Government in Action
RESEARCH & PRACTICE
EDITOR’S FOREWORD

Welcome to the first issue of *Government in Action: Research and Practice*, a new periodical published by the French Institute for Public Management and Economic Development (IGPDE) and Université Paris-Dauphine to bridge the divide between public policy researchers and practitioners.

**Rethinking government in a changing world**

The way in which government operates is changing beyond all recognition. If public services are to keep pace with these changes, they need a steady supply of evidence-based knowledge, resources and guidance.

The IGPDE was set up to help public authorities navigate this shifting landscape, and it does so in three complementary ways – delivering vocational training, liaising with the outside world, and conducting research. Gathering, processing and publishing data and information are a vital part of what the institute does, and of research more generally. This periodical contains insights gleaned from this area of the IGPDE’s work.

**Painting a dynamic picture of government action**

Governments everywhere are having to rethink how they deliver services in today’s digital age, when citizens expect more from the public sector. And as more authorities conduct sporadic trials, so researchers are working hard to understand and learn lessons from these experiments. This periodical contains insights from the IGPDE Research Bureau into the latest scientific knowledge in the field, as well comparative analyses of government initiatives elsewhere.

*Government in Action: Research and Practice* has a deliberately international outlook, exploring and learning lessons from what public authorities in Europe and around the world are doing. It also presents the findings of recent academic research and examines the implications of this research for government action – with the aim of ensuring that evidence-based data makes an even bigger contribution to public policy-making in France.

This periodical also reviews the latest academic articles and theses in the field, along with details of events and news for readers with an interest in public management.

*Government in Action: Research and Practice* is a resource for people and organisations working to change the face of government. Your feedback will help us to ensure that this publication aligns with your interests and preferences. Please let us know if you have any comments or suggestions.

I hope you enjoy reading this first issue.

Virginie Madelin, Managing Director, IGPDE
Randomised controlled trials (RCTs) have gained remarkable traction in economics since the 2000s, thanks in no small part to Esther Duflo, Director of the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL). Proponents hold up the method as a particularly robust impact evaluation tool. Although little is known about its origins, examining the backgrounds of those who use it – especially their academic and career paths – goes some way to explaining why it has become such a success. Digging deeper into what the theory involves, and how it came to be applied in practice, sheds light on the inevitable compromises that shaped its rise to prominence and on how an obsession with quantification can affect policy-making.

Esther Duflo stands alongside Thomas Piketty and Jean Tirole as one of the world’s most prominent French economists. She has won a host of prizes and awards, including the *Le Monde* and *Le cercle des économistes* Best Young French Economist Prize (2005) and the American Economic Association’s John Bates Clark Medal (2010). She is a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where she is Co-founder and Director of the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL). Duflo is a keen proponent of randomised controlled trials (RCTs) – a method in which participants are randomly assigned to groups to assess and measure the impact of interventions as disparate as drugs and microcredit. Commonly used in medicine, RCTs have become popular in development and, increasingly, in public policy evaluation – with great success. The J-PAL lab has run more than 600 RCTs to date, on top of many more conducted by the World Bank. But how do RCTs actually work? What do they involve and what makes them different from other methods? And what are their benefits and drawbacks?
An ingenious method that is older than you might think

Evaluating a policy or programme is far from straightforward. To understand why it can be so complex, let’s look at an initiative that involves giving free laptop computers to high-school pupils. An authority might decide to do this for any number of reasons – ensuring equal access to information and communication technologies, cultivating new teaching and learning practices, or simply improving pupils’ attainment. To keep things simple, let’s imagine that the aim is merely to boost pupils’ attainment. The project sponsor quite rightly wants to know what impact the intervention has had. In other words, did it “work”? The purpose of evaluation is answer this very question – to ascertain whether “something” (be it a public policy, an aid programme or a specific drug) actually makes a positive difference.

How does evaluation work?

The challenge, when answering a question like this, is to determine what “would have happened” in the absence of the intervention. This is known as “counterfactual impact evaluation”. For argument’s sake, let’s imagine I take an aspirin because I have a headache. One hour later, the pain has gone away. So can I conclude that the drug worked? Absolutely not. To draw that conclusion, I would need to know whether the pain would have gone away if I hadn’t taken the pill. After all, headaches could well disappear naturally on their own. In this individual case, therefore, I cannot establish causality. The same holds true for individual high-school pupils. Imagine a pupil’s attainment improves a few months after receiving a free laptop. Here too, it is impossible to establish a cause-and-effect relationship because the same might have happened without the laptop.

One way around this problem is to think in terms of groups rather than individuals. Let’s take two groups, A and B. Members of both groups are sufficiently similar for comparison purposes (e.g., average age, gender distribution, attainment) and we can assume that both would have similar outcomes if they did not receive free laptops. Therefore, if group A are given free laptops and group B are not, we might expect group B’s attainment at the end of the academic year to match what group A would have attained had they not received the laptops.

Of course, creating comparable groups poses a real challenge. There are several ways to do this, but random assignment is the most compelling method. Provided the sample size is large enough (according to statistical rules of thumb), the evidence shows that randomly assigning pupils makes it more likely that the groups will be similar according to both measurable variables (such as attainment) and non-measurable variables (such as talent).

This is precisely how RCTs work – dividing a target population into two groups. In our example, the experimental group receives free laptops and the control group does not, then the groups are later assessed against certain indicators to measure the differences between them and to determine what impact the intervention had.
A long history

Esther Duflo and her colleagues are often credited with developing RCTs. In reality, however, the method is much older and its use – in economics and other disciplines – dates back a relatively long way. Evaluation plays an important role in many fields, several of which – not least psychology, medicine, education and agronomics – have been instrumental in developing RCTs as they exist today.

The method has its roots in the gradual adoption of the group trial model, and in a growing acceptance of the benefits of random assignment in evaluation. The evidence suggests that random assignment can be traced back to the late 19th century, when it was first used in psychophysics (a branch of psychology that measures sensations).

In any event, its origins cannot be pinned down to one specific factor and, therefore, one specific discipline. It seems, however, that medicine played a key role in stabilising and spreading the RCT method in the aftermath of the Second World War, with the advent of randomised clinical trials. The 1960s saw widespread adoption of RCTs as a public policy evaluation tool in the United States. So while Esther Duflo and her colleagues cannot be credited with pioneering the method, they were the first researchers to apply RCTs to international development – especially on such a scale.

“Duflo was the first to apply RCTs to international development”

RCTs in public policy evaluation

The J-PAL lab has run hundreds of RCTs since its inception in 2003, spanning policy areas including education, health, microfinance, employment, governance, agriculture and environment. Here, we provide a brief overview of some of these trials.

Education

Absenteeism among teachers and pupils is a major problem for schools in developing countries. Although enrolment rates are on the rise, many pupils still fail to attend school regularly.

A number of RCTs have been conducted in an effort to combat truancy. In Kenya, where school is free to attend but pupils have to buy compulsory uniform, one trial looked at whether free uniform would improve attendance rates. Pupils were assigned randomly to two groups – one receiving uniform free of charge and the other having to pay for it. The researchers found a 43% reduction in truancy among the experimental group (i.e. the group that had been given free uniform). Other trials have been run in Kenyan schools, including free worming tablets and free school lunches – again, with compelling results. A separate trial in India looked at whether financial incentives could cut absenteeism among teachers. Although the method was ethically dubious, it proved effective at boosting attendance rates. Teachers were given digital cameras with a tamper-proof time-and-date-stamp function and asked to take photos of themselves with their class at the start and end of every day to prove they had attended.

Even when pupils attend school, they often end up learning very little. Class sizes are one possible cause of this problem. A trial in Kenya looked the effect of halving class sizes (from 80 to 40 pupils). The researchers found no significant improvement in attainment among the experimental group when compared with the control group, although it is hard to imagine that smaller class sizes have no positive impact in general. Researchers also tested another intervention: free textbooks. Yet again, the results were disappointing. Attainment is a problem in developed countries too. An RCT in the Netherlands explored the impact of attainment-based bonuses but found they had so significant impact. In a separate trial in France, Créteil local education authority instructed participating schools to hold three information meetings for parents of sixth-grade pupils to explain how to support their children’s learning. The initiative produced positive results.

Health

Aside from education, RCTs are also common practice in health policy evaluation. Unsafe sexual practices are a major public health concern, especially in developing countries. In a successful trial in Tanzania, participants were offered financial rewards if they managed not to contract sexually transmitted infections. A similar trial was run in Kenya, although this time the results were much less persuasive. This discrepancy raises the thorny question of whether trial results can be generalised. We will return to that question later on.
One of the nagging debates in health economics is whether health products should be fully subsidised (which widens access but risks money being spent unnecessarily on people who can afford to pay for them), or whether people should be made to pay all or part of the cost (which targets resources where they are needed most but risks excluding the poorest). An RCT in Kenya aimed to answer this question. The trial population was split randomly into two groups. The first group were given free mosquito nets, and the second were given nets at a discounted price. The researchers observed better outcomes in the first group than in the second, suggesting that it is better to fully subsidise the cost of these products—at least in this particular context. Another preventive healthcare trial, this time in India, measured the impact of child immunisation incentives. Although the incentive was small in value (a bag of lentils), it produced significant results.

Labour and employment

Labour economists have been grappling with the issue of unemployment for the past four decades. RCTs have been used to test some of the many recommended policy measures. In Denmark, for instance, researchers explored whether scheduling more regular appointments at job centres would make a difference to jobseekers. The trial produced extremely positive outcomes, although a similar one in the Netherlands proved much less convincing. Once again, these findings raise questions about whether RCTs have much value beyond the narrow circumstances in which they are conducted.

A trial in France sought to compare outcomes for jobseekers on public placement schemes with those on private-sector schemes, tackling a long-standing debate in public economics around the relative merits of the public and private sectors. Jobseekers were randomly assigned to two groups—one public, and one private. Better outcomes were observed in the first group than the second. In a separate trial in France, researchers took the novel step of exploring whether subsidising driving lessons would make a difference to the employment prospects of disadvantaged young people. As expected, those who received the subsidised lessons were more likely to pass their driving test, but the trial found no short-term employability benefits.

Major drawbacks

RCTs have a number of drawbacks. We explore just some of them below, without touching on ethical issues (which can be particularly concerning when the trials involve individuals) or on technical considerations (which are best left to econometricians). Instead, we focus on those drawbacks that have more to do with public policy implementation.

A challenging method to apply

Although RCTs might seem alluring in theory, applying the method in practice poses the same challenges that come with any experimental process. Practitioners are sometimes reluctant to assign trial participants randomly or create a control group because those individuals placed in the “wrong” group would be deprived of the services that the trial is testing. Trial participants can also skew the results, for instance by changing the way they behave once they have been randomly assigned to a group (so-called “randomisation bias”). Consequently, any impact observed by the researchers cannot be ascribed solely to the intervention itself, since the very fact that the participants are involved in a trial influences the results. More generally, the Hawthorne effect describes how trial participants modify their behaviour when they are aware that they are being observed. In our previous example, there is every possibility that the pupils might work harder simply because they know they are taking part in a trial and because they appreciate the added attention that this brings, independently of the intervention that the trial is trying to evaluate.

Another drawback, this time affecting the applicability of RCT results, stems from the fact that the researchers who conduct such trials work to much longer time scales than the policy-makers who order them or use their results. Politicians, who are constrained by electoral cycles, often cannot wait for the results of RCTs to be published, while researchers are often unable to publish their findings quickly enough to hold politicians’ interest. The rift between these two worlds goes some way to explaining why RCTs have lost momentum in the United States since the 1980s.

The thorny issues of generalisation and causality

The question we must therefore ask is this: what can we actually learn from RCTs? In other words: can the results of an RCT be generalised? There is no guarantee that the findings of a single trial, run by one team, in one place, and at one point in time, can help us to draw universal conclusions. In the literature, this issue is known as “exter-
nal validity”; to what extent are the results of a trial “valid” and do they still hold true outside the context of that particular trial?

Regrettably, the literature appears to sideline what remains a fundamental question. It goes without saying that the results of a single RCT cannot be generalised. Nor can the results of two similar trials in two different sets of circumstances, since there is no guarantee that a third will produce the same outcomes. We cannot know whether the results of a trial can be generalised without first examining the context in which that trial took place. We must look to the social sciences for the tools to help us interpret trial outcomes. It is something of a paradox that, while RCTs are in vivo (as opposed to in vitro) experiments, the conclusions drawn from them still seem to give very little weight to actual conditions on the ground. If we are to overcome this problem, we must break free of the economic blinkers that blind the work of Esther Duflo and her colleagues – and a good number of economists in general.

The distinction between efficacy and causality is well established in medicine. Yet confusion between the two remains a real problem in evaluation. In other words, knowing that an intervention works does not tell us why it works. We can demonstrate that giving out free laptops has a positive impact on high-school pupils’ attainment. But understanding why is a separate matter altogether. Is it the software installed on the laptop that makes a difference? Do pupils perform better because the intervention boosts their self-esteem? Or can the improvements be attributed to more engaged parents and/or teachers? Yet again, understanding the underlying causal mechanisms demands thorough investigation using a range of methods – especially qualitative ones.

**RCTs and a deliberate policy of quantification**

The growing popularity of RCTs can, and indeed should, be placed within the broader context of the role that quantification plays in today’s society. They are part of a trend that French sociologist Albert Ogée calls the “reduction of society to numbers”. Numbers are not a bad thing in and of themselves. Quite the opposite. But an impulsive, narrow-minded obsession with quantifying everything – and all-but disregarding every other area of the social sciences – is problematic because it impoverishes our understanding of society.

RCTs are by no means the first time that quantification has been introduced into politics and policy-making. But randomly assigning participants to groups – a method held up by proponents as the final answer to the evaluation debate – lends RCTs a veneer of scientific objectivity while at the same time masking the fact that decisions such as what intervention to test, or what indicators to measure its impact by, are inherently political acts. Advocates of RCTs consider them the pinnacle of quantification – a way to circumvent ideological debate, and to sideline political considerations, through science and numbers. This somewhat debatable view seems to be upheld by Esther Duflo in her latest book, Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty, co-authored with Abhijit Banerjee and published in 2011. Yet it is worth remembering that RCTs are no less susceptible to political influence than other evaluation methods – and arguably even more so.
Focus on randomised controlled trials in economics

In this interview, Arthur Jatteau talks about the subject of his thesis, “Evidence by numbers”, focusing in particular on randomised controlled trials (RCTs).

We asked Arthur to tell us more about the theoretical frameworks that shaped his analysis, how he carried out his field work, what data he used, and what conclusions he drew in his thesis.

You can watch the full interview (in French) here: https://www.economie.gouv.fr/igpde-editions-publications/action-publique-recherche-pratiques

Further reading


In recent years, transparency and anti-corruption policies – often held up as examples of “good governance” – have become an indispensable part of sound public management. This shift has come about, in part, because today’s citizens expect government to be more transparent. This article looks at the conceptual frameworks behind transparency and anti-corruption policies in different parts of the world, how these policies are implemented, and what lessons we can learn from them.

In many parts of the world, government transparency has become a major vote-winning policy and a flagship feature of political leaders’ manifestos. In 2013, US President Barack Obama claimed to be running the most transparent administration in history. In the run-up to Canada’s 2015 federal elections, the eventual winner Justin Trudeau promised to form the most open and transparent government the country had ever seen. In France, transparency has enjoyed a spectacular rise to the top of the political agenda, with the creation of the High Authority for Transparency in Public Life in 2013, the country joining the Open Government Partnership in 2014, the launch of the French Anti-Corruption Agency in 2016, and the enactment of the Act on Confidence in Political Life in 2017.

In many cases, however, we still know little about the conceptual frameworks behind government transparency and anti-corruption policies, the complex relationship between them, and their combined impact on public policy coherence and consistency. The benefits of openness and transparency are well-publicised. But can they actually frustrate governance and thwart government negotiation and decision-making?

This article explores practical examples of openness and transparency policies from around the world, along with research insights on the subject, in an attempt to shed light on these questions. It also looks at the drawbacks of such policy measures, as well as how transparency initiatives have helped to shape anti-corruption policies that work.
What is transparency?

The idea of transparency as a value came to prominence in the Age of Enlightenment. It was Jeremy Bentham’s (1748–1832) proposed Panopticon that transformed transparency – and visibility – into a tool for management and organisational control. The Panopticon is a form of prison design in which light and shadow are arranged in such a way that a single officer can see what every prisoner is doing. Because detainees are aware that their every movement might be observed at any moment, the opportunity cost of misbehaviour becomes greater. It is only a short step from this form of institutional design to transparency. In both cases, the person being observed – be it a prisoner, a civil servant or a politician – tends to be on their best behaviour because they know they are being watched.

This self-same idea – using visibility as a means of control – underpins Michael C. Jensen and William H. Meckling’s(1) “principal-agent theory”, an idea that was quickly transposed from the private to the public sectors. In the public sphere, the “principal” (the citizen) delegates authority to an “agent” (the government), yet the two parties have conflicting interests and asymmetric information. Consequently, good governance involves giving outsiders (citizens) the means to access all the information that is normally reserved for insiders (such as civil servants and politicians) so they can monitor and control what the authorities are doing.

In recent decades, the emergence of organisations like Transparency International and the Open Government Partnership have turned transparency in public life into an international standard(2) by which government performance is measured. Bodies such as these publish global rankings that add to domestic and regional pressure for more robust transparency policies. The Open Data Charter, founded in 2015 and currently adopted by 54 national and local governments including France, is a case in point. The Charter’s six principles state that data should be published in a format that is: (1) open by default, (2) timely and comprehensive, (3) accessible and usable, (4) comparable and interoperable, (5) for improved governance & citizen engagement, and (6) for inclusive development & innovation.(3)

This way of conducting government business, and the many forms that it takes, is often described as “Open Government” – a movement that seeks to recast the government-citizen relationship, hand more power to citizens, and give them a greater say in monitoring and controlling what government does. Seen from this angle, transparency draws heavily on the ideas of deliberative democratic theorists such as John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas, who advocated for citizen participation and engagement in public life and argued that the public’s “right to know” is vital to building a strong democracy while ensuring that the all-important checks and balances are in place.

Citizen empowerment has three key objectives. First, the fact that organisations are forced to publish details of what they have (and have not) done strengthens accountability. Second, improved internal information flows lead to better management. And third, publishing information about public task performance has a more direct influence on how individuals and organisations behave. Proponents of this model argue that it helps to build trust in the machinery of government and, by allowing citizens to see how the public sector operates, better equips them to assess how well public services are delivered. In this sense, transparency is more a means to an end than an end in itself.

What about corruption?

Good governance in public institutions relies on officials carrying out their duties without corruption – defined by the OECD as “the abuse of public or private office for personal gain”.(4) Conventional wisdom dictates that corruption in public office only happens when certain conditions are met. First, the organisation must have individuals in positions of authority with discretionary powers (in other words, they must have the power to independently allocate resources or provide goods and services as they see fit). Second, these individuals must abuse or misuse the powers entrusted to them. And third, they must do so for personal gain (either for themselves or for a third party). These gains may be tangible (goods) or intangible (promotion), and come in many different forms, from cash payments (bribery) to benefits in kind such as meals or travel.(5)
While transparency is often associated with principal-agent theory, corruption tends to be viewed through the prism of rational choice theory. In other words, engaging (or not engaging) in corruption is viewed as the rational outcome of a cost-benefit analysis made by a given individual when conditions are right. And it stands to reason that conditions are more likely to be right for corruption when surveillance — and therefore transparency — are weaker.

A distinction is traditionally drawn between petty corruption (bribery) and grand corruption (embezzlement, misappropriation or other diversion of property by a public official). A separate distinction is made between passive corruption (whereby a public official solicits or accepts an undue advantage in order to act or refrain from acting in the exercise of his or her official duties) and active corruption (whereby a citizen promises, offers or gives a public official an undue advantage in order that the official act or refrain from acting in the exercise of his or her official duties).

There is also a dividing line between so-called “legal” corruption (erecting legal barriers to hide or facilitate corruption) and illegal corruption (criminal behaviour that breaches national and international conventions). The question, therefore, is whether effective anti-corruption policies can be founded on transparency alone, or whether something more is needed.

Transparency in practice
The contours of transparency are in constant flux, shaped by political will, public pressure and technological progress. Policy measures vary markedly from one part of the world to the next as the relative weight of these factors changes. Here, we look at what governments in different countries are doing on the transparency front in order to shed light on research insights. The examples outlined below show that, while the law still has a role to play, citizens are playing an increasingly vital part in designing, developing and implementing public transparency policies.

Governments themselves decide where the boundaries of transparency lie. For instance, they determine what information is classified as sensitive and which public bodies are subject to freedom of information requests. But there are other forces shaping what the public expects to know and how transparent governments really are. News leaks, open data movements and radical transparency initiatives like WikiLeaks are moving the boundary between what is legal and what is illegal, and between what the public does and does not have a right to know.

The “right to know” is often cited as an integral part of transparency and accountability — two values that underpin the freedom of information laws that now exist in more than 190 countries around the world, giving citizens the legal right to access open, unclassified government documents unless the law states otherwise.

In the past, the rule of thumb was that all information was confidential except for what governments chose to disclose, under various pretences. But that reasoning has been turned on its head, and governments now have to justify why certain documents and information are kept confidential.

The world’s oldest freedom of information law was passed by Sweden in an effort to curb the monarch’s power. These days, as elsewhere, it is primarily a tool for scrutinising the work of parliament and government. National and regional freedom of information laws share many common features. They set out which bodies the law covers, what kinds of information can be accessed, the legal grounds on which the authorities can deny disclosure requests (classified information, privacy, etc.), and the administrative arrangements around freedom of information requests, such as how long institutions have to respond, what fee is payable by the requesting party, and what legal avenues are available if the request is denied. Governments are increasingly embracing open data policies — a move that implies a shift in their relationship with citizens towards an arrangement in which information is developed jointly by both sides.
Proactive transparency

Freedom of information requests are expensive to process and generate substantial human resources and information management costs for public bodies.

One way to reduce these costs and to improve government transparency more generally is to pursue a policy of “proactive” transparency. This practice is particularly widespread in the United States, where any information that the government feels may be of interest to citizens is routinely published online and made freely accessible. Such an approach has several benefits: it avoids all-but inevitable and costly freedom of information requests, it deflects criticism around government secrecy, and it allows the authorities to frame the debate on potentially controversial subjects from the outset.

Back-office nudges

Crisis hit the state government of Georgia in 2016 when it was discovered that a senior finance department official responsible for monitoring purchasing had racked up more than $87,000 in personal spending – a sizeable portion with Amazon – on a government credit card.

The administrative department brought in a series of reforms to fix issues with the system and stop something similar happening again, including reducing the number of people authorised to use government credit cards, redesigning the payment system, and bringing Amazon into the government procurement system under a new partnership.

The reformed payment system includes a number of “nudges” to influence user behaviour. Fields such as the delivery address are now populated by default and cannot be altered, users see three warnings and reminders alerting them to the fact that the purchase they are making is connected to a government contract, and the new streamlined interface simplifies the whole process and means that buyers can access the Amazon Prime catalogue just as easily as government procurement catalogues.[10]

United States

Au Canada

Managing image in parliamentary broadcasting

Broadcasting parliamentary proceedings on TV or online is now common practice, giving citizens and journalists a glimpse into the day-to-day work of politicians at the national, regional and local levels. Although parliamentary broadcasting is nothing new, there has been a recent move towards better managing public perceptions. For instance, strict rules mean that broadcasts of proceedings in Canada’s federal parliament can only show the speaker and viewers cannot see other MPs, not all of whom give the speaker their undivided attention.
Singapore
Paying high salaries to tackle corruption
After Singapore attained self-government in 1959, the new administration signalled its intent to crack down on corruption by introducing tough laws and setting up the independent Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau.
As part of sweeping public sector reforms in the 1980s, the civil service salary structure was revamped and variable bonuses were introduced to build more flexibility into the system. The vast majority of Singaporean civil servants enjoy a job for life – known in Chinese as an “iron rice bowl” occupation – with bonuses for performance, length of service, and other criteria.
In 1993, senior civil servants were awarded a pay rise of between 20% and 34% in an effort to tackle recruitment and retention problems. In 1994, new comparative indicators were brought in to index-link senior civil servants’ pay to traditionally high private-sector salaries. Both measures were part of a deliberate civil service salary hike policy designed to attract and retain the best talent and limit corruption risk associated with poor public-sector pay.

Austria
Une éducation à la transparence dès le lycée
In 2012, Austria’s Federal Bureau of Anti-Corruption began running corruption awareness events for 14-18-year-olds, including 45-minute workshops where pupils work through questionnaires, take part in role plays, talk to corruption investigators and engage in other activities. The aim of the sessions is to teach them what corruption looks like, so they are prepared to encounter it when they enter the workforce.\(^{(1)}\)

Poland
A mandatory public register of lobbyists
EU lobbying rules have changed markedly in recent years, with new measures designed to make lobbying more transparent and to restrict interaction between lobbyists and government representatives, among others.
Although many countries maintain an official register of lobbyists, registering is not mandatory in most EU Member States. One of the few exceptions to this rule is Poland, where all lobbyists are required to register and where each public authority produces and publishes an annual report listing all lobbying aimed at their institution.\(^{(2)}\)

Mexico
Naming and shaming fraudsters
Mexico’s tax authority has taken the initiative on using open data to combat corruption and financial fraud, publicly naming and shaming taxpayers who flout the rules to deter others from following suit. The authority uses its website and the Official Federal Gazette to publish lists of taxpayers who set up false businesses, issue fake invoices, fail to pay their taxes, or have been convicted of tax fraud.\(^{(14)}\)

India
A right to information website
Building on the mandate to foster greater transparency established by the 2005 Right to Information Act, the Indian authorities launched a central web portal, spanning government-to-government and government-to-citizen services, in order to better manage freedom of information requests received by public sector institutions.
The e-government portal is designed to make it easier for citizens to request information and track the status of their access requests, while at the same time ensuring that public institutions provide citizens with appropriate information. The platform was designed with two key principles of digital transformation in mind: digital inclusion and digital by default.\(^{(13)}\)
Is transparency always a good thing?

Transparency is seen as a positive force and examples of successful initiatives abound. Yet transparency as a tool for citizen control has its drawbacks – both for citizens themselves and for public institutions.

More information does not always equal greater transparency

Proponents of transparency see the public as a watchdog, actively exercising democratic control over the government. Yet this is perhaps a rose-tinted view of how citizens access and use information.

In reality, members of the public often fail to read the information at their disposal or are ill-equipped to analyse it. The rise of “e-transparency” – using technology to foster greater transparency – only magnifies the problem because, as well as being short on technical and political expertise, citizens often lack vital computer skills.

Information overload can also leave citizens feeling overwhelmed. Sometimes, a public body will respond to a freedom of information request with thousands – or even millions – of pages of information, thinking it has fulfilled its duty. Yet the sheer volume of information makes it difficult, even impossible, for the recipient to understand, contravening both the spirit of the law and the authority’s stated aims. Simply providing information is not enough. The authority must also ensure that the information is properly structured, fit for purpose, and easy to understand.

Another drawback of these new transparency arrangements, this time affecting society as a whole, stems from the fact that powerful, well-organised lobbies – with their own aims and interests that sometimes run counter to what is in the public interest – tend to be their biggest users. In other words, they seek to “capture” transparency arrangements for their own goals. (15)

Can opacity be a good thing?

Government secrecy exists for good reason. For instance, it allows officials to discuss and address problems without fearing a public backlash. Transparency is seen as problematic in some quarters because it stifles innovation – something that, by definition, is a process of trial and error. Officials who are constantly weighing up what the public might think are less likely to make bold decisions.
Proponents of this line of reasoning posit that transparency has caused the standard of public debate to decline. They argue that, while fully transparent decisions can claim legitimacy, the fact that they are made so openly causes a switch in emphasis away from the decision itself and towards image management and spin. Conversely, they claim, being more opaque would improve the standard of debate because it would give all sides more freedom to share their comments, questions and suggestions and, ultimately, achieve a compromise that keeps everyone happy.

Some critics of full transparency argue that it makes compromise impossible and deadlock often inevitable. Others claim that its greatest downfall is to conceal the many and varied excesses that occur inside an organisation.

Either way, it is clear that its drawbacks are at odds with its purported benefits, and that those drawbacks can erode the extent to which citizens and organisations trust transparency as a management and social development tool. Public institutions must therefore take stock of the challenges that these questions pose, come up with adequate answers and solutions, and ensure that transparency remains a force for better governance.

Towards transparency in moderation?

Having transparent public institutions is vitally important. But transparency has not yet gone far enough to stamp out corruption, whether real or perceived. There are several ways in which existing transparency policies and systems can be improved.

Mediation

The mismatch between the promise of full transparency and how it plays out in reality – and the role of the media in particular – sheds light on the ambivalences inherent to transparency. Citizens do not see reality, but rather different representations of reality. That is why it is so important for information to be mediated and for raw data to be contextualised and processed. That said, transparency alone cannot fix ineffective communication. Governments that communicate well must also consider their target audience. Transparency can only fulfil its regulatory function if the information that governments publish is interpreted for public consumption by the media, civil society organisations, public institutions or other go-betweens.

Data quality

Freedom of information rules will prove toothless if governments fail to produce documents or index them properly. That is why, in the interest of data quality, governments must adopt standardised document creation, storage and management procedures – a move that comes at a significant cost, even when documents are managed electronically.

Sanctions

Transparency can only deliver greater political accountability if it works in tandem with other measures. Some observers criticise the widely held belief that surveillance is an effective way to instil discipline and hold officials to account, arguing that transparency is a pointless exercise without appropriate sanctions. Some even go so far as to argue that transparency without sanctions does more harm than good because the veneer of openness that it lends actually allows excessive practices to flourish.

Can transparency stamp out corruption?

The relationship between transparency and corruption is a complex one. Understanding the two phenomena does not always lead to coherent, consistent policy-making. For all of transparency’s benefits, excessive openness can complicate governance, weaken a government’s negotiating hand and thwart decision-making. Corruption is often defined as a situation in which an official abuses public office for personal gain. One way around this problem is to publish details of their decisions and actions – a clear deterrent designed to discourage officials from breaking the rules in pursuit of their personal interests.

Understanding personal interest is vital to understanding corruption. But all too often, personal interest is wrongly conflated with financial interest. This narrow-minded view goes some way to explaining why anti-corruption efforts have enjoyed limited success. A recent International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimate put the annual cost of bribery at around $1.5 trillion to $2 trillion – roughly 2% of global GDP.
Further research could provide a more nuanced picture of corruption and explain why transparency can only go so far in tackling this complex phenomenon. Aside from officials’ personal interests, other factors – norms, culture and context – that drive individual behaviour and erect moral barriers (sense of ethics, civic duty, etc.) must be given due weight. After all, human beings cannot be reduced to homo economicus. A cultural approach such as this stresses the importance of moral and normative barriers, which are typically shaped “in an inter-subjective and relational dimension” and are “slowly developed through a socialization process”.[23] Officials with different normative worldviews could therefore respond differently in similar sets of circumstances – one choosing to act, and the other choosing to refrain from acting. This observation calls for a rethink of one-size-fits-all solutions that fail to take local contexts into account.

At the same time, the transparency pursuit could be seen as a rejection of the established representation of reality,[24] implying that some representations are intrinsically more truthful than others, or that the way reality is represented can be stage-managed. There are always people who are better at exploiting situations, than others, or that the way reality is represented could be seen as a rejection of the established representation of reality.[25] And it is always deployed as a strategic weapon used in power struggles.[25] It is a strategic weapon used in power struggles. 

**Sources**


Using TDABC to calculate costs in a hospital transport service

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Charles Ducrocq, Professor, Université Paris Descartes, CEDAG

This paper describes an experiment in which Time-Driven Activity-Based Costing (TDABC) was used to calculate transport service costs at a public hospital. It describes the method used and the results of the experiment, highlighting the potential benefits of this approach for operational management of hospital logistics. The authors analyse the use of TDABC for just one part of the hospital’s operations, revealing that the method is successful at modelling complex logistics activities without the need for complex, organisation-wide costing. The authors highlight the benefits and limitations of the method, and explain how it can be applied to other areas of public management.

The article was published in Gestion et Management Public 2017/1 (Volume 5/No.3), pp.59-81, and is available online at: https://www.cairn.info/revue-gestion-et-management-public-2017-1-p-59.htm
Management Control Tools: Value Drivers for the Public Sector?
Benjamin Dreveton, Professor, Institut d’Administration des Entreprises (IAE) Poitiers, CEREGE

This study analyses the role of management control tools in the deployment of new values for the public sector. The article studies the three-year process of introducing a performance management tool (Balanced Scorecard) in a public agency. Initially, the scorecard is presented internally as a way to “transfer” new performance management values and practices from the private to the public sector. Later on, members of the internal project team question its purpose and intent and set about embedding the organisation’s social responsibility values into the tool, creating tension with the performance values that traditionally underpin the Balance Scorecard. The study reveals the various contexts of the deployment process, from disinterest and acclimatisation to managerialisation and conflict. The author shows that, when a value is transposed into an organisation largely uncontested, there is no chance that a network of actors capable of driving the new tool forward will emerge. Conversely, deployment is likely to be more successful if “creative” tension between opposing values is maintained throughout the process.

A double edged sword? Use of PPPs and fiscal risks control
Frédéric Marty, Researcher, CNRS, Université Côte d’Azur, GREDEG

Complex, long-term public procurement contracts, such as public-private partnerships, can play an important part in public authorities’ risk management strategies. They cannot, however, offer absolute protection against fiscal risks because some of the risks inherent in the contract cannot be fully transferred to the private partner, and because the contractual and financial architecture itself may generate new fiscal risks that are not properly recognised in public accounts. The author explores these concepts to show how contracts of this type designed with a strong emphasis on risk mitigation expose the public authority to residual risks and, in some cases, to other specific risks. The author then goes on to examine the impact of public management approaches to managing these risks.
In this article, the authors report on a model explaining the level of managerial performance achieved through manager participation in management control processes, tested with a sample of 157 managers. In this model, manager participation has two dimensions: (1) the manager’s contribution to management control and (2) the manager’s use of the information resulting from this process. The authors observe that managers who are more involved in the management control processes make better use of the information they receive from the management accountant. Their research shows that interaction between the manager and the management accountant supports the process of turning individual knowledge into shared knowledge. They conclude by stressing that having the manager involved in management control improves the relevance of information because, when the manager and the management accountant work together, the management accountant gains a better understanding of the manager’s needs and environment and has a moral duty to adapt accordingly.

Manager Participation in Management Control and Managerial Performance: A New Approach

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Governance

From the political regulation of the worlds of the welfare state to that of professional worlds. The case of care and domestic services in France and Germany

Clémence Ledoux, Lecturer in Political Science, Université de Nantes

This article looks at the development of welfare state care policies over the course of three decades, revealing a trend towards tax and social security instruments (such as tax and social security exemptions, allowances and reductions, and tax credits) replacing cash benefits. The study explores the impact of tax and social security instruments on care occupations (employment status, collective bargaining agreements, etc.). Looking specifically at childminders and domestic care workers in France and Germany, the author concludes that the use of different instruments has delivered markedly different job security and professionalisation outcomes for workers in these occupations in the two countries. In particular, the author finds that domestic care workers and childminders have, over time, aligned themselves with different professional worlds in France and Germany.

The article was published in Comptabilité - Contrôle - Audit 2017/2 (Tome 23), p. 85-110, and is available online at: https://www.cairn.info/revue-comptabilite-controle-audit-2017-2-page-85.htm

The article was published in Revue française de science politique 2018/1 (Vol. 68), p. 53-76, and is available online at: https://www.cairn.info/revue-francaise-de-science-politique-2018-1-page-53.htm

Government in Action
n°.1 • Autumn 2018
Government-citizen relationship

What participation does to public policy. The case of the Chicago Plan for Transformation at Lathrop

Clément Boisseuil, PhD in political science, Researcher at the Centre for European Studies and Comparative Politics, Sciences Po

This article analyses how service user participation impacts public policy implementation, using the Lathrop Homes social housing redevelopment project in Chicago, Illinois as a case study. Residents opposed the plans when they were asked to give their views, using participatory governance tools to spawn a protest movement that blocked the project for several years. This example shows how public or private organisations that encourage user participation can lose control of the process. In this case, the chance to participate opened a window of opportunity for protest, and the tools themselves gave the protest movement all-important organisation and structure. Yet the article also highlights how complex it can be for public programmes to adapt when users are given the opportunity to have their say. The author concludes that the drawbacks of participation lie not in the way that participatory tools are used, or in the conflicts that arise from them, but rather in the failure of public authorities to learn from these processes.

Published in: Gouvernement et action publique 2018/1 (N° 1), p. 57-84 available online at: https://www.cairn.info/revue-gouvernement-et-action-publique-2018-1-page-57.htm

Public sector employment

Professional digital space and HRM evolution: observation of two different cases

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This article looks at how new digital technologies – and the professional digital space in particular – have shaped developments in human resource management (HRM). The author argues that the professional digital space could help bring about a change in HRM practices, and that it encourages employees and managers to engage more fully with change processes. The research highlights some of the operational benefits of the digital space: boosting employee and manager engagement with change, fostering bottom-up communication that harnesses an organisation’s intellectual capital and creativity, and rethinking internal managerial practices by opening up opportunities to explore new organisational models and communication structures.

The article was published in @GRH 2017/3 (n° 24), p. 77-99 and is available online at: https://www.cairn.info/revue-grh-2017-3-page-77.htm
Public policies for the development of solar photovoltaic energy and the impacts on dynamics of technology systems and markets


Abstract

The market for solar photovoltaic (PV) systems has grown strongly over the last decade, supported by favourable policy-making and a general shift towards cleaner energy technologies. Despite these benign conditions, the global solar PV market had experienced a period of chaos fuelled by over-production, an industry crisis and long-lasting trade disputes. Taking these issues as its starting point, this thesis examines what public policies for the development of solar PV entail and how they affect technology system and market dynamics. The author reveals a relationship between changing political contexts and the shifting dynamics of the solar PV sector, highlighting how China’s entry into the PV sector put the brakes on a booming domestic industry. The thesis concludes with a series of domestic and international recommendations to support the sector. At the domestic level, the author emphasises self-consumption as a natural way to use solar PV power – a move that will require policy to change direction in the future. The author then outlines how collaborative efforts to harness the economic and environmental benefits of solar PV systems, at the global level, could help bring the current industry crisis to an end and reignite demand for the technology.
This thesis explores the effect of prices on healthcare professionals’ decisions and maternal health service uptake in sub-Saharan Africa. The first two chapters are concerned with how wages affect healthcare professionals’ work ethic and multiple job-holding. Based on data collected at the peripheral level of Cameroon’s health system (in Yaoundé and Douala), the author finds no correlation between healthcare professionals’ work ethic and likelihood of holding multiple jobs, and how much they are paid for their main job. This finding suggests that a high-wage policy alone cannot make healthcare professionals work harder or hold down fewer jobs. The third chapter looks at the short-term impact of the free delivery and caesarean section programme on maternal health service uptake in Senegal. The author concludes that the programme has had no discernible short-term effect on service uptake, thereby raising questions about the wisdom of hastily scaling up free healthcare programmes.

The thesis can be viewed online at: http://www.theses.fr/s130085
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Design & layout:
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