

# **Une économie politique sociologique : le cas du gouvernement européen des industries**

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## **Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

Tout en partageant le point de départ de cette Section thématique qui regrette que les chercheurs en sciences sociales abordant l'activité économique le fassent d'une manière excessivement disciplinaire (François, 2010), nous considérons que la science politique est ici particulièrement coupable d'un délaissement dramatique de ce champ d'étude. Or, cette situation découle d'un problème de construction de l'objet auquel on ne peut remédier qu'à travers l'établissement de grilles d'analyse qui mettent au centre la place essentielle que prend le politique dans l'activité économique. Ce problème d'objet trouve ses racines dans les conceptualisations fragiles et flottantes de « l'économie » et du « politique ».

Concernant le premier de ces termes, le plus souvent les politistes adoptent sans sourciller des définitions avancées spontanément par les acteurs commerciaux et publics. Par conséquent, on part bille en tête analyser « la politique économique » nationale, européenne ou régionale, ou l'une des dizaines de politiques publiques « économiques » sectorielles affichées par divers pouvoirs publics. Or, il s'avère beaucoup plus salubre de démarrer une recherche sur une activité économique à partir d'une cartographie disciplinée des institutions -comprise comme les ensembles de règles, de normes et de conventions (Hall et Taylor, 2009)- qui la structurent. Le gouvernement de l'économie ne se réduit donc pas aux politiques publiques. Ces dernières s'inscrivent plutôt, et avec plus ou moins d'effets, dans des « ordres institutionnels » verticaux et horizontaux de l'activité économique. Partant de là, notre objet d'étude générique est devenu l'étude des processus perpétuels d'institutionnalisation, de désinstitutionnalisation des ordres institutionnels qui structurent l'activité économique, c'est-à-dire les actions qui relèvent de la production et de la commercialisation des biens et des services, ainsi que de leur capitalisation.

Une telle construction de l'objet met surtout la recherche en bonne posture pour développer et tester des hypothèses concernant ce qui fait changer ou reproduire les composantes de ces ordres institutionnels. A ce titre, la vive concurrence entre les échelles de gouvernement qui marque l'activité économique actuelle, invite la recherche en science politique à proposer des problématisations et des enquêtes rigoureuses. Au cours d'un projet de recherche ANR sur le gouvernement européen des industries (GEDI) qui s'est terminé fin 2012, une grille d'analyse de cette nature a été développée. Présentée ici dans une première partie, cette grille est ensuite illustrée dans la Partie II avec des résultats empiriques tirés de notre étude de la relation entre l'échelle européenne, quatre industries (automobile, vin, médicaments, aquaculture) et quatre

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<sup>1</sup> La deuxième partie de ce texte est tirée de la conclusion générale d'un ouvrage collectif qui devrait bientôt paraître (Jullien et Smith, 2013). En commençant cette communication j'avais voulu reprendre ce texte en français et le réduire sensiblement mais, malheureusement, j'ai été pris par le temps. Toutes mes excuses donc pour le passage long en

régulations transindustrie (concurrence, emploi, environnement et commerce extérieur).

Au total, et par rapport à la problématique de cette Section thématique, le point de vue global défendu dans ce texte est le suivant : tout en étant séduit et largement convaincu par les analyses de l'économie proposées par les sociologues (Bourdieu, 2000 ; Lebaron, 2000 ; Fligstein 2001 et 2008 ; François, 2011), nous considérons que les politistes peuvent et doivent réinvestir ce domaine d'étude sous un angle complémentaire afin de mettre en évidence l'activité politique qui participe fortement à sa structuration.

## **I. Le gouvernement de l'activité économique : un objet de recherche de sociologie politique**

L'approche proposée ici s'appuie sur une riche littérature sur les économies et leur structuration politique. Au sein de celle-ci, de nombreux chercheurs ont eu raison de souligner le rôle joué par les institutions au sein des marchés et des rapports entre les acteurs publics et privés. Toutefois, cette littérature comporte aussi un certain nombre de faiblesses qui proviennent de définitions insuffisamment précises de deux termes clés : « les économies » et « le politique ». Ces derniers sont constamment évoqués mais rarement utilisés comme des outils analytiques (1). En s'appuyant sur des approches sociologiques en science politique (Mangenot & Rowell, 2010), ainsi que sur des collaborations de longue durée avec des économistes « hétérodoxes » (Jullien et Smith, 2008 et 2011), nous présenterons ensuite une approche générique du gouvernement des activités économiques conçue afin de préciser un regard d'économie politique fortement marqué par la sociologie, mais néanmoins distinct (2).

### **1. Les approches existantes de l'économie et du politique : un apport considérable mais limité**

Jusqu'ici la recherche s'est investie lourdement dans la définition de ce qui doit être expliqué : le gouvernement des économies, c'est-à-dire leur ordonnancement (Lagroye, 1997). Malgré les apparences, nous ne pouvons pas dire la même chose du politique qui, pourtant, explique ce gouvernement et sa structuration.

*Le gouvernement de quoi ? Les économies, les politiques économiques et l'Etat*

Curieusement ce n'est pas au sein de la discipline de l'Economie que l'on peut trouver les définitions les plus robustes et les plus utiles du gouvernement des économies. Tout d'abord, le versant néo-classique de cette discipline ne s'intéresse pas à cette question car il considère que ce sont les marchés, les prix et les contrats qui les structurent (Lebaron, 2000). Ensuite, même les économistes qui ont consacré leurs carrières à contester l'hégémonie néo-classique en soulignant l'importance d'autres institutions que les contrats (Boyer, 2004 ; Jessop et Sum, 2006 ; Amable, 2003) finissent par réduire le gouvernement de l'activité économique à un processus désincarné, c'est-à-dire dominé par une théorie des « intérêts » dérivé du déterminisme matériel.

Heureusement cette inattention aux processus de gouvernement de la part des économistes est largement compensée par les chercheurs formés en sociologie et, dans un moindre mesure, en science politique. Souvent animés par l'institutionnalisme historique ou sociologique, ceux-ci s'opposent presque tous au déterminisme matériel. Pour autant, les processus de gouvernement demeurent peu étudiés en tant que tels.

En ce qui concerne la Sociologie, depuis les années 1980 cette discipline s'est investie lourdement dans les études empiriques et la théorisation de l'économie. En particulier, les sociologues ont montré en quoi les marchés sont structurés par les institutions qui favorisent leur reproduction et rendent difficile leur changement. Dans cette perspective, Neil Fligstein (2001) a souligné plus particulièrement que les marchés ne dureraient pas sans « l'architecture » fournie par les institutions. Plus précisément, Fligstein conceptualise les marchés comme des « champs » qui sont les structures sociales qui rendent l'activité économique relativement prévisible pour les représentants d'entreprises qui, selon lui, cherchent davantage la stabilité, voire la survie, plutôt que la simple maximisation de leurs bénéfices. Comme pour Pierre Bourdieu (2000 ; Lebaron, 2000), ces champs sont façonnés par leurs acteurs dominants. Mais d'autres ont montré qu'ils le sont aussi par les institutions qu'une sociologie davantage institutionnaliste, voire interactionniste, a permis d'analyser de plus près (Dobbin, 1994 ; François, 2011).

Nonobstant cet acquis de la sociologie économique contemporaine, elle connaît aussi un certain nombre de limitations importantes. Tout d'abord, les auteurs comme Fligstein dépendent presque exclusivement de données quantitatives (2008). Cette voie de recherche empirique laisse les acteurs qui bâtissent et reproduisent les institutions marchandes largement inexplorés. Les sociologues qui, au contraire, analysent le rôle de tels agents (François, 2011) tendent fortement à braquer les projecteurs au sein des firmes, laissant ainsi de côté les représentants des groupes d'intérêts, des interprofessions et des pouvoirs publics. Enfin, si Bourdieu a raison de souligner l'impact des « règles du champ bureaucratique » sur l'activité économique, il fait fausse route en considérant que « l'Etat » se situe « à l'extérieur du champ des entreprises » (2000, p. 250). Il est plus salutaire de considérer que le gouvernement de l'activité économique est constamment coproduit par les agents des entreprises et leurs interlocuteurs des pouvoirs publics.

Une des raisons qui explique cette occultation du gouvernement de l'activité économique en sociologie est sans doute à trouver dans une division de travail scientifique qui laisse cette population d'acteurs à la science politique. Cette discipline génère beaucoup d'informations sur l'agrégation des, et la confrontation entre, les « intérêts » des travailleurs, du capital et des pouvoirs publics qui a lieu pendant la production des actions et des outils de gouvernement économique. Depuis une quinzaine d'années, cet angle de recherche a notamment été recadré autour de l'analyse des politiques publiques en général et d'une littérature concernant « les variétés de capitalisme » (Hall et Soskice, 2001) en particulier. La problématique dominante a consisté à savoir si les Etats nations occidentaux continuent à se distinguer en reproduisant les modes d'action publique nationaux particuliers. En analysant soit les phénomènes de « convergence » (Büthe et Mattli, 2011), soit de dissonance (Thatcher, 2007) inter-nationaux, ce courant de recherche a notamment produit les comparaisons

de politiques sectorielles (ex. de la formation professionnelle : Culpepper, 2003) et des Etats providence (Thelen, 2010).

En dépit des qualités de ces travaux de politistes, ils connaissent au moins trois limitations importantes. Premièrement, tout en étant regroupés sous le drapeau de « l'institutionnalisme », des différences épistémologiques irréconciliables séparent ceux plus proches des choix rationnels (ex. Thatcher), ceux qui se disent ouverts à la sociologie mais qui retombent souvent dans les analyses rationalistes (ex. Thelen, Mahoney) et les constructivistes cohérents (ex. Hay). Deuxièmement, la plupart de tels chercheurs sont beaucoup moins animés par la question de comment se gouverne l'activité économique que par celle de la reproduction des économies *nationales*. Cette dernière question est bien entendu légitime. Mais en naturalisant l'échelle de l'Etat nation elle tend à minorer la découverte empirique de l'ensemble des institutions qui cadrent chaque aspect de l'activité économique contemporaine. Enfin, ce point a un lien fort avec un problème encore plus fondamental partagé par la quasi-totalité des économistes, sociologues et politistes que nous venons de citer : l'absence d'une définition rigoureuse et dynamique de ce qu'est le politique.

**Le politique** : variable analytique ou mot valise descriptif ?

En effet, et en dépit du caractère fondamental de ce concept pour la recherche sur l'économie, le politique est généralement étudié sous deux angles problématiques.

Le premier, celui des institutionnalistes formalistes, réduit le politique aux **partis politiques au pouvoir** et aux « **politiques économiques** » qu'ils construisent et mettent en œuvre (Molina et Rhodes, 1996). Malheureusement, cette définition « de sens commun », voire anthropomorphique, est reprise sans sourciller par bien d'autres qui considèrent que les économies nationales sont gouvernées par « **les blocs sociaux dominants** » (Amable et Palombarini, 2009). D'autres vont un pas plus loin en incluant dans de tels « blocs » des **leaders des grandes firmes et des groupes d'intérêt** (McDermott, 2007). Plus généralement, cette définition du politique est omniprésente dans les recherches sur l'économie en analyse de l'action publique. Nonobstant les autres atouts d'une telle approche, elle a comme **postulat que les économies sont avant tout structurées par les politiques publiques**. Il est toutefois plus salutaire de considérer que **les économies et leur gouvernement se façonnent autour d'institutions provoquées par des combinaisons variables d'actions privées, collectives et publiques**.

La deuxième définition du **politique** couramment utilisée dans les études de l'économie l'assimile au **conflit**. Par exemple, Hall et Thelen considèrent que des coalitions d'acteurs participent à des actions « politiques » au sens que « *it entails conflict designed to test the limits of cooperative arrangements and mobilization to bring other actors in line with those arrangements* » (2009, p. 13). Ici **on réduit donc le politique aux acteurs qui sont prêts à s'engager dans une activité conflictuelle** afin de changer ou de reproduire les institutions. Mais une telle définition est si imprécise qu'elle n'a aucune utilité pour la recherche en économie politique.

Au total, il est évident que de nombreux chercheurs ont contribué à générer un stock précieux d'informations sur le fonctionnement et la structuration de l'économie. Toutefois, faute de réflexions informées par la sociologie sur leurs fondements et leurs

causes, les définitions problématiques à la fois de l'économie et du politique tendent aujourd'hui à déboucher sur des programmes de recherche et des publications tronqués.

## 2. L'approche **POGUE** (*The politics of governing economic activity*)

Afin de bâtir une approche alternative de l'économie politique, il est tout d'abord nécessaire de partir d'une épistémologie constructiviste qui intègre les leçons clés d'un institutionnalisme dit historique ou sociologique. Sur cette base solide, nous proposerons ensuite une thèse centrale et une méthode de recherche construites autour d'une **conceptualisation du « travail politique »**.

*Fondements théoriques : constructivisme, institutionnalisme historique et sociologique*

En phase avec des politistes (Hay, 2006 et 2007 ; Mangenot et Rowell, 2010 ; Abdelal, Blyth et Parsons, 2010), des sociologies de l'économie (Dobbin, 1994 ; François, 2011) et certains économistes (ex. Robert Boyer, 2004), notre approche adopte explicitement et constamment une épistémologie constructiviste qui conduit à réfuter toute analyse basée sur un déterminisme matériel qui réduit l'économie politique au simple résultat de la confrontation des « intérêts » que l'on suppose motiver les acteurs (Gourevitch, 2005; Amable et Palombrini, 2009). A l'opposé d'une telle démarche, le constructivisme qui nous anime oblige à **découvrir les représentations sociales présentes au sein et autour du gouvernement de l'activité économique, et surtout comment les acteurs concernés cherchent à les « naturaliser » au cours de leurs interactions et interdépendances**. Or, de telles tentatives n'ont rien d'anarchiques. Elles ont lieu autour des tentatives de changer ou de reproduire les institutions que les acteurs jugent saillantes dans chaque domaine économique étudié. Du point de vue analytique, allier une épistémologie constructiviste à un institutionnalisme compatible (Hay, 2006b) débouche sur une ontologie qui postule que :

- les enjeux du gouvernement de l'économie sont des construits politiques. En étant **contingents** ils doivent par conséquent être étudiés comme les résultats d'échanges et de luttes inter-acteurs ;
- cette contingence n'est pas délimitée simplement par les institutions renforcées par la menace des **sanctions** (notamment celles liées au droit), mais aussi par de la **cognition** et des **symboles** institutionnalisés.

Afin d'étudier cette économie politique là, les projecteurs doivent être braqués sur une économie qui s'analyse autour de quatre concepts : les ordres institutionnels, leurs rapports institués, les régulations trans-industries et les échelles de gouvernement.

i) Le point de départ ontologique de notre approche consiste à considérer que chaque industrie est structurée par les institutions qui, ensemble, composent son **« ordre institutionnel »** (OI). Ces institutions constituent non seulement des contraintes sur l'activité productive et commerciale, en lui fournissant un cadre et donc une certaine prévisibilité, mais elles sont également les conditions indispensables pour la durabilité d'une telle activité. Autrement dit, celle-ci est « régularisée » (Boyer, 2004) par une activité politique qui consiste à produire, à reproduire ou à changer les institutions de l'industrie en question.

ii) Si l'OI d'une industrie possède forcément une singularité, il est tout de même comparable à d'autres parce que chacun des ordres contient les mêmes quatre « Rapports institués » au sein desquels se régulent ses enjeux de finance, d'emploi, d'achat (*sourcing*) et de commercialisation (Jullien, 2011). Plus précisément, chaque RI se construit et prend ses effets à travers les institutions qui lui sont propres et les relations entre les acteurs qui les ont façonnées ou les ont reproduites. Certains acteurs sont présents dans tous les RI d'une industrie, tandis que d'autres ne le sont que dans un, deux ou trois RI. Ce qui importe surtout est de considérer que le changement au sein d'une industrie est très rarement provoqué à l'échelle de l'OI tout entier. Il démarre généralement au sein d'un RI avant d'avoir un impact « par contagion » sur les autres. Plus au fond encore, et contrairement à ce que postule l'économie néo-classique, raisonner ainsi permet de saisir que chaque RI d'une industrie n'est jamais en état d'équilibre : il est au contraire toujours en train d'être institutionnalisé, désinstitutionnalisé ou réinstitutionnalisé.



iii) Si chaque OI industriel dispose donc d'une certaine autonomie, il est évident que chacun d'entre eux n'est indépendant ni d'autres OI industriels, ni des régulations transversales qui s'appliquent de manière horizontale à plusieurs, voire à la quasi-totalité, des industries. Sur le premier point, par exemple, il est aisé d'imaginer et d'étudier les recoupements entre l'OI de l'acier et celui de l'industrie automobile. Toutefois, prendre en compte les régulations trans-industries telles que celle de la monnaie ou de la concurrence inter-firme nécessite une clarification supplémentaire. Si formellement et légalement de telles règles « s'imposent » aux OI industriels, dans les faits les représentants de ces derniers cherchent constamment à obtenir des applications, et si possible des dérogations, spécifiques à leur propre industrie. C'est ainsi, par exemple, que pendant de longues années les industries agricoles américaine et européenne ont pu échapper aux règles du GATT sur le commerce international.

iv) Cet exemple empirique nous rappelle également que la régulation des industries implique toujours, et a toujours impliqué, plusieurs échelles d'action publique, collective et privée<sup>2</sup>. Avec la montée en puissance d'organisations internationales, et notamment l'OMC, l'échelle mondiale devient de plus en plus évidente et, généralement, puissante. Mais elle ne prend ses effets qu'en s'enchevêtrant avec les échelles européenne, nationales et infranationales (Wolfe, 2005). Pour cette raison, nous considérons qu'il importe d'étudier de près chaque RI d'une industrie afin de cerner ce qui se régule à chaque échelle, ainsi que les luttes autour des tentatives de passage de pouvoir d'une échelle à une autre.

En résumé, en s'articulant les uns aux autres, ces quatre concepts constituent la base théorique de l'économie politique proposée. Partant de là, et à l'aide de la sociologie politique, le défi de la recherche devient l'identification de ce qui fait changer, ou pas, ses institutions et leurs rapports respectifs.

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<sup>2</sup> Pour nous, une échelle de régulation est toute à la fois un espace de calcul économique, un espace de légitimation politique et une juridiction – comprise comme un espace de droit et de politiques publiques (Smith, 2011).

Thèse centrale : le « travail politique » comme la cause de la reproduction ou du changement

Si, comme nous venons d'établir, les acteurs sont à la racine du gouvernement de l'activité économique, la variable développée pour expliquer qui détient le pouvoir dans chaque cas doit s'appuyer sur une définition dynamique de la politique. En effet, comme le précise Colin Hay (2007, p. 66-7), « la capacité de l'agence », définie comme les pratiques des acteurs en vue d'un but qui à tout moment peut devenir « stratégique », constitue un trait général du politique. Cette capacité d'agence « oppose le politique au destin » (« *counterposes politics and fate* ») en soulignant que le premier est un univers où « la contingence et la délibération » dominent « la nécessité » fonctionnelle (Hay, 2007, p. 79). Par conséquent, le politique ne doit pas être réduite à ce que font les élus et les administrations. Fondamentalement, il recouvre les choix collectifs concernant l'allocation des ressources qui, selon les modes variés à saisir par voie d'enquêtes, impliquent de la réflexion, de la délibération et de l'action stratégique.

Bien entendu, les personnes et les organisations qui cherchent à participer à la politique sont armées de répertoires de ressources asymétriques, ainsi que d'interprétations de leurs intérêts et des biens collectifs différentes. Néanmoins, si on part du postulat que les choix collectifs sont contingents, le but de la recherche devient la découverte de ce qui a structuré les participations à ces choix des acteurs étudiés. Plutôt que réduire cette question concernant les choix à des intérêts supposés des acteurs, notre approche considère que de tels choix sont 1) le résultat d'interactions sociales et 2) leur cause en est toujours des valeurs, c'est-à-dire les principes qui conduisent un acteur à définir ce qui est « bien » et « mal » (Muller, 1995). Ce point est crucial parce que, si une multitude de chercheurs constructivistes ont cherché à définir et à étudier le rôle des « idées » au sein de l'action sociale, économique et politique (Blyth, 2002 ; Parsons, 2003), peu de ces entreprises scientifiques soulignent clairement que ce sont les valeurs qui se trouvent au cœur des « cartes » cognitives et symboliques des acteurs. En s'appuyant sur la sociologie weberienne, l'hypothèse centrale développée ici est que dans le gouvernement de l'activité économique c'est à partir des valeurs qu'émergent les propositions de critères de jugement utilisés ensuite pour établir non seulement les priorités et leur hiérarchisation, mais aussi des liens dans les chaînes de raisonnement qui sont mobilisés dans les argumentaires en faveur du changement ou de la reproduction institutionnelle. C'est pour cette raison que nous conservons le terme « politique » pour saisir les actions qui, au nom des valeurs, cherche à institutionnaliser, à désinstitutionnaliser ou à réinstitutionnaliser les règles, les normes et les conventions qui structurent le gouvernement de l'activité économique (Jullien et Smith, 2011). Plus précisément, nous considérons que cette dernière rencontre la politique chaque fois que les acteurs cherchent à changer ou à reproduire les institutions qui les concernent sur la base de ce que Weber a appelé leur « rationalité substantive », c'est-à-dire leurs points de référence et leurs jugements concernant ce qui est « bien » ou « mal » (Kalberg, 2010, p. 128-131).

Or, faire ce lien entre la reproduction ou le changement institutionnel et les valeurs permet de souligner que ces dernières ne flottent pas sans points de fixation au sein des ordres institutionnels et des espaces politiques. Au contraire, les valeurs « vivent » lorsqu'elles sont au cœur des mobilisations que leurs détenteurs estiment appropriées pour réaliser leurs fins respectives. C'est la raison pour laquelle nous avons développé le

concept de « travail politique »<sup>3</sup> afin de capter le rôle causal joué par la mobilisation des valeurs au sein et autour de l'activité économique, et ceci pour déplacer ou stabiliser les constructions de « la réalité économique » telle qu'elle est, et telle qu'elle devrait être. En procédant ainsi pour changer ou reproduire les institutions, les acteurs cherchent en même temps à construire ou à renforcer leur propre légitimité à être associés à ces processus et, si possible, se trouver à leur centre. Ainsi les constructions de la réalité économique proposées par un acteur sont toujours un moyen pour les allier, du moins potentiellement, à d'autres. En somme, le travail politique, et donc les quêtes du changement ou de reproduction des institutions, est toujours structuré autour la fabrication d'arguments et d'alliances au sein de laquelle la politique telle que nous l'avons définie joue toujours un rôle central. Or, afin d'étudier ce travail politique empiriquement, trois processus définis à l'aide de concepts sociologiques robustes doivent être ciblés : la problématisation, l'instrumentation et la légitimation.



*La problématisation* : Comme de nombreux sociologues (Gusfield, 1981) et politistes (Rocheffort et Cobb, 1994) l'ont démontré, les difficultés vécues par les acteurs privés, ici les firmes, ne deviennent jamais les « problèmes » saisis par les organisations collectives ou publiques de manière spontanée. Contrairement à une telle vision fonctionnaliste du monde, une partie majeure du travail politique consiste en des tentatives de construire les problèmes publics. Du point de vue analytique, cela veut dire qu'il faut saisir non seulement les valeurs mobilisées pour définir et présenter un enjeu comme nécessitant des interventions publiques, mais aussi la manière dont une telle représentation sociale de la réalité est rendue « sociale » à travers la fabrication des arguments et des alliances. Ce point ressort particulièrement clairement lorsqu'on observe les quatre ensembles d'institutions qui typiquement structurent une industrie comme celle des médicaments autour des questions concernant l'emploi, la finance, l'approvisionnement et la commercialisation. Le plus souvent c'est à ce niveau de régulation que les acteurs cherchent à « actualiser » les problèmes de leur industrie et comment ceux-ci devraient être abordés par les pouvoirs publics. Par exemple, certains acteurs représentent la concentration croissante de l'industrie pharmaceutique comme un problème d'intérêt général, alors que d'autres renvoient cette question au domaine de l'action privée. Il s'ensuit qu'au sein des composantes de l'activité économique comme les industries, la problématisation est une pratique du travail politique qui coexiste à côté de celle de l'analyse et de la discussion de l'état des marchés. Or, cette coexistence est plus ou moins harmonieuse selon la proximité et l'intensité des valeurs, ainsi que des asymétries entre leurs porteurs, qu'elle englobe.

*Instrumentation* : Définir un problème public constitue donc une partie de toute tentative de changer ou de reproduire les institutions économiques, mais procéder ainsi demeurera largement sans effet si cela ne s'accompagne pas d'un travail politique ciblé sur le deuxième aspect du travail politique : la fabrication puis l'actualisation des instruments d'action collective et publique. Que ce soit des règlements juridiques, des subventions ou des technologies plus subtiles de gouvernement telles que les indicateurs et les catégories statistiques, de tels instruments deviennent bien souvent des institutions (Lascoumes et Le Galès, 2007). Ce faisant ils agissent durablement sur le gouvernement de l'activité économique. Plus fondamentalement encore, du point de vue idéologique les instruments ne sont jamais neutres car ils se bâtissent toujours autour

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<sup>3</sup> Depuis le début des années 1990 (Briquet, 1994), la sociologie politique française utilise le terme de « travail politique » pour décrire l'activité des élus. Aussi intéressant qu'il soit, cet usage du terme n'est pas suivi ici.



des choix fortement structurés par les valeurs et les groupes sociaux qui les portent (Rowell, 2012).

**Légitimation** : Alors que des problèmes publics et des instruments d'intervention sont généralement spécifiques à une industrie ou un domaine d'activité économique, afin de bénéficier d'un soutien public durable ils doivent également faire l'objet d'une légitimation au sein d'espaces gouvernementaux trans-industries tels que des comités interministériels, des parlements ou des instances de « dialogue social ». Il s'ensuit que les acteurs déploient des pratiques de légitimation qui prennent deux formes. Dans bien des cas, les partisans d'un problème ou d'un instrument d'action publique cherchent à le politiser en évoquant les jugements de valeur qui le sous-tendent et en s'engageant dans les actes de médiatisation afin d'entamer un débat public (Lagroye, 2003). Par exemple, les grandes entreprises pharmaceutiques défendent les prix et leurs niveaux de profitabilité élevés au nom d'un « juste retour » sur leur investissements en matière « d'innovation », un principe qui est souvent mis en avant plus comme une valeur morale que comme un moyen pour réaliser une efficacité économique. Cependant, dans bien d'autres cas les acteurs préfèrent dépolitiser ou techniciser leurs problématiques et instruments en référant davantage à des rapports d'experts quant à une telle efficacité et/ou qu'à des principes juridiques (Dubois et Dulong, 1999 ; Radaelli, 1999). Ici un langage fonctionnaliste prédomine et les acteurs cherchent à réduire le débat à des arènes restreintes, voire fermées, tel que le Comité économique des produits de santé (CEPS) qui fixe les prix des produits pharmaceutiques. Les termes de débat deviennent ainsi plus restreints et les discussions ouvertes sur les valeurs sont moins probables. En résumé, la légitimation de problèmes et d'instruments publics qui structurent l'activité économique peut prendre des formes fortement contrastées. Toutefois, il est essentiel de rappeler que ces problèmes et instruments ne sont jamais « techniques » ou « politiques » *per se* (Hay, 2007, p. 78 ; Radaelli, 1999). Au contraire, ils deviennent technicisés ou politisés au cours de leur construction et leur légitimation. En effet, comme le concept de travail politique permet de saisir, c'est en combinant dans l'analyse les concepts de problématisation, d'instrumentation et de légitimation que la recherche s'équipe le mieux pour cerner les valeurs, et donc la politique, qui sous-tendent la création, l'entretien ou la déstabilisation des institutions de l'activité économique.

## II. Le gouvernement européen des industries : analyse comparée et traits récurrents

Notre projet GEDI (Gouvernement européen des industries) a contribué au développement de la grille d'analyse présentée plus haut. Mais il a surtout été l'occasion de la tester empiriquement, et ceci à travers une analyse approfondie de comment se gouvernent quatre industries (vin, automobile, médicaments, aquaculture) à l'échelle européenne depuis le début des années 1990, ainsi que leur « croisement » par quatre régulations transindustrie (concurrence, développement durable, emploi, commerce extérieur)<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Sur le plan du travail empirique, plus de 200 entretiens ont été effectués et les analyses statistiques et de l'usage de la statistique ont été réalisées. En outre, dans certains cas les observations ont pu se faire, ainsi que des analyses bibliométriques quantifiées.

Dans cette perspective, et afin de dépasser les analyses trop générales et trompeuses du rapport entre l'Union européenne et l'économie (ex. McCann, 2010), this section uses the approach developed above to undertake comparisons in two stages. Firstly, government of industries at the EU scale will be compared in order to capture its most salient features. Secondly, we will mobilise comparisons to further analyse the political work that our case studies have shown to be its cause. Overall, the common thread running throughout this section is a desire to unravel the apparent paradox of an EU that is still most often associated with the creation of an 'economic' community, but within which the government of many of its industrial and trans-industry components is often modest and frequently weak. As will be shown, this paradox begs the two-sided question: what exactly is the European 'economy' being sought after by its dominant actors? And what brand of economics are they using in order to get there?

### **1. Comparing the EU's government of industries: processes, institutions and their effects**

In this section, comparative analysis will be 'put to work' in order to discover similarities and differences in EU-scale government both between the industries and across the trans-industry regulations studied. Indeed, in order to make the most of the analytical purchase such comparisons provide, initially we will deliberately avoid rushing to explanation of the findings this exercise brings to light by first comparing the government of industries (section 1.1), then the trans-industry regulations (1.2) studied in our research. Causal analysis of these institutional and political outcomes will only be brought to the fore subsequently by revisiting the central hypothesis that has structured this book: 'political work', not economic determinism, is always the cause of change or reproduction of both an industry's government and the extent to which this takes place at the scale of the EU (section 2).

#### **1.1 Comparing the government of each industry's Institutionalized Relationships**

Let's start then by simply comparing how the Institutional Order (IO) of each of our four industries has been structured over the last ten to fifteen years. A first step to grasping the content and shape of each industry's IO is to compare the relative importance within each of the four Instituted Relationships (IRs) –labour, finance, sourcing and commercial- we theorize as always being present within the government of any industry. Aimed at teasing out governmental complementarities, disequilibria and hierarchies, this mode of comparison will first be applied to each industry's contemporary government in general, then to the place occupied by institutions and actors situated at the EU scale. In order to begin this analysis, below tables 1 and 2 propose a ranking system we will use 'with moderation': XXX = very important ; XX = important ; X = quite important ; - = unimportant. In so doing, it is vital not to become fixated on the ranks given. Nor should one consider that the IRs with the highest ranks automatically 'structure' the industry in question. Instead, and in keeping with the constructivist type of institutionalism we favour (Hay, 2006), each ranking accorded attempts to capture the importance given to each IR by the actors who actually participate in their co-production. As will be seen, this importance is shaped by the 'problems' that these actors identify and their relative commitment to the regulatory

instruments -rules, norms and conventions- that together provide the framework within which these stakeholders operate both economically and politically.

*Table 1: Importance given to the overall government of our four industries*

	Labour IR	Finance IR	Sourcing IR	RI Commercial
Cars	XX	X	XX	XX
Pharmaceuticals	XX	X	XX	XXX
Aquaculture	-	X	XXX	XX
Wine	X	X	XX	XX

*Table 2: Importance given to the EU government of our industries and their four IRs*

	Labour IR	Finance IR	Sourcing IR	Commercial IR
Cars	X	-	XX	XX
Pharma.	-	-	XX	XX
Aquaculture	-	-	XXX	-
Wine	-	-	XX	XX

*Relatively ‘ungoverned’ Finance IRs*

This initial inter-industry comparison first leads one to reflect upon the relatively weak level of importance given to the overall and European governing of the Finance IR of all four of the industries studied. Of course, this finding does not mean that rules and norms that relate to how industrial activity is financed are seen as peripheral to its government. Rather it suggests that most actors within each industry consider that the institutional ordering of finance owes more to its trans-industry regulation -for example via fiscal, shareholding, competition, banking and monetary policies- than it does to industry-specific policy arenas and instruments. In short, whilst clearly being an omnipresent part of each industry’s IO, at least over the period studied here (i.e. essentially since 2000), one can cautiously conclude that governing financial issues has not been a central issue within all the four industrial cases upon which this book is based. One needs to be cautious here firstly because we have rarely had cause to study these Finance IRs directly. Secondly, it is probable that significant reinstitutionalizations of these IRs occurred earlier in the 1980s and 1990s. However, our findings lead us to conclude with greater conviction that if, in the recent past, political work within each industry’s Financial IR has taken place, this has rarely been located at the scale of the EU. An initial explanation is that for individual businesses sources of finance today are either global (through inter-connected stock markets) or remain national and even regional (through public subsidies, banks and other credit organizations). A second explanation is that if the EU itself has provided some funding either directly to commercial operators (for example in the wine and aquaculture industries), or assisted them indirectly through financing pre-competitive R& D (as in all four of our industries), the sums involved are relatively low and bear little relation to those that national and regional governments continue to invest in specific industries (e.g. automobiles). This said, it is not sufficient to impute the EU’s ‘lack of generosity’ simply to the tightness of its budget, nor to its constant scrutiny by national governments, parliaments and media. Instead, as we develop further below, an even more fundamental cause can be traced to elements of neo-liberal economic doctrine that are constantly mobilized to justify EU policy instruments which eschew overt and intense forms of interventionism. Put another way, those who dominate the making of policy instruments for Finance IRs at the EU scale persistently reduce their objective to one of facilitating the operation of

'thin' markets (wherein 'demand' is assumed to spontaneously meet a naturally occurring 'supply'), and this rather than aiming to structure industries more thickly (through embracing the uncertain, constructed and contingent character of both demand and supply).

*Employment IRs: national and rarely industry-specific*

If, in each of our industries, capital is not governed at the scale of the EU, what about labour? For reasons that are partly similar to what we have just seen for finance, analysis of our four industries has all shown that the latter's Employment IRs are also weakly governed at the European scale. Here one major cause we shall return to in the following section is obviously the continued strength of the national trans-industry regulation of labour law, employment policy and social protection. When examined instead from the angle of each industry's IO, one can also see that their Employment IR's are often weakly governed at the EU scale because actors have not worked politically to problematize labour as a European issue to be tackled using EU policy instruments. In the wine and aquaculture industries this phenomenon can largely be explained by the weakness of employee representation. Moreover, and despite considerable demographic evidence to the contrary, dominant employers and interest group representatives tend strongly to consider labour to be a 'non-problem'. Consequently, the Employment IR of both these industries barely possesses any specific form of government that differentiates it from trans-industry regulation.

By contrast, actors in both the pharmaceutical and automobile industries have accorded their Employment IRs a more important and distinctive status. In the case of the former, possessing skilled personnel continues to be seen as a source of innovation, and thus of commercial success, by most company managers and public representatives alike. Notwithstanding a certain degree of delocalization of R & D and productive capacity to developing and East European countries, as well as externalization of such activities to sub-contractants within countries such as France and the UK, the major players in Europe's pharmaceutical industry have continued to attempt to govern employment issues to some degree at the level of their industry. To do so, and in contrast to wine and aquaculture, they have certainly constructed employment –often termed here 'human resources'- as an industry-specific 'problem'. However, the latter has essentially been framed at the national level. More precisely, if a general discourse about employment in the pharmaceutical industry exists at the EU scale, it is at the national scale that this has been translated into more concrete action plans and policy instruments (e.g. the French government's *Stratégie de filière des Industries et Technologies de Santé*).

Here a parallel can also be drawn with the automobile industry. Once again, representatives of the EU have made frequent commitments to protect employment. However, policy instruments doted with sizeable budgets have continued to be monopolized by the national and regional governments of France, Germany and Italy. In contrast to the pharmaceutical industry, however, this pressure to conserve jobs in Europe has been pushed by highly active trade unions and local politicians fearful of the consequences of losing manufacturing sites from their respective territories. From this point of view, one sees that the industry's Employment IR is above all a consequence of orientations adopted within the Sourcing and Commercial IRs: ever since these have enabled manufacturers to manage most employment issues by invoking the argument of 'irreversible' pan-European competition between production sites, the shaping of public

problems related to labour has been returned to the national scale. In turn, at this scale these problems possess contrasting framings, in particular states where wages are high have typically sought to reduce employment in this industry, 'convert' workers and sites while seeking EU aid to achieve these goals. In this category of states, and because of its focus upon high end markets, the exception is Germany, a country who's representatives have thus had no incentive to develop solidarity-based alliances with their French and Italian opposite numbers at the EU scale. Meanwhile, states with low wages and/or who have just joined the EU are focused upon the quite different problem of training their workers and recruiting qualified personnel into the car industry. Naturally, what they seek from the EU is quite different to what the French and Italians have requested. For all these reasons, EU-scale government of the Employment IR in this industry has consisted of an absence of EU policies and a permissive approach to competition policy that has generated a plethora of national and European subsidies. Manufacturers have generally used the latter to withdraw from high wage countries while investing in lower wage economies, both outside but also within the EU. In short, today's pattern of development in this industry has been fuelled by a European Employment IR that has facilitated highly differentiated, and often contradictory, employment policies across the EU.

In summary, the Employment IR of industries is weakly governed in vertical fashion at the EU scale via harmonized industry-specific instruments and institutions. This weakness of EU government reflects a clear-cut asymmetry of legitimacy as regards the national scale. As we have seen, the legitimacy of EU policies to impose constraints upon the labour dimension of productive and commercial activities remains dependent upon the unlikely willingness of actors at the national scale to 'co-ordinate' and 'share best practices'.

#### *The predominance of Sourcing and Commercial IRs within EU government*

In contrast to the Employment and Finance IRs of the four industries studied, our research instead highlights that EU scale government of such entities is considerably more developed within their respective Sourcing and Commercial IRs. Tracing the causes of this finding must await section 2. Here we simply describe the main processes and institutions around which this form of EU government takes place. In so doing, our analysis nevertheless takes an initial step towards deepening existing accounts of each industry's political economy (e.g. Hall & Soskice, 2001) which regrettably focus excessively upon the institutions of capital and labour to the detriment of those that govern sourcing and access to markets.

As regards the Sourcing IR of each industry, 'the completion of the EU's single market' has not surprisingly led to a great deal of institution-building and, therefore, political work. As many scholars have underlined before us (Sandholtz & Stone-Sweet, 1998; Fligstein, 2008), 'building the single market' has notably entailed the harmonization of innumerable standards and other rules concerning goods and services which, previously, had been experienced as barriers to trade between firms located in different member states. Our research has added value to this academic *acquis* firstly by placing greater emphasis upon how institutions that relate to sourcing are central to the government of each industry and, secondly, by showing their density at the scale of the EU.

These twin points can be illustrated first by taking the example of the wine industry where the production and processing of grapes has been massively affected by rules concerning oenological practices, plantation rights and certification schemes, as well as subsidies for restructuring and 'reconverting' wine farms and merchant companies. Given the continued involvement of national and infranational actors, not all these institutions have been set entirely at the EU-scale, nor given rise to policy instruments that are EU-wide. However, and in particular since the reform of EU wine policy in 2008, many of these key institutions are indeed now European in terms of the 'problem' they ostensibly tackle and the legitimizing discourse which accompanies it.

Although, the problematization and legitimation of the Sourcing IR of the pharmaceutical, aquaculture and car industries is less clearly European than that of wine's, the policy instruments of each are nevertheless clearly deeply affected by institutions established at this scale. In the case of pharmaceuticals, 'market authorization' rules and practices (e.g. clinical trials) that govern the safety and efficacy of medicines are today primarily fixed at the EU scale. Similarly, in the aquaculture and automobile industries, institutions that concern minimum levels of safety are also essentially EU-wide, as are the environmental protection rules that deeply structure production in both these industries. In short, as our research relates in detail, the contemporary Sourcing IRs of all three of these industries are in large part the results of political work that has been carried out chiefly at the scale of the EU.

This said, and as part one of this book has also underlined, the most stimulating means of grasping the dynamics of an industry's Sourcing IR is to tease out how its institutions are interwoven with those of its Commercial IR. Indeed, it is largely by examining this Sourcing-Commercial nexus that the GEDI project has uncovered the depths of the EU scale government of each of our four industries.

In the case of the wine industry, EU governmentalization began simultaneously in both its Sourcing and Commercial IRs. EU-wide constraints on and subsidies for production were initially supplemented by costly forms of price support (distillation and private storage aids). However, since 2008 that type of interventionism has been abandoned and instead the EU budget now finances instead the marketing campaigns of private companies, co-operatives and regional 'interprofessions'. More fundamentally still, a new 'conception of control' (Fligstein, 2001) centred upon 'demand' and 'the new consumer' has been institutionalized at the EU scale and now dominates not only the government of its Commercial IR but, also its Sourcing counterpart (through rules on oenological practices and certification). The overall effect has been to resegment not only markets, but vineyards and indeed the European industry as a whole. This said, once again the dominant representation of the industry at the EU scale is now largely reduced to a very 'thin' conception of markets which, via the mantra of spontaneous demand and supply, is used to problematize and legitimize a form of government that leaves key issues either to other scales (especially finance) or not to be governed much at all (notably employment).

This high degree of interdependence between Sourcing and Commercial IRs is also present in the pharmaceutical industry where institutions concerning market authorizations and intellectual property increasingly spill over from the former to the latter around the issue of pricing. Within European states, governing the setting of

prices for medicines has of course been linked to controls on their safety and patents since the 1960s. However, driven partly by concerns over the rise in public health expenditure and partly by changing corporate behaviour, this linkage has recently become increasingly controversial. For the most part, representatives of national governments have thus far managed to retain considerable control over the pricing of drugs within their respective jurisdictions. Nevertheless, as political work around 'Health Technology Assessment' underlines, considerable political work has taken place at the EU scale in order to problematize pricing as a transnational issue to which EU-scale responses can be provided. More generally, as in the wine industry, pharmaceuticals' Commercial IR has clearly become central to both its IO and its government.

For aquaculture, the link between the industry's Sourcing and Commercial IRs is also inextricable. On the one hand, EU rules on the environment, food safety and animal health are critical for providing legitimacy and testimony to private standards and labels claiming farmed fish products as 'sustainable'. On the other, additional requirements, such as animal welfare set by private labels, e.g. UK Freedom Food, affect a company's production practices. Whilst the EU-scale is clearly important in mediating this nexus, our analysis nevertheless goes as far as to conclude that completeness at the EU scale is *unwanted* both by representatives of the Commission and by producers. In the case of the former, this is the result of initial and continued problematisations by EU public actors of aquaculture in terms of supply and demand. This has resulted in a construction of this industry as being *within fisheries* and not as possessing a distinctive IO. Meanwhile, producers operating within relatively large companies invest in business relations with large supermarket chains and frame their regulatory challenge as giving primacy to private government of product markets.

Finally, the case of the car industry is both emblematic of the importance of its Sourcing and Commercial IRs within its EU government but also distinctive. It is emblematic because since the very introduction of 'the single market' the principle of free movement of goods has, for both its Commercial and Sourcing IRs, been the main vector of a Europeanization of production and marketing strategies - and this both for European manufacturers and those from third countries (notably the US, Japan and South Korea). However, in contrast to that of pharmaceuticals in particular, this industry is nevertheless distinctive because this shift has never resulted in the disappearance of national frontiers, and this either for the organization of production or the structuration of markets. Actors still have good reasons to think and act in terms of the French, Italian or German car industry because many factors of production are anchored in these spaces and because domestic brands retain much of each market share. Consequently, when shaping European problems and policy instruments that concern these two IRs, national actors have generally been highly ambivalent. On the one hand they are keen to develop unified rules in order to be able to source themselves and market their products throughout the EU but, on the other, they are not prepared to give up national policies which they consider match their interests. As a result, political work at the EU scale in this industry has two temporalities. In the first instance, actors intervene in EU arenas in order to obtain rules that fit closest with their conception of control and block those that do not (eg. emission standards where German actors seek vehicle weight to be taken into account while their Italian counterparts oppose this move). Then subsequently all concerned work to attenuate the national translations into practice of EU legislation.

The most notable example here being the fact that the free movement of goods in the EU has not entailed the harmonisation of prices and convergence regarding vehicle distribution. This is firstly because other EU legislation has perpetuated the domination of manufacturers in the latter domain (Jullien, 2008) and, secondly, because at this scale fiscal issues have always been separated from ‘harmonisation’.

In summary, comparing industries around their respective ordering of IRs and national-EU scaling, reveals that the incompleteness which characterises the EU’s government of industries stems from a form of political work that is deeply dialectical. From the point of view of each IR, this dialectic has meant that the production of EU policies has often been abundant precisely because it is incomplete - a situation dominant actors have consciously and consistently sought. But this dialectic can also be observed around the relationship between the IRs, and thus at the level of industry specific Institutional Orders at the scale of the EU. Here, as we have seen, strong investment in EU arenas to govern one IR has not meant that the same actors adopt the same line of reasoning when it comes to governing one or more of the three others.

**1.2 The differentiated impact of EU-scale trans-industry regulations**

Analyzing and comparing the EU’s government of industries cannot, however, be restricted to the processes and institutions that take place solely within their respective IOs. Instead, one needs to take into account the interactions and interdependencies between these industry-specific orders and forms of government that are trans-industry. The GEDI project conducted research on four of the latter: competition, sustainable development, employment and external trade. Whilst recognizing that this list is far from exhaustive, and indeed leaves out some key trans-industry regulations (TIR) such as those of fiscal and monetary issues, we maintain that this angle on the EU government of industries reveals a number of important findings and insights. Once again we begin here with a simple table of rankings (table 3), then expand upon and explain them thereafter.

*Table 3: Trans-industry regulations and our industries*

	Competition	Sustainable dev	Employment	Trade
Cars	X	XX	-	XX
Pharmaceuticals	XX	-	-	X
Aquaculture	X	XXX	-	XX
Wine	X	X	-	XX

As this table shows the most clearly, the TIR that has had the least impact upon our four industries concerns employment, and attempts to reproblematicize this aspect of economic activity using the principle of ‘flexicurity’. Despite the intense media attention given to the so-called ‘race to the bottom’ for social policy so frequently spontaneously attributed to ‘globalization’, along with other more specialized studies (Hay and Wincott, 2012) our analysis concludes that for the most part national measures in favour of encouraging and structuring employment are still as important as they were twenty or thirty years ago. Nevertheless, an alliance of actors convinced by the utility and justness of promoting ‘flexicurity’ as a means of simultaneously making the EU’s labour force as a whole more flexible but nevertheless reasonably secure gained ground over the mid-



2000s. During this period, labour market policies throughout the member states experienced a general shift towards more 'active' policy instruments and a legitimizing discourse that is frequently close to that used by proponents of flexicurity, without always having recourse to the exact term. Institutions developed at the EU scale, notably the European Employment Strategy, have had some causal impact upon this shift in problematization and instrumentation. But it would be excessive to conclude that political work carried out at the EU scale has been the prime driver of change. Instead, this work has overlapped with that carried out at the national and infranational scales.

A second, more surprising, finding concerning TIRs at the scale of the EU concerns competition policy. Although generally considered, in particular within political economy (Wigger & Nölke, 2007) and European Studies (Cini and McGowan, 2009), to be one of the primary sets of instruments for governing the economy at the scale of the EU, competition policy is actually a decidedly incomplete form of economic government. It clearly possesses a dense array of policy instruments, innumerable supporters within the Commission and national administrations and a reservoir of expertise amongst specialized lawyers and economists. However, as our research related has revealed, the doctrine that underlies this TIR is actually far from being stabilized intellectually and accepted politically. Regarding the former, reference to a 'Chicago school' interpretation of competition certainly did gain ground from the late 1990s to the mid-2000s. However, opposition first from 'ordoliberal' then from neomercantilists re-empowered by the onset of the 2008 crisis has seriously brought into question the extent to which 'Chicago' has been institutionalized at the scale of the EU. Indeed, our focus upon how the Competition policy TIR has been translated within specific industries has clearly shown the extent to which exceptions from general rules is, and has always been, a fundamental characteristic of this mode of European economic government. In the case of cars, block exemptions from this policy regarding 'vertical restraints', and thereby pricing, have had major impacts since the early 1960s. The massive increase in state aids to this industry accorded by producer states since 2008 also raise questions about its governing effects. Meanwhile dominant actors in the pharmaceutical industry have successfully fought off an attempt by partisans of EU competition policy to modify not only the instruments of this industry's government in Europe, but also their underlying 'conception of control' (Fligstein, 2001). All these findings tend thus to show that far from being all-powerful, the EU's government of inter-firm competition remains strongly limited and conditioned by other considerations.

Just as surprising perhaps is our main finding on sustainable development. Although this term has become omnipresent within EU-scale discourse since the early 1990s by largely replacing 'environmental protection', it has yet to give rise to a strong set of policy instruments that systematically constrain the production and selling of goods in Europe. Instead, 'soft law' and voluntary agreements not legislation are increasingly adopted. Indeed, in the eyes and actions of dominant actors, respecting sustainable development has even become a means of making the EU's industries more competitive by stimulating their growth, rather than a political goal in itself. Of course, this is not to say that actions in the name of sustainable development have had no effect upon the industries studied in this book. As our research on cars and aquaculture shows in particular, the business models of most large firms in these industries have been affected by interpretations of this term. However, in so doing, few genuine value-based debates and policy choices have been made, thus rendering the EU's government in the

name of sustainable development particularly vague. Moreover, despite official discourse that the EU is a world leader in this domain, its government is ultimately only weakly differentiated from that of other western polities.

The latter point can also be extended to external trade, the fourth and final trans-industry regulation examined in this book. As over sustainable development, representatives of the EU repeatedly assert that they are playing a global leadership role. This assertion is certainly born out by the support given by such actors to the consolidation of a free trade agenda within the WTO. Moreover, as our research on wine, cars and aquaculture underlines, since the 1950s the WTO and its predecessor the GATT have frequently been invoked in order to justify the liberalization of the EU's own government of its industries. At certain times during this period of history, EU representatives have tempered the accent placed upon free trade in order to assert that there can and should be exceptions made for valid social, economic and political reasons. Indeed, some commentators such as Richard Youngs (2010) even see the EU as having been the most ardent defender of 'liberal internationalism' at the global scale. However, like Youngs himself, our research has found that within the industries and trans-industry regulations studied over the last fifteen years the EU has 'retreated' from this political standpoint. This can be seen in particular through the self-imposed limits placed by EU actors on politicising sustainable trade in farmed fish, definitions for products such as wine and, above all, employment conditions. Ultimately then, representatives of the EU's generalized commitment to trade at all costs raises the following fundamental question: in the name of what values are the representatives of the EU seeking to govern external trade in general, and its repercussions for specific industries in particular?

As we have reiterated throughout this paper, this question of values is fundamental because they are what constitute the politics of industry and determine the strategic choices that are made within it. Having compared and synthesized how this politics has occurred at the scale of the EU, we turn now to the question of which values have dominated and why?

## **2. Why industries have been governed to achieve 'thin' competitiveness**

Our findings on the mobilization of a discourse on competitiveness within the EU's governing of industries confirm those of other studies of political economy at the European scale. In particular, our results chime with Hay, Rosamond and Bruno's contention about how recourse to this discourse has deepened throughout the 2000s:

'It is through repetition, diversification and streamlining that vague and disparate ideas about competitiveness have turned into an overarching 'paradigm' through which social, political and economic developments might be ordered and rendered intelligible' (Hay and Rosamond, 2002: 151) (cited in Bruno, 2010: 188).

However, rather than reduce this political mobilization of 'the thrill of competition' to being simply 'a new expression of neo-liberal governmental technology' (Bruno, 2010:

187 & 190), we have sought instead to unpack what competitiveness has come to mean for the government of industries and how it has been institutionalized at the EU scale.

In this field and at this scale, what dominates is a discourse and practice of 'thin competitiveness' wherein:

- the overarching doctrine and legitimizing discourse is centred upon cost competitiveness as derived from basic versions of neo-classical economics (Hay, 2012);
- from these postulates, the problems of each industry are first reduced to one of supply and demand within their respective Commercial IRs. This simplistic algorithm is then used to reorder issues of sourcing, finance and employment as sub-problems of a generic and disincarnated 'market';
- consequently, industry-specific policy instruments designed to increase cost competitiveness have hardened via EU law, whilst there has been an increased use of 'soft' policy instruments (guidelines, 'co-ordination', voluntary standards, etc.) to address other goals.

As GEDI's empirical research underlines, thin competitiveness has not been completely institutionalized at the EU scale in any industry or trans-industry regulation. In some instances, such as employment policy, politicized resistance and support from institutions at the national scale have slowed its progress. More often, resistance on an instrument by instrument basis has been the norm (e.g. over retaining planting rights in the wine industry or authorizing state aids for conserving car factories). Nevertheless, our contention is that thin competitiveness has, since the mid-1990s, become the leitmotiv driving the EU's government of industries.

To explain this phenomenon, however, it is not sufficient to seek causality in the so-called victory of neo-liberal ideology or anglo-saxon capitalism (Van Apeldoorn et al., 2008; Wigger & Nölke, 2007). Such explanations are too broad, lack empirical backing and, above all, skate over the crucial questions of contingency and agency. Instead, the three dimensions of our concept of political work –problematization, instrumentation and legitimation- will be mobilized in order to highlight the key uncertainties and choices around which the EU's government of industries has shifted and, in so doing, identify the actors who have become determinant or marginalized during this process.

#### *The problematisation of thin competitiveness and the dismissal of alternatives*

A major part of the GEDI project has entailed going beyond the study of formal decisions (e.g. the adoption of the EU wine reform of 2008), and this by drawing upon a wealth of public policy research (Gusfield, 1981; Rochefort & Cobb, 1994) which shows that such moments in the life of an industry are constrained by the shaping of the 'problem' they ostensibly seek to solve. Consequently, each of GEDI's sub-teams set out to capture the argument-making and alliance-building through which 'European problems' have been constructed and institutionalized. Rarely occurring in sequence, at this scale the following four moments of problematization have almost invariably naturalized thin competitiveness while stigmatizing its opponents.

The first moment of problematization examined concerns industry and policy expertise. As in national polities, expertise at the EU scale is made up of academics and private consultants. However, to use a distinction made by Didier Georgakakis (2012), the

academics are only *temporary* participants in EU government, whereas a large number of consultants comprise a significant part of its *permanent* components. Moreover, EU research funding has had very little impact upon the problematizations studied here because analysis financed in this way is rarely connected up to industrial institutional orders. Instead, debates within academia that relate to competitiveness tend to develop and take place either at national or international scales (e.g. over wine reform), then penetrate EU policy-making via interest groups (e.g. representatives of wine merchants) and consultancy firms (e.g. the role of London Economics in changing EU policy on the distribution of cars: Jullien, 2008).

Indeed, at the scale of the EU there is a particularly strong overlap between the world of ostensibly 'independent' expertise and that of interest groups whose legitimacy formally stems from their representation of industries or professions. Whereas in many national polities there is an expectation that a second moment of problematization entails explicit interaction between experts and representatives of interest groups, at the EU scale this relationship is less open and more blurred. Indeed, at this scale dominant interest groups are frequently seen as *the* experts, as testified by the cases of pharmaceuticals (the EFPIA) and automobiles (the ACEA). It is therefore no coincidence that organizations such as these, wedded as they so often are to the doctrine of thin competitiveness, have managed to impose this problematization of economic activity and how it should be governed as being 'what the experts think' upon so many industries and policy areas.

But what in turn explains the power of such interest groups? Here a third moment of problematization that concerns interaction between such groups and the EU's administration provides many answers to this question. As many previous studies have shown (Mazey & Richardson, 1992), from the outset the European Commission has developed much of its resources and influence upon EU policy-making by establishing longstanding links with interest groups. Indeed, as Cécile Robert has stressed, two of the particularities of EU problematization is that firstly experts often must also be representatives and, secondly, that the consultation of experts at this scale is thus a form of 'pre-negotiation' (2012). All our industry-specific case studies bolster this claim because, in each instance, specialized Commission representatives have been extremely careful to cultivate and keep on board their preferred interlocutors. Of course, over time this preference can change. For instance in the wine industry, over the 2000s DG AGRI's wine unit switched 'partners' from representatives of producers (COPA) to those of merchants (*le Comité vin*). Nevertheless, such changes are not only rare but always correspond to even deeper shifts in doctrine and conceptions of control. As the case of wine shows particularly well, the take-up of 'thin competitiveness' invariably entails inter and intraorganizational change.

The final moment often associated with problematization concerns public debate and the involvement of the media. Typically this is when arguments that marshal expertise and evidence, together with alliances of experts, interest groups and civil servants, give way to interactions structured more by values, symbols and emotions within which politicians have much greater involvement. Unlike many other researchers (de Swaan, 2007), we have not found that politicians are seldom involved in EU problematizations. Instead, our research reveals that a range of European commissioners, national ministers and Members of the European Parliament are inextricably engaged in

discussions over what constitutes a problem for an industry and in what way this problem is 'European'. For example, when John Dali was DG SANCO's commissioner he publicly committed both himself and this administration to delving deeper into the running of national health systems by promoting Health Technology assessment (HTA). However, except in the case of wine, politician involvement in the problematisation of industrial government at the EU scale has rarely entailed their sustained engagement in oppositional debates. Indeed, this lack of sustained engagements, as much by ministers as by commissioners, returns us to Georgakakis's distinction between the 'temporary' and 'permanent' protagonists engaged in governing economic activity at the EU scale. When ministers and even commissioners view themselves principally as 'passing through Brussels', one can hardly be surprised that problematization is largely left in the hands of the experts, interest groups and civil servants highlighted above.

In summary, there has been nothing inevitable about the problem of EU industry becoming framed in terms of thin competitiveness. Instead this situation is the cumulative result of political work carried out not only to 'own' European problems (Gusfield, 1981), but also to consistently diagnose them using a simplistic economic doctrine which, partly due to its very simplicity, has sidelined alternative analyses. Here the hypothesis we propose is that the propensity of the EU's government of industries to reduce all problematisations to ones of 'competitiveness' can best be explained in terms of a two-sided logic that is deeply relational: within EU arenas occurs a selection of experts, problems and registers of legitimation which favours actors who express their preoccupations, interests and concerns in terms of efficiency and, ultimately, by making explicit references to increases or losses of competitiveness. Meanwhile, those considered ineligible to participate in these EU arenas are implicitly invited to invest instead in non-European arenas. This logic explains in particular why the EU governmentalization of the Commercial and Sourcing IRs of industries is much deeper than that of their Employment IRs. The former two enable actors using the language of efficiency and competitiveness to conciliate corporate strategies with EU government. However, over labour issues the actors principally concerned (in particular trade unions) generally use other problematisations and rhetoric and thus become excluded from EU decision-making.

In short, the incompleteness analysed here is two-fold. It firstly features scales of government that overlap and which simply cannot be studied in isolation. But secondly this incompleteness reflects how industrial problems become 'public' and 'political' as a result of argument-making and symbolic action in a multi-scalar economy. Here the EU scale is handicapped by the poverty of its institutionalized symbols and rhetoric. Of course, these two levels of incompleteness constantly fuel each other. Indeed, the resilience of national and infranational scales revealed by our project owes as much to the difficulty actors experience in adapting their registers of argumentation and legitimation as it does to the division of 'competences' laid out in the EU's treaties.

*Instrumenting for thin competitiveness: when less is more*

Of course, diagnoses in terms of thin competitiveness frequently occur simultaneously with the proposition of antidotes in the form of policy instruments for change in the government of economic activity. Indeed, as Mangenot and Rowell underline (2010: 19), rather than reduce instruments 'to a question of utilitarian adjustments of means to

ends', it is vital to envisage them as playing 'an important role in institutionalizing specific European scales of action, problem definitions and policy objectives'. Given this strong overlap between problematization and instrumentation, much of the previous section could, and perhaps should, be restated here. Instead, two more specific claims relating to how instruments for governing industries are institutionalized at the EU scale will be made. The first concerns the changing range of instruments which dominate this scale, while the second tackles how alternatives to 'thin competitiveness' technologies of government have progressively been discredited.

The first and most obvious way in which the range of instruments has shrunk concerns interventions with relatively large budgets. In the case of wine these have been largely abandoned, whilst Europe's aquaculture industry has never benefited greatly from the EU's fisheries budget. Meanwhile, EU support for R & D on pharmaceuticals has been made heavily dependant upon public-private financing.

The second change in instrumentation has been a quantitative reduction in legislative production. If one excludes executive legislation adopted solely by the Commission, the EU's total production has dropped dramatically for both Regulations (from a high of 400-550 a year in the mid to late 1980s to between 140 and 218 from 2000 to 2007) and Directives (from 58-83 per year in the former period to 24-66 for the latter) (König et al., 2012). This overall trend is borne out within the industries and trans-industry regulations studied in this book. The wine industry has retained a reasonably high density of EU legislation and some degree of specificity, but its legislative base is increasingly being subsumed within general agricultural policy. Meanwhile, virtually all of aquaculture's legislation-backed instruments have always been non-industry specific. The pharmaceutical industry does now have some highly specific EU legislation (e.g. on counterfeit medicines) but otherwise most of its laws simply set an overall framework. Of course, legislation is still important for establishing the legitimacy to act of the EU, and of the Commission in particular. For example, the cross-border care directive adopted in 2011 enabled the Commission to intensify its proposals and actions over Health Technology Assessment (HTA). Nevertheless, today's EU government of industry is clearly less structured by the preparation and adoption of legislation than it once was.

However, this is not to say that EU government of industries as a whole has shrunk. Rather, since the 1990s there has been a distinct shift towards a more diversified set of instruments. Nearly all of these fall into the category of 'soft law': for example, voluntary standards for aquaculture, the norms of flexicurity within firms rather than at national or European scales, guidelines for EU trade policy in general and for bilateral Free Trade Agreements in particular and, more generally, trans-industry encouragement for diverse forms of 'corporate social responsibility'. Of course, this soft law can have considerable effects, particularly when it takes the form of production standards and certification schemes. But what is more revealing is that invariably such instruments tend strongly to reinforce the thin competitiveness problematic, and this by reducing the role of public intervention and endorsing private management norms.

Just as importantly, all the above has been institutionalized not only in the name of 'freer markets' and the entrepreneur, but also as part of a 'better regulation agenda' adopted by the European Council and the Commission which ostensibly aimed to change how Europe's administrations intervene in the economy. Here the part of this 'agenda' that

has interested us the most concerns the consultations and evaluations that have been introduced as a means of being 'more responsive to industry'. As regards consultation, there is no doubt that through publishing more documents via the web and keeping to clearer timetables, Commission services have taken steps towards becoming more 'transparent' than in the past. However, as all our industry case studies highlight, this does not mean that more open discussion of policy alternatives has occurred. Indeed, as the case of wine reform shows particularly clearly, inviting the submission of more views provides a means of diluting discussion, drowning out dissenting voices and increasing the likelihood that the Commission's initial proposal will nevertheless be sent to the Council and the EP virtually intact. In other words, procedural changes here have not reduced the Commission's capacity to dominate the formulation of procedures regarding the reproduction of policy instruments (e.g. patents for pharmaceuticals) or their change (e.g. rules on wine-making). As Saliou has found in the case of the Commission's recent 'invitation to participate' in the making of EU maritime policy, consultation is 'more a 'tool to help governability' than a means of promoting the ideal of participative democracy' (Saliou, 2013).

The second procedural change in the name of better regulation has been the introduction of a form of ex ante evaluation known as 'impact assessments'. The requirement here is that the Commission evaluates the likely effects of its policy proposals before they are put into the legislative process and, in so doing, sets out different *scenari* and thus choices for policymakers. Although this procedure sounds conducive to inspiring informed debate about how the EU governs economic activity, once again actual implementation has meant that formal expectations are rarely met in practice. Similarly, although the introduction of systematized Impact Assessments has certainly meant that more supposedly factual information now circulates every time the Commission makes a legislative proposal, this does not mean that either the content of these documents, nor the *scenari* that they ostensibly generate, are genuinely open for discussion and debate. At least in the instances we have studied closely (notably for wine, aquaculture and cars), the Commission's preferred options had already firmed up well before the Impact Assessment was prepared, thus making this text more part of political argumentation than of 'neutral' analysis. Significantly, member state administrations are deliberately kept out of the preparation of Impact Assessments, ostensibly in the name of maintaining a separation between the Commission's work and Council negotiations. However, this norm is only partially adhered to in practice, thus rendering the traditional and illusionary separation between 'administration' and 'politics' just as questionable as it has always been.

Overall then, instrumentation at the scale of the EU has experienced a shift over the past ten to fifteen years, both in terms of the content of instruments and how they are produced, adopted and implemented (Radaelli & Meuwese, 2010). However, the fundamental question for research to address is not whether this change has made the European government of industries more 'efficient' or 'better'. Both these terms are contestable and invite normative judgement rather than analysis. Instead, we are more interested in understanding two deeper traits revealed by the displacements that have occurred. First, consolidation of neo-classical economics as the cornerstone of doctrines behind both European problematization and instrumentation. Second, the increasingly desperate search for legitimacy by the Commission and its supporters.

*Legitimation: depoliticization and short-termism as the norm*

This EU's quest for legitimacy, and that of the Commission, is of course by no means new. Although it has become conventional to date this quest from the difficult ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, legitimizing European integration has in fact been a constant challenge from the outset. Moreover, legitimation of European integration has never been the sole preserve of actors who formally represent the EU: its Commission and Parliament. Rather, a range of actors including member state executives and administrations, MEPs, interest groups and NGOs have all contributed to, or on the contrary frustrated, the 'naturalization' of the EU as a scale of government. This said, since the early 1990s a more sustained attack on the right to govern of the EU has indeed occurred and, in reply, proponents of deeper European integration have most often recast their beliefs and commitments in technicized language (Radaelli, 1999). More precisely, our findings retrace this trend firstly to the way information about EU measures to govern industries is communicated and, secondly, to the role European commissioners in particular play within this process.

Our analysis industries and trans-industry regulations largely confirms recent research in this issue area (Aldrin, 2012) which underlines that whilst representatives of the EU, and of the Commission in particular, have since the mid-1990s certainly devoted a great deal of energy and resources to communicating more than they did previously, this has not necessarily led to greater public understanding and acceptance. The two reasons for this we highlight here concern the type of language used to legitimize the EU's government of industries and the weakness of the EP as a space for debating policy options.

As regards language, many of the key terms used by proponents of deeper EU-scale involvement lend themselves strongly to depoliticization and thus non-debate. Amongst these words, the most prevalent is, once again, 'competitiveness'. As our research has repeatedly shown, arguing in the name of 'competitiveness' that the EU needs to introduce new policy instruments, or change old ones, is only likely to convince actors (e.g. wine merchants), and indeed citizens, who are already convinced that there is only one way to improve the European economy: introduce cost containment and 'free market forces'. Similarly, other terms closely linked to the competitiveness agenda, such as sustainable development or flexicurity, do little to convince even moderate critics of Commission proposals that the alternatives they propose are not worth seriously considering.

Of course, for such alternatives to be considered they first have to actually be heard. Again, as our research shows, this is by no means easy given that even the organization ostensibly created for this very purpose –the EP– is geared less towards genuine deliberative debate and more towards the technicized discussion of precise articles within legislative proposals. The non-debate in 2008 of the Commission's 'New vision' for the pharmaceutical industry provides a prime example of this trait. Instead of being a chamber within which this strategic document was actually discussed, the EP's relevant committee immediately became fixated upon one particular, and relatively marginal, policy proposal.

This said, if there is often very little debate over such questions of strategy, this is also because the most senior figures in the Commission –its commissioners– frequently



neglect or downplay the communicative dimension of their role. As our earlier research underlined, the role of commissioner has never been as strongly circumscribed by behavioural norms as that of ministers in most member states, and this particularly over questions of communication (Joana & Smith, 2002; Smith, 2003). This has meant that over the course of EU history some commissioners have sought to engage with the wider public more than others, notably via speechmaking and the media. What we have nevertheless found striking in the research presented here is that since the mid-1990s the commissioner responsible for DG Enterprise and Industry has consistently taken on a distinctly low profile. More precisely, as our case studies of the pharmaceuticals and automobile industries underline, communication in these fields has largely been delegated to officials and left to national politicians. The exceptions here include Marianne Fisher Boel and the reform of the EU's wine policy, together with successive competition commissioners (Mario Monti and Nellie Kroes). In these instances the commissioner was used as a spearhead for a reform worked for politically by the officeholder in question, their *cabinet* and DG. These counter examples show that although an accentuation of depoliticized communication has taken place elsewhere within the Commission, there is nothing inevitable or irreversible about this trend. This aspect of the EU's government of industries remains contingent upon the collectively constructed political project at issue, but also how each commissioner perceives their own role. This said, of course those seeking 'to swim against the prevailing tide' constantly have to struggle against a form of technical and cultural path dependency developed over previous EU and Commission practice. The instruments used to evaluate the likely impacts of EU policies are so firmly wedded to the quest for economic 'efficiency' and 'competitiveness' that they bolster definitions of problems and modes of legitimation which make alternative framings almost unenvisagable.

In summary, much more could and should be said about the political work revealed in GEDI's research and how it structures the EU's government of industry. What we have tried to do here is to underline how analyzing this activity around the concepts of problematization, instrumentation and legitimation provides new and rigorously derived insights into what causes the government of industry at this scale.

## **Conclusion**

Comme notre analyse du gouvernement européen des industries permet de le souligner, ce n'est qu'en mobilisant les concepts et les techniques d'enquête utilisés couramment au sein de la sociologie politique française que le rapport entre l'activité économique et le politique peut pleinement s'analyser. Loin de se limiter à la génération de données sur les acteurs, leurs ressources et leurs représentations sociales, l'apport de cette sociologie politique comporte également des leçons épistémologiques et ontologiques primordiales. Pour cette raison, l'heure n'est plus à un simple dialogue entre politistes et sociologues souvent prédisposés à s'accorder sur l'intérêt heuristique de leurs propres approches. A partir de cet acquis, ce qui importe davantage aujourd'hui est d'investir les débats nationaux et internationaux entre les économistes hétérodoxes et entre les *political economists*, c'est-à-dire dans des arènes où se trouvent les alliés potentiels pour développer et propager des analyses de l'activité économique à la fois heuristiques, justes et socialement utiles.

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