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The evaluability of local policies : an application to Smart City public policies



Research Seminar – 18 nov. 2024

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Context and Issues

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- ❑ For more than 20 years, the **evaluation of public policies has been omnipresent in the discourse of public players**
- ❑ The issue has been addressed in **a number of academic studies**, but there is no stabilised definition of the notion of evaluation, even if it is possible to observe **a convergence of authors on the definition and issues of local public policy evaluation**

*Evaluation is « an activity that aims **to produce knowledge about public actions**, particularly with regard to their **effects**, with the dual aim of enabling **citizens** to appreciate their value, and helping **decision-makers** to improve their **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coh rence and impact** »*

(Fouquet 2014)



- ❑ However, there is still **very little work and research on the implementation of evaluation**, particularly in the local public sector

« A **fragile institutionalisation** [of evaluation], both **shifting** and **dispersed** »
from one sector to another and from one institution to another »
(Lacouette-Fougère et Lascoumes 2013)

- ❑ An **emerging literature on the conditions for the evaluability of public policies**, the aim of which is **to help overcome the current disconnect between the theory/discourse and practice of evaluation**, by means of an analysis focusing on the **organisational** and **methodological** dimensions of the approach



- ❑ An **interesting case study in the success of the Smart City concept** worldwide and in France : more than 200 Smart City public policies (DataPublica et KPMG 2021)

*“Smart City public policies are **a set of actions and tools** deployed by one or several public collectivities, making use of **digital technologies** and **massive data** in a consistent and organized manner to **serve the ambition to create multi-dimensional public value**, implemented by internal and/or external actors with public and/or public-private funding.” (Frucquet et al. 2023)*

- ❑ An academic literature that calls for **an analysis of the public value actually created by these policies** (Rodríguez Bolívar 2019, Gil-Garcia et al. 2023)
- ❑ The evaluation of Smart City public policies presents **a double challenge** :
 - Their **scope** : Economy, Population, Governance, Mobility, Environment, Habitat (Giffinger et al. 2007)
 - Identify **directly attributable results and impacts**



Context and Issues

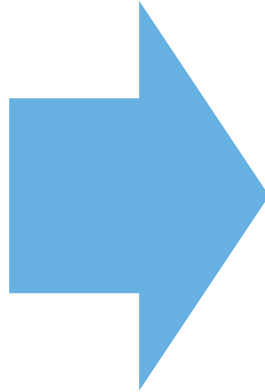
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Research question :

What are the prerequisites for evaluating local public policies ?



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□ An **analytical framework rooted** in :

- The **literature on public policy evaluation**, its history and the difficulties encountered (Gibert 2003, Vedung 2017, Iga 2008, Roch 2009)
- Since the 1970s, specific work on the question of evaluability has advocated **pre-assessment of evaluability** (Horst et al. 1974), the stages of which were subsequently specified and tested on various public policies (Smith 1989, Méasson 2005, Dunn 2008, Epstein 2010)
- The contributions of **neo-institutional theory** to analysing **the risks of decoupling** (Meyer et Rowan 1977) in the creation and implementation of conditions for the evaluability of public policies



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❑ A **4 dimensional** analysis framework :

Context

The context investigated by the public policy, which must be able **to be characterised very precisely**

Objectives

The objectives of the policy being pursued, paying particular attention to the extent to which they are **clear and accepted by those involved in terms of results and impact on stakeholders**

Tools

The **management tools** used to evaluate the policy, by observing the types of **indicators** planned and **the degree of balance between means/resources, outputs, and effects/impacts**

Time

The time required of the evaluation, which must be **an integral part of the management of the public policy** being evaluated, in order **to successively manage the deployment and capitalisation phases**



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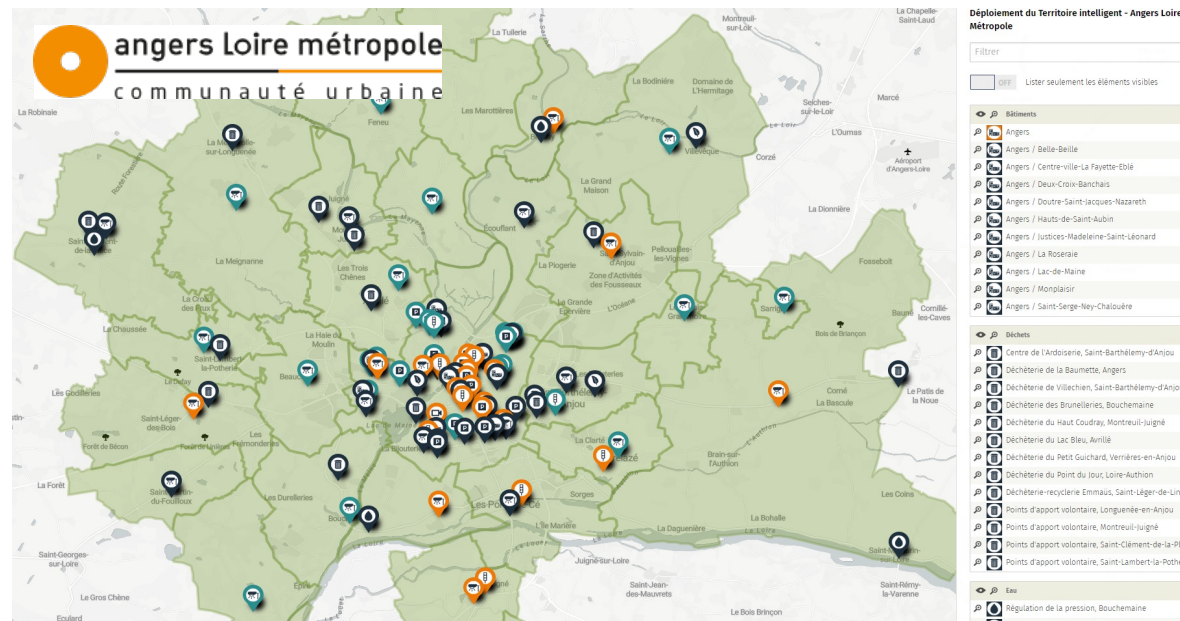
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- ❑ A single case study in the form of **research-intervention** (Capalletti 2009) as part of **an agreement between Angers Loire Métropole and the GIS OPTIMA (2023-2026)**
- ❑ « **Angers Territoire Intelligent (TI)** » : a benchmark project in the deployment of the Smart City in France (Soupizet 2020, DataPublica et KPMG 2021)



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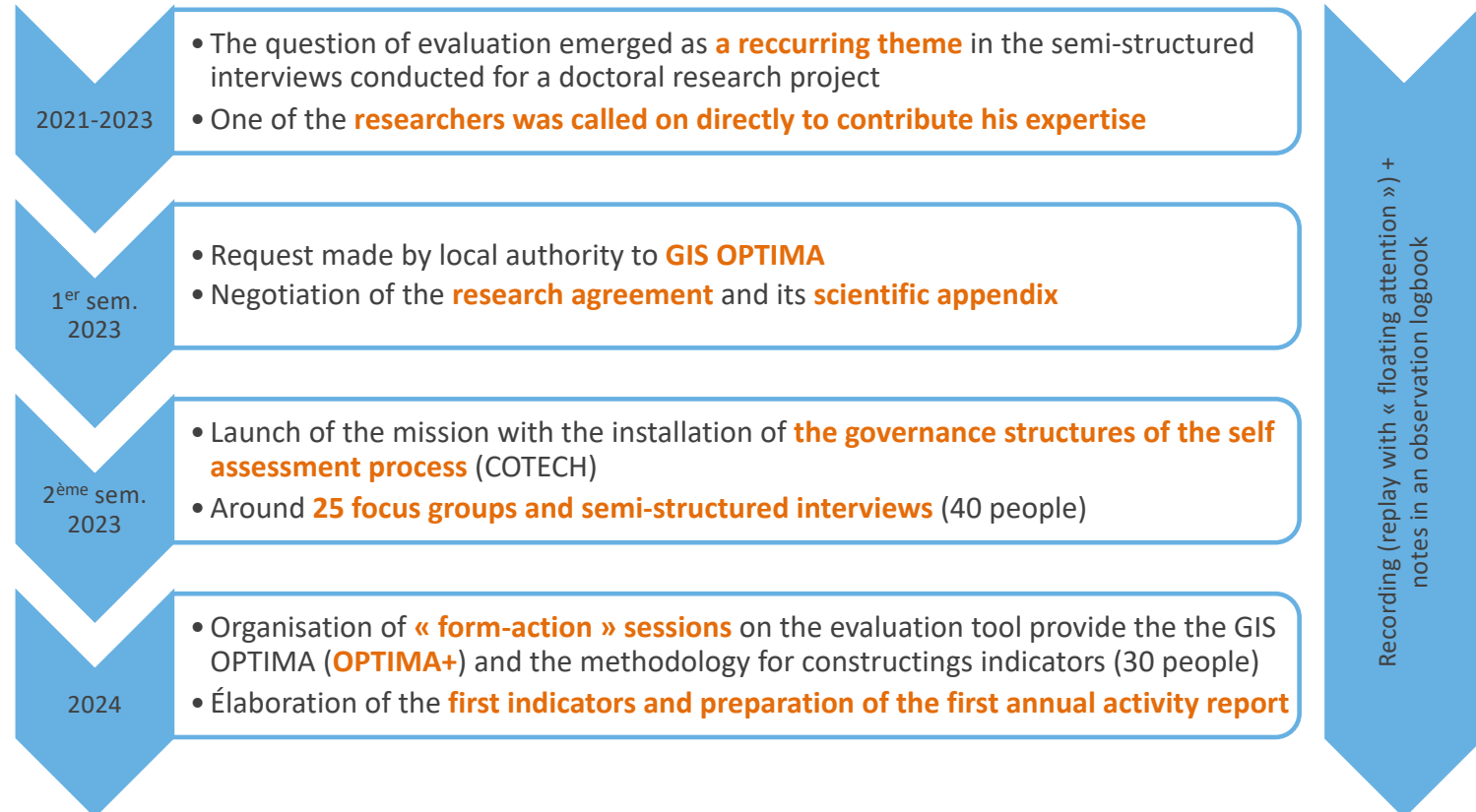
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□ A longitudinal multi-media data collection process



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□ Results confirm **the relevance of the proposed evaluability criteria**

Context

- « Territoire Intelligent » : a project clearly identified as a **political priority** for the 2020-2026 mandate
- A **Global Public Performance Contract** concluded for the period 2020-2032
- Ad hoc **governance structure** (steering committee, team, pilots, etc.)
- Culture and habits of **working together on the Smart City policy**
- An **evaluation ambition set at the outset of the project**

Objectives

- A **permanent vacillation in the discourse** of the players between **very / too precise objectives**, the achievement of which is sometimes not directly linked to the Smart City policy alone (e.g. energy performance of buildings) and **very broad objectives** « accelerate the ecological transition », « improve quality of life », « develop new uses », « involve local authorities and residents », « initiate the managerial transformation of the local authority »



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☐ Results confirm **the relevance of the proposed evaluability criteria**

Tools

- Tools focused on **the administrative and financial management of performance in the contractual framework**
- An **initial assessment carried out using the socio-economic net present value method** « *which (...) in practical terms had difficulty gaining the support of those involved, be they elected representatives or local authority technicians* » (A-501)
- Teams in **difficulty to assess the effects/impacts of the Smart City policy**
- An initial survey of the population, but with **very generic questions and therefore no convincing results**
- GIS OPTIMA provides two tools : **OPTIMA+** and **Donner mon avis** (Giving my opinion)



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☐ Results confirm **the relevance of the proposed evaluability criteria**

Time

- Observation of **discrepancies between the agenda of the “Smart City project” team**, which is punctuated by the contractual deadlines, **and the political, strategic and operational agendas of other elected representatives and business line departments**
- Affirmation by elected representatives and senior management of their **desire to work over the long term and support for the approach proposed by the GIS OPTIMA of working within a self-assessment logic** : *"it is important to have an iterative approach in relation to objectives and indicators; the indicators will create the objectives; do not focus on operational objectives"* (COTECH-20-12-23).
- Organisation of **"form-actions"** supplemented by **personalised support interviews** carried out by OPTIMA teams to encourage stakeholders to adopt the evaluation methodology.



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□ The results have led us **to add to the list of evaluability criteria**

Segmentation

Accountability

- We observed an **ambiguity about the recognition of “Territoire Intelligent” as a public policy and about its scope** : actions that fall within the scope of “Territoire Intelligent” as a public policy, but which are not carried out within the framework of the global contract, are carried out by the business divisions with expectations in terms of evaluation.
- Need to **identify the local authority's strategic plans to which the Smart City policy contributes**
- Significant **ambiguity as to who is responsible for the actions that make up the Smart City policy**



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Governance

- Decision **to extend the COTECH** initially set up to supervise the evaluation process to all the business divisions and **to ensure consistency between organisation and evaluation**
- Implementation of **a process to update the initial segmentation**, which focused on the functional scope of the global contract (buildings, green spaces, public lighting, control centre, digital twin, etc.), and **move towards a segmentation of the entire Smart City public policy**

Resources

- Observation of **a discrepancy between the will and ambition of the elected representatives and General Management to move forward with the evaluation of the Smart City policy, and the reality of their ability to mobilise the necessary resources**
- The evaluation process is **weakened by various strategic concerns, including those intrinsic to the implementation of the Smart City policy**



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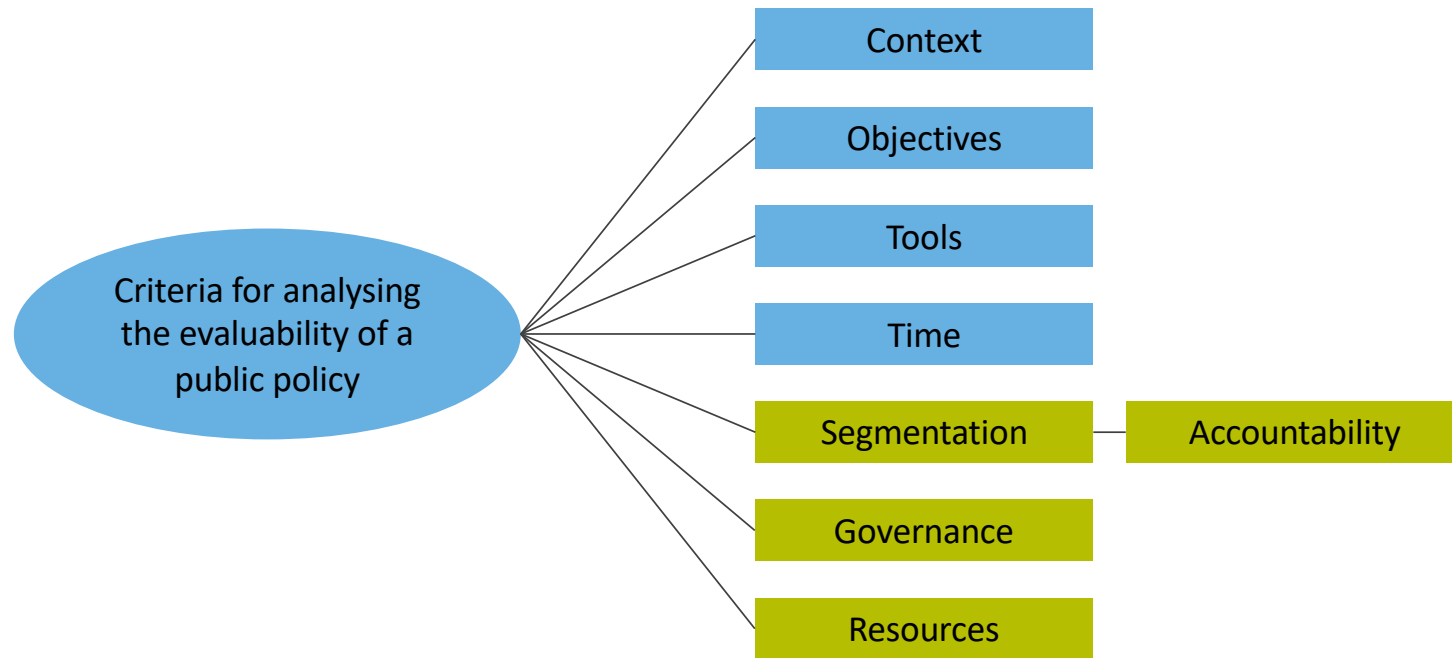
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- ❑ A theoretical and managerial **contribution to the analysis of the prerequisites for the evaluation of public policies by proposing a detailed framework for analysing their evaluability**



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- ❑ Results which are **consistent with the literature on the evaluation of Smart City policies** (Smart City Institute 2021)
- ❑ Interesting results **from a methodological point of view**, given **the importance of the researchers' direct contribution to the development of the organisation in its relationship with evaluation and also to the collective narrative around "Territoire Intelligent"**

EXAMPLE : Evaluation of the deployment of connected objects as part of an experiment

"The target value? That's something we didn't necessarily discuss at the start of the experiment" (EA-22-02-24)



By action, formalization of :

- Objectives
- Pilot structures and agents
- Implementing structures
- Observation periods
- Indicators of achievement, means/resources and effects/impacts with actual values/target values

Appropriation

Institutionalisation



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☐ Results to be confirmed by studies:

- On **other Smart City politics**, to identify any discrepancies or new criteria to be taken into account
- On **other public policies** in order to observe whether there is a correlation between the type of public policy being evaluated and the conditions under which it can be evaluated.





Thank you for your attention

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