The Power of Illusion: Evaluative Information and Political Steering in Valais

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Introduction

Of all the reforms proposed under New Public Management (NPM), performance contracts have had the greatest impact in Switzerland (Proeller, 2006). In the majority of cases, as well as distilling policy and political objectives down to operational levels, performance contracts link the legislature, the executive and the administration. They help to clarify responsibilities with the aim of reinforcing the steering of public action. Each party agrees to define objectives and targets and to provide information to the relevant authority, thus enabling the latter (executive and legislature) to manage the process, request additional information, suspend action or readjust measures. Data are collected based on indicators, which, like the objectives and targets, are selected by common agreement between the parties.

Several Swiss political scientists (e.g., Delley, Haldemann, Finger, Horber-Papazian, Knoepfel, Mastronardi, 1997) saw the introduction of performance contracts as a type of steering instrument linking the legislature to the executive and the latter to the administration, and as an opportunity to strengthen the steering role of the legislature. Whether at the federal or cantonal levels, parliaments in Switzerland assume the functions of legislation, control, oversight and budget voting. Through its power to formulate legislation, a given parliament will define policy objectives, in particular in terms of outcomes (target audience to be addressed) and problems to be resolved or impacts to be attained. Parliamentary supervision comprises three

components: reviewing (management and finance auditing), compliance control and the steering of policy effects.

According to political scientists, the use of performance contracts and the establishment of information systems tailored to their use should have considerably strengthened the power of parliaments by helping to concretize objectives and targets in the process of defining policy measures. The performance contract also enables the definition of an implementation framework that would limit the administration's scope for interpretation during the implementation phase and ensure that specified targets have been attained and, where necessary, that the corrective action is taken. In this case, parliaments would be in a better position to steer the fulfillment of political objectives. Thus, evaluative information should enable them to establish a basis, take charge of the effects of their decisions, and, ultimately, strengthen their role at political level. Beyond repositioning of the role of parliament, political scientists (e.g., Bouckaert, 2004) also raise the fundamental question as to the political stakes involved in the selection of indicators and definition of targets in this context.

For their part, policy evaluators also greeted the introduction of performance contracts with great hope. They saw them as a tool for parliaments to go beyond their roles as legislators and develop a systematic interest in the effects of their decisions. These evaluators also believed that information systems would collect information not only on the services offered but also on the outcomes and impacts of measures. Similarly, they imagined that performance contracts would make it possible to remedy the asymmetry in the flow of information between the executive and the legislature. Finally, they saw these reforms as offering an opportunity to reinforce or create a culture of evaluation among decision-makers, thanks to the associated introduction of monitoring based on defined objectives and of indicators.

While it was obvious to all those affected by the measure that the information systems established were more focused on controlling or checking[ii] than on systematic or specific evaluations, it was hoped that in cases of policy errors or failure, parliaments would be able to avail themselves of the services of external evaluators.

This chapter analyses a pilot study for the introduction of performance contracts in the canton of Valais, which was awarded the Arthur Anderson Public Service prize for 2000/2001, and addresses four questions that arise in the case study: first, the characteristics of the steering system used by the Swiss canton of Valais; second, whether the information made available to the parliament is suited to political steering; third, and most crucially in the context of this chapter, whether the power dynamic that was established between the different actors enabled the Valais Parliament to strengthen its role in relation to political steering and, finally, whether the hypotheses proposed by the political scientists and evaluators have been verified. In attempting to answer these questions, the case study examines the canton's Department of Health, which was chosen because the health sector is one that is the most open to evaluation in Switzerland at both national and cantonal levels (Horber-Papazian, 2006). The chapter begins by presenting the policy management system in the Valaisian health sector. It then determines whether the data provided by the Valaisian administration enabled parliamentarians to play their assigned role under the new system, i.e., to support political steering and acquire a culture of evaluation. The third section provides an explanation of the results obtained, in particular through the power games associated with access to information and the strategy implemented for each actor to maximize its latitude for action. This analysis furthers Furubo's and Karlsson Vestman's debate in the introduction to this volume in relation to the

retention of information by the administration as a way of exercising power over a legislature where elected officials are not professionals. The case study presents the results of an analysis of documents submitted to parliamentarians and of semi-structured interviews carried out among political and administrative leaders and managers in reference to 2005.

A Steering System to Increase the Power of Parliament

In 1997, at the request of its parliament, the canton of Valais introduced legislation to bring in a set of reforms[iii] that included results-based management, the clarification of the respective powers of the political and administrative levels, the use of performance contracts and multi-year global budgets. Central elements of the reform included bringing the conduct of administrative actions closer to service beneficiaries and creating thematic parliamentary commissions that would enable parliamentarians to develop specialized knowledge about key aspects of cantonal policy, including health policy. This process initially involved six pilot sites under the responsibility of the director of the management center attached to the Valaisian cantonal administration, which was established for the initiation of the reform.

This management center was closed after the retirement of its director. Its employees were then distributed throughout the administration for the purpose of dealing with pilot projects for the implementation of performance contracts. The reform was adopted throughout the administration from 2008 onwards.

The model developed in Valais is based on a sequence of three performance contracts. These performance contracts link the Valaisian cantonal parliament ("Parliament") to the government, the government to the responsible member of the

Department, (the Department of Health, in this case) and the head of Department to the service providers, i.e., the administration. Thus, Parliament, the government, the Department head and the administration each had their own "steering instrument" or contract adapted to their specific levels, objectives and needs. The first contract, which is known as the "political contract," is located at the parliamentary level, the top level in the system, and binds Parliament to the government for four years. The contract is proposed by the government to Parliament, which in turn adopts it. It defines the political objectives to be attained, priority measures to be implemented and the indicators of outcomes and impacts, which will enable the political steering. The resources available for the implementation of these objectives are defined in global budgets. The second contract, which is called the "strategic contract" defines and operationalizes the main points involved in the implementation of the policy by the relevant departments of the administration. The policy objectives are defined in terms of a number of service and finance groups, which are specified in the strategic contract that links the government and the implementing departments. Finally, the third contract, which is called the "operational contract" is located at the administrative level, and describes the products and services that are required to implement government programs. These programs are defined for two years and link the department in question to the stipulated products and services (Berteletto, 2002).

The evaluative information is reproduced in the form of management reports which are compiled by the administration and submitted to the government, which, in turn, passes them on to Parliament twice yearly on the occasion of the budget vote and approval of the accounts. Each actor monitors the fulfillment of objectives on its own level, for which it is responsible on the basis of the evaluative information provided to it, in relation to the defined targets and results obtained and, if necessary, takes the

necessary readjustment measures. Steering is carried out independently on all four levels: i.e., parliamentary, governmental, departmental and administrative.

The documents presented to the parliament are dealt with by thematic commissions and finance and management commissions (Conseil d'Etat, 2004: 10) before being debated in plenary. The reports describe the status of implementation and highlight any gaps in the planning.

Inadequate Evaluative Information for Political Steering

Steering a policy or program requires information, not only on the allocation of resources, implementation of processes and targeted populations, but also on behavioral changes or other outcomes and impacts, so that adjustments can be made in the case of policy failures.

However, the key question is whether the information provided to Parliament enables it to fulfill his steering role.

The performance contract, which links Parliament and government, was analyzed in detail for the health sector in the canton of Valais for 2005. The analysis looked at the nature of the information provided to the parliament along with the management report. The table below presents the defined objectives, the measures and the indicators that quantify the impacts in relation to the political objectives. The indicators were classified to determine whether the data enabled Parliament to intervene at its own level, i.e., in relation to the effects of the measures it has voted in. At issue is whether the defined measures reached the target audience, enabled behavioral changes (outcome) and/or resolved the problem that they sought to address

(impacts). Parliament also received data on outputs, i.e., on the services provided by the administration steered by the executive.

Table 7.1 Synthesis of the service agreement (political level) for the health sector, 2005

Objectives	Measures	Type of indicator[iv]	Indicators
To improve health	Informing and educating the population	Impact	– Percentage of population which feels that it is in good health
To prevent illnesses	Prevention of mental illness	Output Impact	– Overall expenditure on prevention per inhabitant – Number of prevention campaigns – Number of suicides reported

Objectives	Measures	Type of indicator[iv]	Indicators
	Prevention of tobacco addiction	Output	– Overall expenditure on prevention per inhabitant – Number of prevention campaigns – Implementation of anti-smoking campaigns
	Prevention of alcoholism	Output	– Overall expenditure on prevention per inhabitant – Number of prevention campaigns – Implementation of anti-alcoholism campaigns

Objectives	Measures	Type of indicator[iv]	Indicators
	Prevention of accidents	Output Impact	– Overall expenditure on prevention per inhabitant – Number of accidents involving individuals under the influence of alcohol, addicted to drugs or medication or resulting from physical weakness
	Breast-cancer screening	Output Outcome	– Overall expenditure on prevention per inhabitant – Coverage rate of breast-cancer screening program

Objectives	Measures	Type of indicator[iv]	Indicators
	Prevention of other illnesses	Output Outcome	– Overall expenditure on prevention per inhabitant – Number of prevention campaigns – Implementation of campaigns for young people – Number of violations of the law on narcotics – Success of healthy eating campaign (“green fork”)
To guarantee the quality of professionals and institutions	Inspection of pharmacies	Output Outcome	– Number of pharmacies inspected – Number of doctors in practice per 100,000 inhabitants

Objectives	Measures	Type of indicator[iv]	Indicators
To guarantee curative and palliative management that meets requirements	Development of a concept for the management of the elderly	Output Outcome	– Acceptance by the Conseil d'Etat ("State Council", i.e. the executive at cantonal level) of the concept for the management of the elderly – Number of people who benefit from home help and care
	Revision of the legislation on the organization of emergencies and disasters	Output	– Progress in the drafting of the legislation on the organization of emergencies and disasters

Objectives	Measures	Type of indicator[iv]	Indicators
	Provision of support to the Valais Health Network in the implementation of hospital planning	Output Outcome	– Progress in the new hospital planning – Number of acute beds operated per 1,000 inhabitants – Average duration of stay in acute care
	Revision of the legislation on health facilities	Output	– Progress in the drafting of the legislation on health facilities
To guarantee curative and palliative management that complies with quality and safety requirements	Implementation of surveys on the quality of care, patient satisfaction and personnel in health facilities	Output Outcome	– Publication of the report on the quality indicators in health facilities – Rate of satisfaction of residents in medical-social establishments
To guarantee efficient curative and	Introduction of cost-accounting in hospital centers	Output Outcome	– Improvement of cost-accounting in hospital centers

Objectives	Measures	Type of indicator[iv]	Indicators
palliative management			– Rates of cover borne by insurers for hospital expenses – Increase in rates of cover by insurers
To guarantee to the population the information necessary and useful for promoting access to care on the basis of informed judgment	No measure defined		
To guarantee the economic accessibility of health services through the targeted	Full use of the resources provided by the Confederation	Output	– Distribution of subventions to insured parties, as a percentage of the sum provided by the Confederation

Objectives	Measures	Type of indicator[iv]	Indicators
subvention of the insurance premiums of those on modest incomes	Adaptation of the cantonal contribution based on the contribution paid by the Confederation	Output	– Sum allocated to the subvention of premiums by the canton compared with that allocated by the Confederation
	Targeted allocation of subsidies	Output Outcome	– Average cantonal health insurance premium – Proportion of population that benefits from subvention – Average subvention per insured party – Ranking of canton for health insurance premium

As indicated in the above table, the selected political contract has eight general objectives, which are then operationalized in 17 intervention measures. Obviously, no health policy can be reduced to a mere 17 measures, especially ones that are so unequal in scope. Indeed, while some of the measures are intervention measures (prevention of alcoholism, accidents etc.), others are more concerned with the policy or legislative process (e.g., development of concepts or revision of laws).

A similar observation applies to the indicators: out of the 27 indicators that are supposed to enable the Valaisian Parliament to track the effects of its health policy, 16 are output indicators which are indispensable to the management of the service. These output indicators describe either administrative activities, such as improving cost-accounting, progress in hospital planning, drafting laws, publishing reports and allocating resources, e.g., the expenditure per inhabitant for prevention campaigns. If these are disregarded, it emerges that the Valais Parliament really only has 11 indicators for monitoring the effects of its health policy.

However, the danger of information overload (e.g., Mayne, 2007: 97) reveals that it is better to provide parliamentarians with fewer indicators than to submerge them with an excess of indicators which they find difficult to grasp and relate to each other. In the case of Valais, of the 11 indicators provided to Parliament, eight are outcome-based indicators. With one exception (the percentage of population using breast-cancer screening), they either do not concern areas on which Parliament can exert influence (e.g., the Canton's rating in relation to health, which depends on insurance companies' rates of coverage of hospital expenses borne by insurers which are governed by relevant federal policy) or they are too fragmentary to enable Parliament to take any particular action. For example, without information on

causality or attribution, the increase or decrease in narcotics violations does not tell Parliament whether the change is due to specific measures undertaken by the administration (the health sector), or whether the behavioral changes are due to other factors which may not even be mentioned—i.e., increased policing, federal campaigns in this area, etc. Similarly, the number of people who benefit from home help and care is not linked to any objective or norm. For example, a decrease could indicate either that the elderly are in good health or that there has been a transfer to hospitals. In the absence of information on these points, Parliament is unable to adjust the measures or reallocate the resources if necessary.

In reference to the Table 7.1 above, it is interesting to note that Parliament only has three impact-based indicators that concern the preventive or health promotion measures. This finding is similar to other experiences in Switzerland (Rieder/Lehmann, 2002 quoted by Brun/Siegel, 2006: 485; Proeller, 2007: 104-108) and abroad (cf. Furubo et al., 2002: 10). In those studies, as in the case of Valais, the data only superficially address outcomes and impacts.

Furthermore, targets are defined for each of the indicators (for example, the number of prevention campaigns to be implemented, number of accidents, number of acute beds per inhabitant, average duration of stay in acute care). A controlling report specifies whether the targets are fully attained, almost attained or not attained at all. However, nothing indicates to Parliament why targets have been attained or not.

Three factors explain the failure to fulfill an objective. The reform, which aimed to create greater transparency and to strengthen the role of Parliament in particular, has not attained its objectives. Research carried out in the rest of Switzerland (Zürcher, 1999; Horber-Papazian, 1997; Rieder, 2005) and abroad (Greiling, 2006; Pollitt, 2006; Leeuw/Furubo, 2008) points to political, technical and

financial reasons that explain the difficulties encountered by reforms of the type implemented in Valais. Indeed, apart from revealing the inadequacy of the evaluative information, the Valais study identifies three main factors: the lack of openness on part of parliamentarians in relation to political steering; asymmetry in information flow between the executive and Parliament, and fear on the part of each actor of relinquishing its own power.

Parliamentarians Lack Capacity for Political Steering

In Switzerland, the members of cantonal parliaments are not professional politicians. Thus the time at their disposal is limited and this restricts opportunities for participation in public administration training or on issues relating to particular sectors. Moreover, there is 60 percent turnover of the Valais parliament every four years, and this poses difficulties in terms of training parliament as a whole.

Furthermore, the "non-professional" character of Parliament has significant consequences in Valais when objectives and indicators are selected. In theory, Parliament should discuss, propose and approve objectives and indicators and then confirm that its decisions have triggered effects in line with the defined political objectives. In this regard, the definition of indicators and the ensuing steering require methodological skills that non-professionals parliamentarians like those in Valais simply do not possess. More specifically, the formulation of objectives, targets and indicators often presents difficulties. In the context of the health sector, in particular, it may be difficult or impossible to quantify the effect of a policy in the short term that is not merely the reflection of the shorter duration of the relevant performance contracts (annual or quarterly).

In reality, objectives are adopted from laws, and clarified where necessary by the administration. The administration also defines the indicators, and then collects the data. This state of affairs is justified by the professional nature of the administration and its knowledge of the sectors in which it is actively involved.

In addition, the Valaisian Parliament is supported by a poorly resourced parliamentary service. In fact, just one member of the parliamentary service is available to assist Parliament in the formulation of performance contracts and their monitoring. On the executive side, nine staff members work on the management of performance contracts, and performance monitoring managers have been designated for each service.

In this context, it is obvious that no parliamentarian will carry out the above analysis, as it emerged very clearly from the study that the Valaisian parliamentarians have not really adopted a logic of steering. The information they receive is mainly used and discussed by the thematic commissions in the context of the adoption of the budget and of linking inputs to outputs. Evaluative information provided is not discussed in much detail within the Health Commission and for the period under examination (i.e., 2005), the commission did propose altering or adding indicators or targets. Finally, the parliamentary debates show that evaluative information relating to the effects of measures is very rarely referred to in the plenary political debates. On the one hand, this raises the question as to the degree of appropriation of these tools by parliamentarians and their capacity to adopt a steering logic, while on the other hand, it raises the question of their desire for and acceptance of a political debate based on dispassionate and clearly defined indicators.

Beyond the question of the appropriation of these tools, the question of the acceptability of reforms also comes to the fore. Selecting indicators and targets

requires a definition of clear objectives. However, as demonstrated, by the ambitious but essentially vague objective of "improving the health of the population," this clarity is not always sought. It may be possible to obtain a majority regarding the necessity of a particular measure, but it is difficult to reach consensus on a precise objective. In Valais, for example, there may be agreement on the need to monitor professionals in the health sector but not on the scope or nature of this monitoring.

The lack of definition of targets and the inexistence of evaluative information on the effect of a policy give politicians a good deal of room to maneuver, as they cannot be confronted with the real effects of their actions which remain largely unknown to the electorate.

Asymmetry in the Flow of Information between Parliament and the Executive

Numerous studies demonstrate that public administrations, like Valais, select indicators based on access to data and on the usefulness of indicators in relation to their own practices (cf. Metzenbaum, 2006; Knoepfel, 1995: 139; Schmidt, 2008, Proeller, 2007: 108). Two categories of data can be identified in the context of public action. First, there is information relating to services provided by the administration (*outputs*)—these are operational and are generally collected on a routine basis. This information concerns, in particular, the volume and quality of the service, compliance with deadlines and cost of services. Second, the effect-related indicators (outcomes and impacts) must be recorded specifically by the administration. This generates additional work that the administration is little inclined to take on for reasons of time and cost. This, in turn, weakens the possibility of political steering. Parliament is thus dependent on the evaluative information transmitted to it by the administration.

In some cases, the Valaisian administration presented defined objectives to Parliament as having been attained, whereas in reality no information had actually been gathered. For example, an important indicator concerning "the numbers of days spent in medical-social institutions (EMS)" is marked with a green symbol, thus indicating that the objective was attained. However, a closer reading of the management report reveals that this indicator was not in fact surveyed (DSAE, 2005). On the other hand, when objectives were not fulfilled, as confirmed by available information, the administration tended not to inform Parliament. For example, the indicator relating to frequency of calls made to an emergency telephone line shows that the target was not reached, but this information remained at the operational level despite the fact that, by law (Conseil d'Etat du Valais, 2004: 3-4), Parliament was to be informed of all of the indicators relating to impacts and outcomes.

The administration's strategy of withholding information is not unique to Valais. It has been extensively documented in the literature (e.g., Audria, 2004) and explained in terms of the administration's fear of relinquishing its latitude or autonomy. Moreover, in the case of Valais, this was aggravated by a sense that the administration had been duped. Under the terms of the reform, it was proposed that Parliament would grant a degree of autonomy to the administration through multi-year budgets in exchange for the provision of information and completion of additional tasks. In reality, Parliament approved the multi-year budgets for investments, but not for operations, and the administration still has to submit its accounts in the form of cost accounts under budget headings. In addition to feeling that it lost out as a result of the change, in view of the part-time nature of Parliament, the administration—which includes health care experts—fears that parliamentarians do not understand the challenges posed by health policy and are prone to taking

decisions dictated by political opportunity. There is also a concern that parliamentarians will intervene at operational levels without respecting the separation of roles.

All these examples raise questions about the relationship between politics (executive and legislature) and the administration in terms of access to information. In this area, the political arena is dependent on the administration, which in turn holds information and controls how it is collected, processed and viewed. The examples also demonstrate the alliance forged between the administration and the executive in terms of how information is distilled and then provided to Parliament. The process has a tendency to shine a spotlight on results obtained and areas of information that highlight success, convey a positive impression and maximize their room to maneuver. In this context, Parliament is clearly at a disadvantage and in an asymmetric position in terms of access to information and, hence also, in terms of power at its disposal.

Fear of Relinquishing Power

The reforms were adopted through the combined forces of a Parliament anxious to strengthen its supervisory power in a period of financial crisis and of experts in performance monitoring and policy analysis. Together, these efforts should have enabled the entire political-administrative system and Parliament in particular, to steer the effects of their decisions while reassuring themselves of their effectiveness and efficiency. But the reforms have not really succeeded. The main reason is the fear on the part of each protagonist of relinquishing its power. Each actor has positioned itself vis-à-vis the others to optimize gains from the reform or at least maintain the

status quo. According to the analysts' predictions, Parliament should have emerged the stronger from the reform (Horber-Papazian, 1997; Finger, 2001), but this is not the case. Indeed, Parliament was unable to benefit fully from the opportunity to monitor the effects of its decisions by requesting specific information and, based on this information, insisting on indicators that would have served its purpose. Today, everyone—on both the legislative and executive sides—delights in the greater degree of transparency, but in the case of Parliament this transparency is illusory as it is entirely controlled by the executive.

For its part, the executive may deem itself satisfied: various analyses, in particular that carried out by Finger (2001), predicted that the executive would lose the greatest autonomy with the introduction of performance contracts, but this did not happen in the case of the Valaisian executive. In fact, the evaluative information from the administration made it possible to control the administration and the executive were able to request accounts more readily. Furthermore, given the weakness of Parliament, the establishment of specialized commissions enabled members of the executive to win over some of the parliamentarians in advance of the plenary debates. Finally, the government built up its administration by using teams that supervised the definition of indicators and the recording of information, a development that enabled it to play a pivotal role in steering through performance contracts.

On this basis, the administration experienced a double loss. First, it did not attain the promised autonomy with respect to the management of service provision, which Parliament refused in response to significant pressure from the central services (finance, human resource management). These central services quickly opposed the advantages granted to different pilot services in relation to financial and human resource management for fear of relinquishing their own power. Second, the

administration must render its activities more transparent by providing more information about its actions. Despite these two issues, however, the fact remains that the administration still enjoys significant power today thanks to its control over the production of evaluative information. Moreover, politicians come and go, but the administration stays. The capacity to deal with thematic issues is located mainly within the administration. The political level is unable to impose clear and precise indicators on the administration, which generally enables the administration to protect its own autonomy, the extent of which depends on the caliber of the departmental heads and their capacity to derive benefits from the tools at their disposal.

Conclusion: The Power of Illusion—The Political Scientists and Evaluators Got It Wrong

Political scientists and evaluators were convinced that all public action must be based on a theory of action that would enable: analysis-based identification of problems and requirements; associated public target(s); objectives, and appropriate intervention measures. However, as this case study shows, they completely forgot that decisions taken by parliaments in general and the Valaisian Parliament in particular followed a political logic inspired by the outcome of political arbitration rather than rational and systematic choices based on reliable and valid indicators or the results of evaluation.

They also underestimated the administration's capacity for resistance in the face of any reforms that could threaten its room to maneuver by forcing it to provide information on its activities and thus strengthening the control imposed on it by other forces. In the context of a political system that provides ample space for non-

professional actors who, in most cases, are less skilled and knowledgeable than professional ones when it comes to management topics and tools, the Valais administration enjoys even more latitude than it might in other systems.

The political scientists and policy evaluators have also forgotten that the introduction of a culture of evaluation, and hence also of adjustment takes time. The success of both processes depends on the age and educational background of the parliamentarians involved.

Under the *illusion of expectations***,** political scientists and evaluators totally ignored the possibility that the political class (executive and legislative) deliberately avoided the adoption of clear objectives and indicators and the systematic use of evaluative information in order to preserve their autonomy vis-à-vis the electorate, to conceal dysfunctions in the system and to avoid the need to be accountable. This also begs the question of the purpose of political action; i.e., to preserve or increase political power or to respond to requirements, resolve problems and be accountable to civil society for the actions of politicians. This, in turn, raises questions about the critical response of the electorate. Highly reactive when it comes to expressing opposition to increased taxes or charges, the electorate expresses little opposition when it comes to enquiring about the effects of measures targeting the population, despite the fact, moreover, that citizens are expected to finance these measures or express a view on them in the context of Swiss democracy. Parliamentary management and steering tools were strengthened at federal level following a crisis of confidence between Parliament and the government (Urio, 1972). Thus, in the age of the general adoption of the process in Valais, the question arises as if a crisis should arise between parliament and government or the political classes and citizens in order

to create sufficient pressure for an effective and meaningful steering of public action that will overcome the pressure to maintain power. I do not think so.

I simply believe that Swiss political scientists and evaluators were mistaken, and deluded in their belief that change was taking place because they wanted things to progress too quickly. The fact that evaluation has found its way into legislation does not mean that a culture of evaluation exists. And it goes without saying that, today and in the future, evaluative information will only be part of the information available to decision makers.

Would the power games have played out differently if a credible, experienced external evaluator had been involved in the process?

Power struggles would likely have been stirred up in any event if Parliament alone and on his own had commissioned an evaluator with the aim of rebalancing the information flow, conscious of the importance of reliable evaluative information for the pursuit of its objectives and the readjustment of its policy.

If the executive had been responsible for the appointment of the evaluator, it could have sent out a signal for the need to seek balance in the management of information and the administration would have seen its room for maneuver reduced, especially if the appointment had been the result of a process of political consensus between the executive and the legislature. These assumptions demonstrate that the involvement of an external evaluator would not have reduced the power games.

Indeed, if the evaluator had wanted to impose his or her rationality, it would have radicalized the position of the actors involved. It would have fostered the creation of a common front against the evaluator who would have become, in turn, the scapegoat of a group of actors definitively resistant to any change. Finally, at best, if the political will to adopt the logic of steering had preceded the evaluator's mandate,

or could have been generated during it, it could have enabled a reconfiguration of the balance of power, thus giving Parliament the possibility of regaining its lost influence on policy. By concluding on this point, I reveal that I am myself swayed by the evaluative rationality.

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Endnotes

[i] I would like to thank Caroline Jacot-Descombes for her involvement in the research of information, which was indispensable to the writing of this chapter.

[ii] The task of controlling is (a) to help define and set objectives, (b) to develop and systematically measure and verify the processes and procedures put into place to achieve these objectives, (c) to compare actual results against plans, as well as (d) to compare performance with that of exemplary organizations considered "pioneers" in the field in order to identify potential improvements (bench-marking) and (e) detect and diagnose any discrepancies and/or problems early enough so that adjustments can be made (early warning system) (OFSP 2004). Controlling is defined by the Valais Council of State as: "a steering and management instrument of the parliament, government, departments and services. It is a management instrument for use by political decision-makers and senior administrative personnel which should be distinguished from control activities which primarily concern the verification of legality and regularity." (Conseil d'Etat, 2004 : 9).

[iii] *Loi concernant les clauses expérimentales pour les unites pilotes du projet de réforme cantonale "Administration 2000" du 29 mars 1996, RS/VS 615.1*/Law relating to the experimental clauses for the pilot units of the "Administration 2000" cantonal reform project of 29 March 1996.

[iv] I differentiate between three types of indicators: output (services), outcome, impact and adopt following definitions of the indicators (OECD, 2002): Outputs: "The products, capital goods and services which result from a development intervention; may also include changes resulting from the intervention which are relevant to the achievement of outcomes." Outcome: "The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's output." Impact: "Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended."