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Today, in the domain of public policy evaluation, it is still difficult to link the theoretical with the practical (RIST, C.R. 1995). The first reason for this difficulty is that the theoretical ground and, in particular, the domain of methodology of evaluation is still strewn with many conflicting technical, political and philosophical ideas. Consequently, in this field, we have to master the theory of economic policy (to analyse chains of causality between instruments and objectives), the theory of the demand of collective services induced by public policies (see, for instance, [BASLÉ, M., (1995a)], and the theory of values or judgement of values. BASLÉ, M., (1995b).

The second reason is that we always have to choose between different disciplinary approaches and that we have also to choose between different evaluation procedures or process and between diverse evaluation tools (inquiry, different means of production of information...). Every choice will always depends on many parameters: expertise by national statistical institutes, presence of scientifically different persons, abilities to meet in an institutionalised instance, abilities to control the quality of information. Even in the most propitious circumstances, the choice is hardly neutral: for instance everybody can easily be transformed in an "interest group" seeking to capture the process of production of information and the process of evaluation.

The third reason is the lack of agreement over the finality of evaluation: should the information be collected to be incorporated in a recapitulative evaluation, its results considered as important, taken up and officialized by the people's representatives and transmitted by external communication messages to the citizen taxpayer-user [RIST, R.C., (1995), Introduction]? Or, on the contrary, should the information only taken up as an instrument of internal management and be directly used in an internal process of improving decision making [ALBAEK, E. 1989-90]?

We very briefly note these difficulties in this preliminary and we want to explain, first of all, some needs of statistical information at a regional level when this information has to be used for evaluation by State and regional official authorities. In a second point, we will show that such a case is furnished by the production of statistical information needed by the evaluators of public policies listed in the state-region plan contracts and particularly in the case of Brittany.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to deeply analyse the process and the results of a specific case of partenarial evaluation: the French evaluation of state-region plan contracts. Historically, the institutional context of this partenarial evaluation has been determined by the 22 January 1990 decree on the evaluation of Public Policy, by the 9
December 1993 circular relative to the implementation of steps leading to an evaluation of contractual procedures (State planified contracts, town plans contracts), and by the Prime Minister's circular of the 13 July 1994 relative to the plan for the modernisation of financial procedures linked to decentralisation [BASLÉ, M., 1994].

Within this context, in which several political or administrative officials search for the same information concerning their programs, a new partnership evaluation behaviour has made its appearance, stemming from both the State and regional authorities. Co-operative devices have been experimented with the beginning of a shared distribution of tools and methods on a regional level. The beginning of the new period which constitutes the plan contracts between State and Regional Councils has thus been favourable to research upon how is, in France today, conducted partnership evaluation (BASLÉ, M., 1994). In spite of efforts undertaken by the General Commissary to the Plan (CGP, 1995) and Centre d'Etudes de Projet [GAUDY, 1996] in the areas of information and co-ordination, little is known on the period and we do not dispose of any evaluation of these territorial evaluations.

So, we first of all, shall endeavour to characterise the emerging doctrine of this precise field of co-operation in evaluation and the partnership mechanisms which have been experimented (1) In these mechanisms, in our opinion, a central problem has emerged: we shall show that this major problem remains one of partnership coproduction of common information concerning public policies. For the demonstration, we will appeal at game theory (2) The third point (3) will be the analysis of the case of Brittany. Finally (4), further consideration will be given to the nature of privileged policies that have been evaluated at a territorial level in France and the most afferent difficulties.

© Some doctrinal considerations upon French tradition of endeavouring to modernise public action.

The French administration has experimented numerous ways of modernisation of its action. In the sixties and seventies, the predominating way was based upon the experience of R.C.B. ("Rationalisation des choix budgétaires") many programs of investment has been evaluated with the aid of cost-benefit analysis, or more exactly, with the aid of cost-advantages analysis (which takes account of "generalised" advantages like savings of time, savings of lives, gains of security and so on). The traditional State budget presentation was seconded by a presentation in the form of "budgets de programmes" with the application of some links between the objectives to reach and the corresponding means. It was a prelude to the evaluation of the efficacy and of the coherence of programs and policies.

In the eighties, some forms of "new citizenship" came into fashion. Amongst diverse experiments, evaluation of public policies was presented as a potential gain for the democracy. The background was a republican political doctrine: evaluation is necessary and it must not be only undertaken by experts. The vocabulary summons up to the expression of "évaluation pluraliste": "it is a democratic requirement insofar as it allows citizens to obtain objective information and appreciation which help them in the formation of an opinion concerning the
functioning of public services”. The doctrine seems to be in rupture with a long tradition of French administration: rational, neutral and moving apart from the general public, the people. In fact, the new fashion for evaluation was also the forwarding of an internal movement of managerial modernisation in public administration and its action. On this last point, it is important to note that the French movement of evaluation, even though it refuses to admit it, is de facto influenced by recommendations from Anglo-Saxon specialists of public action who aim for a greater efficiency, i.e. no waste, as in the private sector and a greater efficacy in reaching official objectives: the sovereign State (and certain regional authorities) have recently tried, in France as elsewhere, to be more performant and so not fail in the eyes of the general public: they dare not say that “they want their money back” but, with the Pressing of growing deficits and growing burden of debts, they proposed to be more careful and more thrifty. Have these two characteristics of the developing French evaluation (improvement in basic policy, element of modernisation of management) transformed French evaluation into a means of the putting on of pressure by the citizens or experts upon Public Action, pressure theoretically as powerful as that administered by the client on the commercial sector?

We are far from reaching such a point today even if, on a national as well as a regional level, initiatives are evolving in that direction. If we observe what has taken place, by reviewing numerous evaluations undertaken at different levels (ministerial, Scientific Evaluation Committee or more local evaluation), today’s emerging doctrine seems to be, above all, rather pragmatic. This is not unexpected when one studies the texts it is based upon and the reports from the Scientific Evaluation Committee (Scientific Evaluation Committee, 1993, 1994, 1995) These texts do not organise in detail the participation of every group of interest. They do not constrained instances of evaluation to ensure a large communication of their judgements. At the top level of the National Scientific Council of Evaluation (which operates as a second level court), the proceedings are generally noiseless and the broad casting very modest (Conseil Scientifique de l’Evaluation. 1995 Report).

The eclecticism is evident when looking at the regional level. Many institutional configurations co-exist (see the Scientific Evaluation Committee chart, 1993) or are undergoing institutionalisation (General Commissary to the Plan, 1995). If there is some homogeneity, it is probably on the semantical and methodological side. The question seems to be the same everywhere: can the appraisable programme be described through its means (the "causes"), its objectives and its effects and more generally its impact, its challenges? Shall we be able to make a board of indicators on the programme and its application, its long-term effects?

2. Partenarial mode of evaluation in the case of state-region plan contracts.

At the regional level, in France, we observed some instances of evaluation. We can also find some partenarial devices or apparatus. The case of Brittany is probably exemplar with an equi-distribution of power of State and Regional Council in the Regional Council of Evaluation. But one can also draw attention to the Franche-Comté region where a joint steering committee for evaluation has been set up or the regions of Aquitaine, Auvergne, Champagne-Ardenne, Lorraine, Pays de Loire and Picardie where recent committees have been instituted.
We can theoretically conceive the difficulties of these French experiences of co-operation between multi level official authorities when the common objective is the evaluation of public policies which, yes indeed, are common policies but where there is a leadership which is de facto committed to one of the partners. Two official authorities who keep in France a watchful eye on themselves and are somewhat committed in fiscal and financial competition deciding that they have a common interest in a common procedure of evaluation of their plan contracts! It is a priori unbelievable and we are thus dealing with cases classically described in game theory.

### 2a Contribution of game theory

Modern game theory has put the accent on equilibrium of respective strategy choices when each player (here in the game of evaluation) knowing the full rationality of the other player, can in principle take the latter choice as given for choosing so as to maximise his own expected utility. The usual problem, in cases named prisoner's dilemma, is the lack of confidence. When two players hesitate to give their strategic information about the common program and finally decide to retain it, we have a case of asymmetry of information and of lack of confidence of this nature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State in Region (player 2)</th>
<th>Regional Council (player 1)</th>
<th>Cooperate</th>
<th>do not cooperate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cooperate</td>
<td>( + 6 ; + 6)</td>
<td>(0 ; - 9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do not cooperate</td>
<td>(9 ; 0)</td>
<td>(-1; -1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Diagram 1: non co-operative equilibrium

Suppose that gains and losses are distributed as presented in diagram 1 (the first number represents the gain or loss of the first player, i.e. the Regional Council). If there is a lack of confidence and a possibility in a one-shot game to obtain some strategic information from the other player, then, when each player choose his best response to the other's, he will choose the non co-operative move. The Nash Equilibrium so defined will be non co-operative. Nevertheless, co-operation would have been more profitable for everyone. Game theory has told us that, in this configuration, two means can be employed to change the Nash Equilibrium. The first one is to reduce the asymmetric profit of the diffusion or sharing of some strategic information (from 9 to 5 in the example). The second is to increase every individual profit from co-operative attitude (from 6 to 10 in the example): the gains to be expected from co-operation in evaluation would have to be greater. A third trivial solution would be to postulate that a non co-operative behaviour is not possible in repeated games!

### 2b Conditions for co-operation in partnerial evaluation

Note, first of all, that, in France, since the beginning of the process of administrative deconcentration (some form of regionalization of State officials authorities), the two partners in the evaluation analysed here, State and
Regional Council, find themselves practically in a starting equal judicial state of autonomy and responsibility. Their complementarities in actions can be explained by the indeterminateness of the theory of fiscal federalism: some competencies are shared by nature at different levels, and we can also observe a real need for co-operation when using some competencies. In reality, many competencies are linked (national, regional and departmental roads for instance). In this institutionalised context, each partner is concerned with rationality, efficiency, (no waste), coherence between means and ends, efficacy (doing what has been announced), effectivity (getting the expected effects), and finally, satisfaction of people. The incitements to this attitude are the constraints of re-election and the existence of different forms of control: for example, that of the "Cour des Comptes" at the national level, and that of the "chambres régionales des comptes" at the regional level.

Does each partner have an interest in some form of evaluation in this context? Probably yes: evaluation and audit create the conditions and the pressure to be more performant on a political side and on a financial side. The recourse to a neutral and expert body to prepare the analysis and to validate the results of inquiries, interviews, studies etc... is a proof of professionalism and can partly contribute to avoid future control or dissatisfaction. That is the case to-day in France and the observation of the present diffusion of evaluation process confirm the intuition on its utility.

Does each partner have an interest in a partnerial evaluation? Does the net global surplus be positive? Will it be correctly distributed between partners? These questions have to be enlightened by the previously presented considerations of game theory.

First of all, the two partners have to experiment the need for the constitution of a club or a joint venture in evaluation. One elementary condition observed in Brittany is the existence of mutual confidence. A second elementary condition can be found in the preliminary step of common experimentation in evaluation. The result of this experimentation is a preliminary agreement on words and the sharing of the same culture in evaluation of public policies. This facilitates organisational learning and communication (i.e. production, transmission, decoding of information). The result is common knowledge and knowledge recognised as such by the two deciders. And this common knowledge can have some operational consequences when half-term deadlines for the contract are reached or when the setting up of a new plan (therefore a new contract) is imminent.

Secondly, two partners are more credible than one when the production of information on a program has to be decided and to be undertaken. On the state administration side, it is better for a "préfet de région" to be seen as co-operating in a club of evaluation with the Regional Council. Everybody can guess that it is also the best way for getting information on programs notwithstanding the fact that one of the partners has the leadership on the implementation of the program. On the Regional Council side, it would be very difficult to keep to one's own set. Evaluation realised without State will not appear as sufficiently different from auto-evaluation (i.e. not evaluation at all), or from simple internal management control. Furthermore, we can have a doubt upon the possibilities of obtaining in this case some crucial information from civil servants of the State if the latter was not integrated in the evaluation process!

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1 Theoretically, all the regional prefects could, by this time, have implemented the 9th december circular covering the evaluation of plan contracts. It is stipulated that evaluation is at least partially obligatory for the State. The financement of this evaluation is the following: funds are ear-marked on the central government level (Commissariat général du Plan) and each general secretary for regional affairs (the assistant of the regional prefect) must exercise his drawing rights upon the funds which are kept under the auspices of this central government.
Briefly, common knowledge and co-operation result in a net global gain and it could be a profit for each partner. So State and locals partners cooperage, with some specifics forms depending on the local context.

3 The case of Brittany.

Among the cases of performant partnerial evaluation, the case of Brittany is worth hearing and analysing. Since 1990, Regional Council presided by Yvon Bourges (ex minister of General De Gaulle) and the successive regional prefects have experimented and afterwards institutionalised a Regional Council of Evaluation assisted by a scientific committee (in fact, a semi-scientific and semi-administrative committee of experts in evaluation). Each partner, in addition to the fact of having satisfied a legal obligation, says to-day that he finds an equal individual interest in the co-production of information about public programs and policies. Each partner has re-organised his services to integrate the regard for evaluation. This regard is primarily oriented to the construction of a better system of information. This information is collected by several qualitative and quantitative methods discussed in a sub-group ad hoc of the scientific committee and the aid of the officials who "owned" the resources of information. The experience now distinguishes two cases: light evaluation and deep evaluation. In each case, the work consists in the creation of pertinent indicators on the programs.

In Brittany, twelve classes of potential indicators are proposed. The first class is constituted by indicators of physical monitoring. The second class by indicators of financial monitoring. Then, there are indicators following the programmes' schedules. Then, indicators to measure the action's efficacy, i.e. the ratio between the officials and announced objectives and realised objectives. These latter objectives are intermediary or instrumental objectives in order to realise final objectives (in the quantitative reference unit or in the qualitative reference which is that of multi-criteria or the result of a vaguer logic). Then, an another class of indicators is constituted by potential first-rank effects indicators; the following classes are that of second-rank effects and that of non-intentional effects on beneficiaries, eligibles but not beneficiaries, or third-persons.

Finally, so as to prepare the synthesis by the elected representatives of the degree of coherence and pertinence of the actions they decide to undertake, synthetic representative indicators are created: they are measures of the "good" or the "bad" character of a program i.e. of its pertinence, on the basis of direct surveys upon the beneficiaries, the eligible non-beneficiaries and third-persons. The elected representatives are those who are really responsible for pertinence indicators. They render judgement after having considered the wealth of the information that reaches them by different channels and not only by the channel of recapitulative evaluation; they are in possession of the best information on the satisfaction of social demand and the strength of the different groups of interest.

The ad-hoc group having obtained, either directly or indirectly by complementary surveys, the right to obtain the necessary information concerning the proposition of the twelve classes of indicators and the drafting of the detailed indicators which potentially seem accessible, it remains for it to accept to organise the search or more precisely the co-production of the desired information. It is here that real partnerial evaluation starts.

If evaluation is light, the ad hoc group and services that carry public action have to examine the potential results of evaluation and to consider its feasibility and interest: they have to decide, with the aid of the experts of the scientific committee, on what could be the crucial or warning indicators of each line of action. They must also
decide upon the seasonability of the indicator, its support, and the nature of the operational group which is to be informed about the indicator’s evaluation.

If the evaluation of such a line of action of the plan contract is deep, and one can hope that this is the case in areas most expensive in public funds (for reasons of efficiency) or in the most complex areas (for reasons of its contribution to helping methods progress), the elaboration of the terms of reference must be a common effort and has to furnish the main lines to be followed. The latter may be revised, as works progresses, by a pilot group between the State and the Regional Council, with some of its members belonging to the scientific commission. The choice of crucial indicators is made as the results emerge. The proposed synthesis found in the summary which is the final report is subsequently put under private consideration by the scientific body which, being a third-person in the partnership, has the possibility of having a counter-reporter. This latter, as third-person and expert, will insist upon the scope and limit other results obtained. It is well-known in particular that common knowledge produced under the name of effectivity indicators is often flawed by a good degree of uncertainty for several reasons: the main one being that it is always difficult to separate the main effects of such and such a measure because the instruments are not always separated in real terms and that every manipulation of an instrument produced various types of effects, some unintentional, unforeseen and even, sometimes perverted.

The different problems to be solved can sometimes find a common solution among the two partners if each has identical goals in terms of evaluation (instrumental utilisation so as to improve the next action, CF RIST, R.C., 1995, introduction). A solution may also be reached if each partner accepts to make a minimum of concessions and if the two partners, through repeated trials, learn together. It is nonetheless inevitable that problems concerning the interpretation of common information and its use, subsist: in the implementation of the same action of a same plan contract, the two partners are, in effect, in fine in the logic of a situation that leaves them with their differences and which does not lead them to a joining of their interests. Dissymmetries do not disappear through co-operative games. But the observation of the case of Brittany show that the game is reasonably playable for each player.

4 A few remarks concerning the choice of domain of investigation areas in territorial evaluation in France.

At the national level, diverse areas have been the object of evaluation investigation (Conseil Scientifique de l’évaluation, 1993,1994,1995) and above all social policies.

In the same way, in the area of the evaluation of plan contracts, economic and social aids seem to be a privileged field. But agro-environmental measures are also attractive for evaluators. In the two cases, the programmes have complex effects. That is probably one of the reason of the choice. With our limited experience, we can say that it is possible with a deep process of evaluation to be better informed about the impact, the efficacy or the efficiency of public action. The still extant difficulties in these areas are with the interpretation of inquiry’s results: how could you interrogate beneficiaries or non beneficiaries about the effects of social or environmental programs? These programs are so long-term oriented or so conflictual between classes or generations. Here, the criteria to be used for the judgement have to be multiple and you have to proceed with carefulness. In these areas, the results are generally reached with a good dose of uncertainty; as often than not, the relation of causality between the program and its effects is difficult to elucidate; different programmes
always interact rendering insignificant the possibilities of the imputation of some such cause to some such affect; answers to some questions are often of a moral type ("warmglow effect", cf Baslé, M. 1995a), etc...

**Conclusion**

Within the French institutional context since decentralisation and administrative deconcentration, the experimentation of a lot of partnership committees has been pursued. The recent generalisation of the obligation of evaluation, in a context of multilevel or cross-financing projects, has lead to the multiplication of co-production initiatives at a regional level.

More common knowledge exist on the impact of some expensive programmes. Consequently, we observed some improvement and organisational learning in public management of Europeans programmes and of regionalized actions.

Even if the value and fiability of some results obtained through partnership are never absolute, the mere existence of the possibility of control and of evaluation is henceforth a real pressure on elected representatives and their services.

Partnership does not suppress some forms of fiscal, financial and symbolic competition between public actors. It is a new element in the pacific game or struggle for competencies, powers and means at the regional level in France.

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