, "The return of policy design might, therefore, be explained as a fruitless reaction against social change by seeking to reassert a modernist agenda which has already been bypassed by history. Turnbull 2018

The strength of this revised approach is therefore the conceptual precision and the emphasis on instruments. That also signals its limits but all approaches have their limits. In many ways, this approach is narrower and less rich than the "old" policy design literature that discussed the categories, the goals, the conditions of success for policy makers and the capacity to overcome implementation problem. The pretention of the functionalist policy design scholars to tell policy makers what is a good policy mix is untenable also because of the combination of policies, instruments, goals, institutions accumulating over time. The careful measures provided by C.Knill and his group brings ample evidence of the scale of policy accumulation in different countries. The wide range of interactions and unintended consequences renders in most case the idea of rational problem solving through policy design as largely irrelevant.

 By suggesting that effective problem solving firstly depends upon good, coherent, congruent policy mix well designed in advance, Howlett and his colleagues develop an idea that might be fruitful….once in a while. Most of the time, outside Singapore, this conceptualization sounds decisively obsolete and normative, justifying the role of policy expert giving the good advice to anxious policy makers. Who cares about who is governed?

The rise of policy design activities more or less connected to policy outcomes

The depoliticised view of policy design does not suffice to marginalise policy design. Howlett, Peters and others are probably correct in reemphasing policy design...up to a point. Even if most policies do not attain their goals, are not selected in a rational functionalist way or are difficult to identify as a clear categories, those things happen sometimes. There are good reasons to suggest that, in some cases, a wider conception of policy design (see introduction of the handbook) might, under some circumstances and through mechanism that have to be formalised (Capano, Howlett, 2020), may sometimes shape policy in desired way.

Policy design is interesting because whatever the outcomes, a number of people, organisations are involved in policy design activities. One of the result of the research about governance was to stress the importance of non governmental actors in the policy process: foundations, think tanks, consultants' agencies, private organisations, networks, interest groups, public policy schools, international public and private organisations. In many policy domains in diverse countries, scholars have documented the rise of multiple actors involved at multi level (local to UN) in policy processes hence the decreasing quasi monopoly of state officials and politicians in governing the policy process. That echoes the literature on the denationalising of political authority and the restructuring of the state (King, Le Galès 2017) where the state may become more a manager of political authority (Genshel, Zangl,). Policy Design scholars have identified this complexity. Myriads of organisations, at different levels, are involved in policy design activities, to suggestion ideas, instruments, coalitions, implementation strategies, to organise policy feedbacks, issue framing, policy formulation, key selling points, to produce data, knowledge, experiments. Whatever the impact on policy outcomes, all this policy design activities (in the wide sense) is circulating in different part of the world, framing issues, producing norms, alternative ideas and resources for actors aiming at challenging existing arrangements and policies in particular fields. This classic idea of policy design scholars is gaining traction and probably has greater significance at a time when some key issues are in no way contained within the limits of the nation state. Mentioning climate crisis, Covid or the regulation of internet suffices.

As Considine rightly suggests, policy design echoes forms of creativity and the world success of design thinking in different domains (Peters and al...). design may be seen as the promise of some forms of creativity within the policy-making process and on the part of policy experts as the actors likely to be able to think creatively while also being knowledgeable enough to negotiate the practical environments of policy making p.716. Beyond the risk of becoming « blasé » because of the complexity of policy making, the « promise of creativity » is an interesting allay to follow. The generalization of design in various social or economic domains is now epitomized by the success of Design thinking. When faced with a problem or an innovation project, *Design Thinking* means

the methods and tools used by designers ie a synthesis between analytical and intuitive thinking, a co-creativity process involving feedback from the end user. Design is conquering the world and becomes a discipline in itself hence the creation of design school aiming at harmozing the human environment! In other words, design sounds great and not conflictual: creative, strategic, innovative, high tech, politically shrewd related to sophisticated knowledge and data, connected to the users. In a way, the comeback of policy design seems to echo, possibly imitate the rise of design in different social or economic fields.

Despite all the complexity of policy making, some transformations emerged in policy field to deal with this. Together with the disqualification of policy makers as rational and effective problems solvers, the public policy literature has rather undermined the role of elites by getting rid of the heroic policy makers. Also, by contrast to the political science literature of the rational voter and its preference supposedly explaining policies, Pierson and Hacker among others have debunked this illusion. In a European context, the comparative neo institutionalist literature has also often shown that electoral victories by some parties or leaders was sometimes leading to policy change, but not often. The original work of Genieys is an interesting contribution to bring back sectorial elite, mid term time horizon and mechanism to explain some strategies more or less designed His in depth empirical research deals with very institutionalised policy fields such as the health sector and defence. His work in France and later in the US provided great evidence that in those institutionalised policy field where pressure for cuts was exercised, groups of top policy makers were specialising over a decade or so to become a policy field sub elite/network characterised by their expertise, their circulation among different agencies, their control of the implementation of policies. In the US (Forthcoming) he shows how a distinctive group of top level health experts, professionals, lobbyists have constituted over time a rather stable group that was involved in the failed attempt to reform health insurance under Clinton, to organise resistance during the Bush years and to be central in the passing of the Obamacare. They were involved in all sort of activities from negotiation with different groups, to reviewing the economic model and to design the policies.

This more pluralistic, multilevel, competitive globalising world of public policies probably makes the issue of policy formulation, or image making, of framing much more salient to attract attention, to legitimise politicians. In Peters' conceptualisation of policy design, the analysis of the activities is essential. One of the major social change of the past decades in many countries was the rise of education level (that does not prevent major inequalities even reinforced) and the multiplication of channels of communications. A large body of work is showing the importance of sense making, image making, communication instruments, as part of political activities. In a way, in the vein of Edelman or Hood, one could argue that the more politicians and top policy makers become aware of their limits, the more their legitimacy depends on solving

policy problems, the more they invest in activities about the meaning, the framing, the selection of issues, or tricks to grab attention. From that point of views, staging policy design, labelling policies, setting the scene for drug tzars, climate change leaders or anti poverty specific agencies never solved those problems in effective ways, and were never designed in the first place with those goals in mind. They may contribute to it in due course but the overarching stress on new plans, innovative strategies and ambitious design that compete for attention. The long term formidable research of Baumgartner, Jones and their colleagues on agendas have well identified the politics of information (2015) and all the activities associated to it that may be included in the wide conception of policy design. Within the whole world of public policy, the questions of formulation, information, language, meaning seem to have become more central both because of the intricate institutionalisation of so many policies over time and the pressure from the public and the media.

It might be possible to envisage that policy design activities are gaining traction and become more and more salient, visible and important in the public policy world…..this being weakly and vaguely connected effective problem solving or goals attaining. All these activities are of course profoundly political and contested : information is at the core of politics (Baumgartner and Jones, 2015).

Instrumentation of policy with or without policy design

Research about policy instruments has mushroomed over the past two decades or so not only in public policy but in management, critical accounting, sociology of science and technology, critical accounting and quantification or regulation and environmental studies.

How is collective action organised? How do collective actors work together? Focusing on the concrete aspects and material elements of collective action

We shifted our focus to the technologies of government. This reflexive turning point enabled us to build stronger ties with other disciplines in the social sciences, notably with economics, history and sociology which, each in their own way, have always shown interest in how collective action is conveyed.

At the time, we began by concentrating on typical questions: How is collective action organised? How do collective actors work together? Social science research has provided a number of very different responses to these questions. 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 were not only highly effective in tracing change (jostling history, revealing discrete scenes), they were also among the variables that explained the dynamics observed such as the production of new expertise or the renewal of coalitions.[3]

We thus distanced ourselves from three widespread assumptions: the technical neutrality of instruments, their indifference to political strategies and their 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. Based on this first phase, *Gouverner par les instruments* enabled us to define the concepts of "instrument" and "instrumentation" (See figure 1). 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)[4], and to propose the first empirical tests.

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.

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[3] Ibid.

[4] For further details, cf. Lascoumes and Le Galès, 2004, p. 1-144, and the *Governance* (2007) Journal, No 20 (1).

A number of researchers have since used the instrumentation framework to enhance policy analysis. 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 perception of instruments as deeply perceptive due to the transformation of political regulation and the restructuring of the state, have also made it possible to associate them to studies on the exercise of power, certain modalities[5] of which have been presented by Christopher Hood. 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 instruments can be beneficial or not[6]

In 2008, we began a new research project on instruments, then on the state. Our objective was two-fold: first, we sought to extend the instrumental approach to public policy analysis and second, our objective was to associate our work to discussions initiated by other disciplines (Management Sciences, History, Economics, etc.) in order to study the sciences and analyse markets, capitalism, businesses and the different forms of collective action linked to public authority. Initially focusing on the works of Weber and Foucault and on Management Sciences, the Sociology of Sciences, Sociology of Law, Public Policy, and state and governance, we ultimately interacted with a wide variety of research programs and research teams over the course of our study.

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[5] Hood, 2010.

[6] Two projects in particular: 1) The "Selection and combination of policy instruments: Changes in the ur*ban and environmental policy fields in France, Germany, the UK and the EU* **since the 1970s, a study conducted under the framework of the European research programme** "NewGov – New Modes of Governance" by Patrick Le Galès and Charlotte Halpern (2005-2008). The results were partly published (Kassim and Le Galès, 2010; Halpern, 2010 and 2011; Halpern and Le Galès, 2011). We are currently working on a book. 2) The *"Grenelle de l'environnement: Actors, discourses, effects" conducted under the framework of the "Consultation, Decision, Environment" programme of the Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development. This project was coordinated by* Daniel Boy and Pierre Lascoumes (2009-2011). Pierre Lascoumes and Charlotte Halpern viewed this political process as a meta-instrument of coordination. Together with Julie Pollard and Aurélien Évrard, they became conscious of the impact of this device on different policy sectors and on the dynamics of environmental policy (Boy et al., 2012).

Gradually, we came upon other similar studies that we had not identified in the first phase of our study[7]. Empirically testing this analytical framework in new fields made it possible to enhance it and to specify the conditions of operationalisation of this category of analysis. It also enabled us to test its explanatory limits[8].

After observing and accepting the analysis through the instruments approach, we questioned its relevance. To what extent, for which objects and with regard to which theoretical objectives is this approach still beneficial when analysing public policy? Are the effects and modes of instrumentation in public policy and within industrial organisations as different as we think? Lastly, isn't our interest in the "how" of collective actions somewhat disproportionate given other global trends that influence actors' beliefs and practices such as the neoliberal paradigm for instance? On the contrary, doesn't reflecting on the conformation-resistance relationship of instruments enable us to update dominance and reproduction issues? Don't these instruments reveal a "new bureaucratic revolution", transforming the forms of the exercise of power in both private and public organisations[9]?

The paper tackles these issues from three complementary perspectives. The first section presents an interdisciplinary debate and encompasses the criticism and controversies involved. We have consistently been against creating "a school of thought that analyses public policy through instruments". The authors in this section have addressed

Conclusion - The world is not Singapore

Singapore is not the centre of the world.

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[7] In particular, the research conducted by Frédéric Varone which compared energy policies, becoming a pioneer French study on public policy instruments (Varone, 1998; 2000; 2001).

[8] See the proposals that consider the instrument as a relevant policy analysis unit in a comparative perspective (Halpern and Le Galès, 2011; Bozonnet and Halpern, 2013) and those on the operational dimension with regard to the distinction between instruments, techniques and tools (Halpern, 2011)

[9] Le Galès and Scott, 2008.

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