



# The Elyssar project in Beirut and the big machine of implementation failure

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**Abstract:**

This paper studies an urban public policy that has taken place in Lebanon: the “Elyssar” project, aiming at regenerating the southern suburbs of Beirut. The thesis is that when looking at the policy as a “big machine”, the necessary outcome of the process is the policy failure rather than its implementation. Non-implementation, even if generally seen as a negative outcome in policy analysis, seems not to be a failure for actors in this case. We show that actors such as Rafic Hariri, the Hezbollah and the Lebanese State had in fact more interest to stop at the policy-making stage because of its symbolic value. This policy-making stage is characterized by the focus on public policy instruments (the creation of a public agency for example), which has allowed both consensus and non-implementation. The paper has implications for the gap between officious and official policy-making, for policy evaluation and for the step-division of policy process: in our case, the process seems “complete” at the end of decision-making.

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## 1. Introduction

*“Design the machine that will produce the result your analysis indicates occurs routinely in the situation you have studied. Make sure you have included all the parts –all the social gears, cranks, belts, buttons, and other widgets- and all the specifications of materials and their qualities necessary to get the desired result. Since social scientists often study “problem situations”, the machine’s product will often be something we wouldn’t in fact want to produce, and the exercise of figuring out how to produce it is inevitably ironic, but that shouldn’t prevent us from taking it seriously”, Howard S. Becker.*

Considering a policy process as a “big machine” in Becker’s sense helps avoiding two flaws about implementation: first, forgetting it; second, considering it as the necessary end of the policy process. In fact, it is now widely agreed among social researchers that “a policy’s value must be measured not only in term of its appeal but also in light of its implementability” (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973). However, the big machine trick refines that analysis: what if implementation failure was precisely the goal of the actors involved in a policy process, what if all buttons and belts were irremediably turning toward implementation failure? Considering non-implementation of a public policy as a *failure* may be a social scientist’s bias against the real interest of actors at stake. Policy analysis begins by the outcomes: if those are radically different from the officially expected ones, it may be that actors have not succeeded or that they have never wanted to succeed. Becker’s trick advises to look at failures (corruption, student’s aversion toward learning) as results of an omnipotent Creator: it helps putting into perspective what actors really want; above all it helps understanding why a large part of policies are never implemented. Implementation failure can therefore be considered as the “product”, the final result of the interaction of all buttons and belts. Becker’s trick doesn’t tell that a negative outcome has necessarily been wanted, but it makes the researcher taking into account this possibility. It is not enough as a theoretical framework applicable to the entire policy process analysis but it is a useful starting point.

The case study we have chosen (Elyssar) enlightens the question of implementation failure as a satisfactory consensus among coalitions: while the policy has been presented as the result of successful negotiation among all coalitions, it has not been implemented. Inertia in implementation has favoured different actors in the process. The Elyssar policy in Beirut - development and regularization of the south-western suburb- is often used by academics to show a renewal in Beirut’s governance (Verdeil 2011, Harb 2001): it has included community actors to the policy-making process and has *made legible* illegal neighbourhoods of the suburbs. However, what seems to us interesting in that policy is that it has not been implemented while there was no opposition to it and while actors with substantive resources initiated and carried the project. Considering this result as the will of a big machine’s Creator turns the policy process round and makes it clearer in the causal chain why Elyssar remained at an embryonic stage.

Another starting point about policy failure is the debate between top-downers and bottom-uppers: while top-down theorists evaluate a policy through the achievement of the government's initial objectives, bottom-up theorists look at the local implementation by actor networks (Sabatier, 1986). The big machine trick brings us to look first at the final product (the failure) and to question the buttons that have led to it: it may be that neither the government's initial objective button, nor the local networks' way of implementing was destined to full implementation of the policy. Therefore, what we want to understand is how and if implementation failure can be a consensual outcome for all actors involved in the policy process; how a failed final product can hide a satisfactory intermediary stage. Interrogating those aspects first has implications for policy evaluation: if a policy failure is benefiting all actors, should it not be considered that non-implementation can have more value than implementation? Then, it puts into question the succession of steps in policy analysis: is decision-making (a step before implementation) not enough for actors to claim that they have *done* something, public policy being "anything a government chooses to do or not to do" (Dye, in Howlett and Ramesh 1995)?

In the Elyssar case, our hypothesis is that actors such as Rafic Hariri and the Hezbollah could have had an interest in the policy being implemented, but that the policy-making (both official and officious) has turned the policy into an un-implementable one. We describe a process where the necessity of consensus about features such as the type of agency executing the project and the content of the policy have brought the actors to collectively block possibility of implementation. Lebanon's consociational context makes it compulsory to integrate numerous actors into the process, especially because the area concerned by the policy is governed by Shiite groups. Therefore, the symbolism of the policy (because of the territory, scope, and people affected) has pushed actors to involve themselves a lot in decision-making and communication about this step, so as to make implementation secondary. However, we explain that this does not make the policy unimportant: decision-making has been sufficient for producing symbolic outcomes and for including Elyssar into a chain of other actions.

Our two main arguments are that (1) the different coalitions had an interest in the policy only existing rather than being implemented; because of how the policy design evolved. The consensual process founded on supposed values has moved aside the real intentions and interests of coalitions and of the targeted populations. The policy as it was designed could in no case be the final product of the big machine; the failure was this product. Then (2), we argue that what has allowed non-implementation and made it acceptable is the focus of decision-making on the choice of *public policy instruments* rather than on a policy content. We show that those instruments have brought a situation of satisfactory inertia for all actors.

### **1.1. Policy description: a major post-war project**

The Elyssar project is one of the two main reconstruction projects in post-war Lebanon, together with the Solidere project in the city centre. It aims at transforming the South-western suburb of Beirut by finding a solution to its illegal neighbourhoods and integrating it to the city. Elyssar is the name of the public agency

(*établissement*) in charge of implementing the project. It was created 1995 and was supposed to implement the policy during 14 years, according to a 4-phases action plan.

The Civil War has affected Beirut for about fifteen years, opposing confessional groups and destroying large parts of the city. Taëf agreements in 1990 have installed the foundations of reconciliation and pushed for large reconstruction works carried by a unified State. Besides, the Lebanese State is consociational: it is based on the institutionalization of confessional differences. Consociationalism plays of course a role in any policy when negotiated and implemented: communities coalitions largely dominate over State coalition, even within it. As for Beirut, governance of the city is generally made at the national level, the Municipal Council being relegated to secondary tasks and being linked to central actors through patronage-type relations. It should be noted that the suburbs are not part of Beirut: even if the “Greater Beirut” is often evoked, no institution considers the city in its extended boundaries. The suburbs are governed (or not governed) by autonomous municipalities.

The Elyssar policy occurs on a territory where the State has been absent and replaced by religious groups, notably during the Civil War. The South-western suburbs are mostly inhabited by Shiites, most of them being war displaced people coming from rural areas; the international refugee population is also significant (several Palestinian camps are located in the perimeter). It concentrates the largest part of illegal housing and poor populations in Beirut. Elyssar is the first project where the State officially recognizes (“legalizes”) illegal places and inhabitants. It is also the first time for the State to be interventionist in this area, which is considered to be “a State within a State”. The perimeter of Elyssar is of 560 hectares and contains 80.000 inhabitants. Its boundaries are: the sea, Beirut, the airport, the airport road. The southern suburbs have always been stigmatized as a misery belt, a village of displaced; homogeneously called *dahiye* (as explained by Harb, even if this word originally means “suburb”, it has been turned into a proper noun signifying “Shiite, poor, anarchical illegal and islamist”). Illegal urbanization, squatters and underdevelopment are common representations of this space expressed by both the media and public opinion. The southern suburbs also host some Hezbollah’s headquarters and were therefore targeted by Israel (notably in 2006). Hezbollah is the main actor of local governance; it detains power in several municipalities and has been providing urban services for a long time. This part of Greater Beirut has therefore also been called the “Hezbollah suburb”. Besides, southern suburbs are crucial for accessing Beirut: the airport and the highway going to the south are located nearby.

The policy story begins and ends with the will of one man: Rafic Hariri, Prime Minister during some phases of the process, political entrepreneur during the whole process. Hariri has been the central figure of all reconstruction works in post-war Lebanon. While the city centre renewal by Solidere has been officially managed by him, his role in Elyssar has been more officious and partial. In fact, the specificity of the southern suburbs – governance being orchestrated by religious groups- has made it compulsory to negotiate with “local actors” namely two Shiites political parties. Those two parties are the Hezbollah and Amal: Amal (“hope”) has been created earlier, as a continuation of the movement of the dispossessed, so as to promote integration of the marginalized, particularly of the Shiite population. It has gained important political representation in Lebanese institutions. The Hezbollah (“party of God”) is more recent and has only been institutionalized lately. Supported by Iran and Syria, its first aim was to resist to Israeli occupation. It is

now a major actor in any policy process in Lebanon, knowing its resources (both financial and intellectual) and its presence at the State level. The southern suburbs have traditionally been a territory of confrontation between those two parties but they now tend to unite, as in the case of Elyssar. Knowing those features, the approval of Hezbollah and Amal has been essential in the steps of policy formulation, decision-making and implementation. The government is not the only one to carry Elyssar: other members have been integrated to the decision process and decision bodies; it is officially a joint project. The board of Elyssar agency is composed of 6 members, among which one Hezbollah representative and one Amal representative. However, Hariri, Amal and the Hezbollah are not the only three actors in the process: several consultancy firms have been involved in the policy design process, local populations have become involved during implementation, some State bodies have been incorporated in the policy –the Council for Development and Reconstruction for infrastructures, the Ministry of Housing for rehousing-, finally private firms have been included through calls for bids.

Negotiations among those actors have led to a common project containing the following features: infrastructure renovation, elimination of current neighbourhoods, rehousing of inhabitants in the same perimeter, compensations of affected populations and regrouping of land. Elyssar is supposed to manage everything: the State is not expected to give any subsidies, neither are any international organizations or private firms. Elyssar has been planned so as to be financially auto-sufficient: revenues of sold land were thought to be equivalent to expenditures.

As for implementation, most of the project has not been realized. Only the infrastructure part has really been implemented (highways mostly), and most of it was not directly carried by Elyssar. In those cases, planned rehousing (initial solution) has been replaced by compensation. Expropriations have been realized but then cancelled because of the State not giving money in time. As for the rehousing part, which was the central point of the project, practically nothing has been implemented. The policy is now at a standstill. The debate has focused largely on negotiations and not on implementation; so that the project is now less evoked in both the media and academic literature.

## **1.2. Methodology**

Most information for writing this paper has come from academic works, in particular a PhD written by Clerc-Huybrechts (2002) about the Elyssar project. Interviews quoted in this work were enlightening about the policy visions of different coalitions. Then, there have been several contributions of Lebanese scholars about Elyssar, notably from Harb (1996, 2001). Unfortunately, few primary sources have been used because of the language barrier, of the impossibility of going to the field and the lack of information provided by the authorities. However, Elyssar's website is very interesting for showing the gap between decision-making and implementation: it mainly gives information about what is wished to be public from the point of view of policy makers.

## **2. Leading a consensual policy design so as to make of implementation failure the only possible big machine product**

Understanding the interaction between this apparent consensual project and its failed implementation requires going back to the different steps that constituted its policy evolution. The idea of using precise and delimited steps in policy analysis can be criticized for creating an imaginary systematic and linear process; while it would rather be a disordered and retroactive evolution. However, the subdivision of the policy process into stages seems useful in the Elyssar case: first, Elyssar has well followed clear steps, even if the implementation period has been characterized by some changes in the policy design. Second, using steps is useful when considering the policy process as a “big machine”: each step is a button in the production. The project, from 1990 to today, follows the pattern identified by Howlett and Ramesh (1995): agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision-making, policy implementation, policy evaluation (this step has not been reached). As precised by the authors, this process does not suffice if other features are not identified, such as the actors and their interests, the context of State and society, and the range of instruments. Those will be therefore combined with the step analysis. For addressing the game of actors, we particularly use the Advocacy Coalition Framework, which features will be explained later.

We should begin by the last step –implementation, since evaluation has not been reached- and by this paradox: most of the policy has not been implemented but no actors are complaining about the policy failure. This could mean that all actors have found an interest in the policy even if it has not been implemented: it is our hypothesis. A public agency has been created but has not been able to satisfy its tasks. Inhabitants have mostly not been expropriated, neither rehoused. The Hezbollah has not lost its privileged power on the territory; it has even gained some legitimacy. The State has had the possibility of investing the area through a new institution and to lead some infrastructure works facilitating the access to Beirut. The point now is to understand what causal chain has led to this situation of positive inertia.

### **2.1. Agenda setting: a unilateral policy window**

Our first idea is that the presence of a policy window combined with a policy monopoly has founded the policy process on a basis that has been taken by all as given; but that was maybe already making policy implementation impossible. A first interesting feature of Elyssar is that the agenda setting step has been consensual in the sense that all actors recognized that there was a problem. It was recognized by all that it was better to do something than to do nothing, which is the first step of a public policy. The case –or problem- of the south-western suburbs has therefore been “put on the agenda”: it is the first button to start the big machine. To understand what has made the soil fertile to problem recognition, a first historical feature has to be taken into account: Elyssar occurs during the post-war period, namely a reconstruction period. Reconstruction gives legitimacy to the central State to implement large projects without consulting much local public bodies and groups: the country is still under “emergency” and the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) is therefore the main urban planner. In that context emerges a “policy entrepreneur”: Rafic Hariri, a fortunate Sunnite specialized in the building industry; he becomes Prime Minister in 1992. He is incontestably the main actor of reconstruction in Lebanon, which essentially

happens in Beirut. His presence in the reconstruction period makes it possible for a “policy window” (as explained by Kingdon in 1984) to occur: the three sets of variables identified by Kingdon are present. First, the *stream of problems* is manifest: Hariri considers the situation of the south-western suburbs as unacceptable and he has a general will of developing Beirut. The suburbs are an access way to the city, which Hariri wants to make a showcase of his country’s successful reconstruction; therefore they have to be transformed. Hariri is not the only one perceiving the problem: the southern suburbs have always been considered as such by Beirut’s inhabitants. Second, there is a *stream of policies* also emerging from Rafic Hariri: his links with international consultancy firms have enabled him to get ideas and solutions about what could be done in the Elyssar perimeter. Several reports have been commanded early in the process to the firms Oger and Dar al-Handassah. Besides, Elyssar follows other reconstruction projects (such as Solidere); those are the main policies for Beirut at that time. Third, the *stream of politics*, in which Kingdon includes among others a “national mood”, is precisely at stake because of the special reconstruction context. At that stage, another key element emerges: Rafic Hariri creates a “policy monopoly” because he is the only one able to obtain information from experts and the only one to formulate choices about what the policy should be. But this monopoly occurs officiously: there is no public promotion of Hariri’s plans, so that most future actors are not informed at that stage. This opaque aspect of the agenda setting step shows an important feature of Elyssar: while the agenda setting step is often the result of the impulsion of actors who endure a problem, then recognized by the government; in the case of Elyssar another configuration has been at stake, namely the imposition of a vision by the State to the concerned population. This helps refining the notion of consensus: the south-western suburbs were indeed recognized as a *problem* by everybody, but concerned populations were not asking for an action undertaken by the State. They had in fact never considered the State as an actor; as explained in the policy description the State had been inexistent for a long time. The policy monopoly detained by Hariri has therefore induced the following: imposing the fact that it should be the State acting there, although it was not the most powerful actor on that territory. Since no other actor had a project for the area, there was an intersection between one problem and one solution; which other actors had to take as the founding principle. This first feature can be considered as a problem: the machine has been put into one direction by only one actor, making the starting button not negotiable. It conditioned the fact that a coalition that has historically no legitimacy on a territory would lead a major project there; without the inhabitants asking for it. Besides, it should be considered that local authorities, notably municipalities, are very weak in Lebanon, therefore there was no doubt about the fact that the central State would be the only one implementing, without the help of territorially-based State institutions. This initial configuration (the State imposing a policy) could indicate that a top-down approach should be used for evaluation, for measuring what amount of the State’s will has been implemented on the field. However, we believe that further evolution of the policy design has not been imposed by the State but rather suffered. This is why interactions with other actors have to be looked at: the outcome is not only a product of the State, but rather a product of all negotiations and exchanges with the State.

This unilateral policy window process implies a particular feature for implementation: if the one that has opened the policy window –Hariri’s coalition- withdraws from it, it becomes highly probable that no other actors take care of implementation.

## 2.2. No public concern, no pressure on implementation

Besides, if nothing was expected from the State by local inhabitants, nothing was either expected by the mass media. According to Howlett and Ramesh, this category of actors essentially plays a role during agenda setting. However, the southern suburb had always been considered as a problem and there seemed to be no special impulsion in minds at that time. Mass media was not addressing the problem for three main reasons: first, the situation was more seen as normality/fatality than as a problem (thus not as a priority); second, common opinion in Beirut and Lebanon has a negative outlook of the suburbs (thus complaining about their situation was not usual for medias); third the agenda setting step was opaque since the policy entrepreneur recognized the problem internally but not officially (thus not opening a public debate). This is crucial: if there is no public recognition for the policy to be a priority, then there won't be any national pressure if implementation does not occur. The fact is that all actors recognized there was a problem but didn't make that problem very public, certainly because they had an interest in not doing so. The difference with the Solidere project at this point is striking: in the latter, researchers and mass media were largely more involved in the agenda setting stage, since everybody felt concerned by the city centre renewal (Harb 2001).

Then, not only has the relation of actors to the problem made implementation impossible, but also the power relations between those actors: those interactions forced them to adopt consensual decisions that nobody wanted to implement.

## 2.3. The effect of consociationalism: no State but strong coalitions

Our argument is that the consociational system of Lebanon only enables interest groups to be powerful (and not the State); which then weakens the implementation process when those groups get joined in a common institution. Howlett and Ramesh's five categories (elected officials, appointed officials, interest groups, research organizations, mass media) shows how the Lebanese context is particular. In fact, consociational organization makes it hard to consider a State actor only as an elected official or appointed official: most of the time, he first represents his community. Actors often integrate the State as official representatives of their community. They are therefore expected to defend their group's interest within the State, confrontation of interests being a condition for the Lebanese equilibrium: they are *institutionalized*. This is particularly striking when, later, the public agency Elyssar is formed: members are chosen for their confession and two members are chosen for representing their political party (Hezbollah and Amal). The structure therefore seems to be more a negotiation structure than a united implementation structure. Consociationalism implies a very particular type of State: the structure is mainly a recipient of interests. This feature makes it necessary to be cautious when studying any public policy: even if the State is nowhere a unite body with united interests, in Lebanon it is even more fragmented. Besides, the scope of Hezbollah within Lebanon also blurs traditional approaches: Hezbollah members could fit in Howlett and Ramesh's five categories at the same time: the group has some elected officials in the suburban municipalities, some appointed officials in the Elyssar agency, the party in itself is an interest group, it owns some research organizations and some mass media. To evaluate the chance of implementation by the State, Howlett and Ramesh's two dimensions can be applied: degree of autonomy ("extent of the state's independence from

self-serving and conflicting social pressures”) can be considered as null; while capacity (which is among all calculated in terms of unity) is also very weak. Lebanese situation seems to be critical for the chances of public policy implementation: it combines a weak State with a fragmented society, which is the worse scenario. This explains why in the Elyssar project, majority of resources has not come from the State: the State as a unite entity is not a key actor in the policy process.

It is more accurate to look at the actors in term of *coalitions* and *subsystems* than of institutions in our case: the model of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (Sabatier and Weible 2007) helps refining the different actors groups. The ACF model is a mix between bottom-up and top-down approaches, its first premise is that the most useful unit of analysis when studying policy change in modern societies is not a governmental organization but rather a policy subsystem: “those actors from a variety of public and private organizations who are actively concerned with a policy problem or issue” (Sabatier 1986). ACF supposes that actors can be aggregated into “advocacy coalitions”, which mix intellectuals, politicians, administrators, etc. Those actors are united by beliefs of different degrees: deep core beliefs, policy core beliefs (both are normative and hard to change) and secondary beliefs (more subject to policy learning). It is certain that the model of actors as presented by ACF is not entirely applicable to Lebanon: for example, the “iron triangle of participants” (legislators, agency officials, interest group leaders) gets blurred by consociationalism. However, the analysis through *coalitions* and their *beliefs* is accurate for the Elyssar case.

First observation is that in the Elyssar policy process, the main coalition has been Hariri’s one and not the State’s one, even if Elyssar is a *public policy*. The State has in fact been included in Hariri’s coalition, making implementation impossible when the “political entrepreneur” was not at the head any more.

## 2.4. Implementation as conditioned to Hariri’s coalition

During the agenda setting step, only one coalition was at stake: the Hariri coalition. This coalition mixes actors from very different institutions: from both private and public spheres, formal and informal. It should be noted that the distinction between formal and informal is not accurate in a case like Elyssar, when approached in term of governance and not of government (Harb 2001). Hariri’s coalition includes international funds and consultancy firms, international political actors, and any kind of actor at the Lebanese level. In fact, in post-war period, Rafic Hariri has been holding a hegemonic position regarding both the State and the private sector; the terms *patronage* or *clientelism* are often used to describe his ties with the members of the coalition. Rafic Hariri’s role has evolved during the policy process because of the change of his political position: as a Prime Minister, he could mobilize State resources and institutions, which accelerated the process. Beliefs of Hariri regarding the Elyssar project, which explain the beginning of the agenda-setting step, are the following: first, Beirut has to be developed, which includes the development of its suburbs. Then, Beirut has to be accessible: infrastructures have to be built in the suburbs so as to facilitate the way to the city. Third, development of the suburbs is conditioned to expropriation: rehabilitation of actual infrastructures is not a solution. Fourth, the most efficient way of implementing is through a private company, as has been done in the Solidere project. Fifth: providing compensations rather than rehousing would make implementation easier. Those beliefs can be classified as

a mix of *policy core beliefs* and *secondary beliefs*: they do not include general assumptions about human nature or fundamental values (which would be *deep core beliefs*) but rather about how the policy should be implemented and by whom. It should be noticed that Hariri's coalition has never based its reflection on social characteristics: the policy was about economic development since the beginning. Knowing the outcomes of the policy design, we can assert that two of the Hariri's coalition beliefs have been contradicted: who should implement the policy (private firm) and what tool should be used for expropriation (compensation rather than rehousing). However, the goal of Hariri's coalition is incontestably the economic development of the area: abandon of other beliefs is accepted if it does not go against it. And yet, those other beliefs precisely concern the efficiency of implementation: abandoning them weakens the trust of the Hariri's coalition in the actual possibility of implementing the policy. If there is no belief in the policy itself but still in the goal (economic development), the policy can then become a tool for implementing economic development by other means and structures than the ones defined by the policy (rehousing and public agency). The ACF model enlightens two aspects of this coalition: first, as in any coalition, there are subdivisions (some beliefs are not shared by all members); second, as the main coalition, it tries to translate its beliefs into actual policy before its opponents do it. As for subdivisions, there had in fact been a diversity of proposals inside the coalition: there was no evidence that a private firm would implement the policy, neither that compensation was the best solution. The consultancy firms gave different options but Hariri had to come with a clear project to impose it on the process. Besides, there was a strong external factor influencing Hariri's belief: he was convinced of the success of Solidere and wanted to apply the same process to Elyssar.

When Hariri is not at the head anymore, the policy process enters stagnation: when the government changes in 1998, there are not enough impulses inside the State to make the process work. When Rafic Hariri dies, implementation simply gets stopped. This is what Howlett and Ramesh call a *variation in political circumstances* and which in Lebanon has very high implications for implementation.

## **2.5. Hezbollah and Amal: no initial beliefs, no will of implementation**

The argument concerning Hezbollah and Amal is that they integrated themselves in the policy process not for the sake of policy implementation but for limiting the other coalition's power. And yet, this limitation was conditioned to a failure in implementation. Amal and Hezbollah are two national Shiite groups that have jointly governed the southern suburbs of Beirut for a long time before Elyssar. They are not a priori allies: they have been fighting for power in the suburbs and have different coalitions and beliefs. They have power on both formal (municipalities) and informal spheres. A crucial aspect is that those groups don't have different *deep core beliefs* when compared to the Hariri coalition. In fact, it has been shown by a study on local governance in the southern suburbs (Harb 2001) that despite their participatory model appearance and good governance labels -some Hezbollah municipalities have been awarded by the UN "best practice"-, their vision of both politics and urban planning was approximately the same as other political and private actors in Lebanon. Their vision of urban planning is highly based on neoliberalism, as for Rafic Hariri, and they have not shown any particular interest for marginal zones and populations. As for policy core beliefs and secondary beliefs, they had no initial beliefs about the Elyssar policy. In fact, Hezbollah and Amal defined their position during the process, not before. They had never expressed a general vision for the

area. This aspect does not mean that a policy cannot be implemented: it often happens that actors integrate the process at an advanced step and then define their position. However, for Hezbollah and Amal, starting by the outcomes is enlightening: what they have expressed as one of their main wills –rehousing- and which they have negotiated for, was apparently not a crucial secondary belief. In fact, the implementation step has shown that the two groups were ready to abandon the rehousing aspect quickly: when expropriations were decided for Horsh al-Qatil and Jnah because of a new highway, they supported the Hariri coalition against rehousing, claiming that there was urgency and that compensation was a better solution. A risk with the ACF model would be to think of the objects and ideas that are used during negotiation as *beliefs*. And yet, the rehousing object, which has been carried as the main Hezbollah and Amal fight, was apparently not a belief for them. This does not mean that Hezbollah and Amal have no altruistic intentions toward the south-western inhabitants –ACF is precisely against rational choice frameworks and their a priori exclusion of altruism-; it could simply be that they don't believe in the Elyssar project as a mean of improving the suburbs.

If Hezbollah and Amal wanted to limit the other coalition's power, the best solution was in fact for the policy not to be implemented but to be adopted. An important feature is that Hezbollah and Amal were seen immediately as the representatives of residents, which is also why the Hariri coalition had to include them in the process. In reality, the Shiite parties' coalition was a different subsystem from the residents' one: majority of inhabitants was for example not in favour of expropriation, while Hezbollah and Amal considered it as evidence.

Turning to interests, it seems that the Hariri coalition had different ones from the Shiite parties: the interest of the State when considered as a whole, and of Hariri, was to invest the suburbs, an area where it had no power. Hezbollah and Amal already detained power on that territory; therefore it was not in their interest to let the State gain power. Besides, it was in their interest that people stayed in the perimeter. However, it was also in their interest to improve the economic development of the suburbs: they could profit from the externalities. As for the local population, being legally recognized and rehoused, and seeing their area becoming more competitive was also a priori in their interest.

Finally, interactions among the coalitions are important: when Elyssar gets discussed, the country just emerges from a Civil War, which means that trust among actors is at a very low level. Previous governments had already tried to intervene in the Southern suburbs, often in a violent way. Besides, while Hezbollah and Amal are Shiites groups, Hariri was a Sunnite (which is not the only interest he defends). "Perceptual filters" –as called by the ACF- tend to produce dissonant information about other coalitions; besides groups tend to see each other as more powerful and threatening than they are (the "devil shift"). In fact, Hariri's hegemony at the national level often made his opponents think of him as a "Prince"; while the territorial installation of Hezbollah and Amal in the suburbs was feared by external actors, who had few access to the area. Besides, Solidere was very important in the policy stream: it had been experienced as negative by local population and the Shiites groups, who therefore wanted to avoid at any cost such a process where the government imposes its will through an omnipotent private firm.

## **2.6. Substantial resources becoming insubstantial when put together**

What is crucial then for implementation is the intersection between resources, beliefs and interests. Looking at resources helps understanding why policy implementation can be seen as negative by some actors, while policy existence satisfies them. Regarding Elyssar, Harb proposes four categories of resources: territory, information, legislation and time. As for territory, Hezbollah and Amal have incontestably more resources than the State; the policy implementation would surely lower this resource. This resource also explains why Hezbollah and Amal absolutely wanted people to stay in the Elyssar perimeter: they wanted to keep their voter pool (since a territory also means a “clientele”). As for information, the Shiites groups had a crucial role: they served as information intermediary for both the actors (because they knew the territory) and the residents (because they were included in the policy process). Hezbollah and Amal can therefore disseminate information as they wish, create rumours, block some processes. The Hezbollah has besides a Research Centre, the CCSD, which published a report on the Elyssar project so that its members could be well informed. On the other side, the Hariri coalition has huge amounts of information since it has initiated the process; for instance, until the end it keeps exclusivity about estimation of the square meter to be expropriated. Regarding legislation, the State was the dominant actor in influencing agenda setting but Hezbollah and Amal also had access to official institutions: the leader of the National Assembly was an Amal leader during the decision-making process; he notably issued a decree to stop the creation of a private firm for Elyssar. A crucial resource should be added to Harb’s categorization: money; as for any public policy. This resource shows the gap between what actors had and what has been put into implementation: Hariri’s and Hezbollah’s monetary resources are very substantial but the agency they jointly decided has never had enough resources for implementation. In fact, in term of resources, Elyssar is officially powerful and officiously dramatically lacking.

This distortion between what coalitions have, and what resources they transfer to implementation can be explained by the mediation of *public policy instruments*. In fact, instruments that the coalitions have jointly created have favoured everyone by blocking implementation and by rather making Elyssar become an instrument for external interests.

## **3. Negotiating the instruments so as not to implement the policy**

It has been shown that actors had more interest in the policy only existing rather than being implemented: our argument is that the negotiation of certain public policy instruments has allowed this particular scheme to occur without it being obvious. Those instruments have constituted the chore of the decision-making step, avoiding discussions on what the project should be and how it should be done; so that implementation was not prepared.

Our analysis is based on the belief that policy instruments should be studied apart from the policy process because first in our case they have been the central transactional object; second because they are recipients of the representations and interests of actors; and third because they create their own effects (Lascoumes and Le Galès 2007). We argue that the central step for making implementation impossible has

been the policy design, in which occurs “the development of a systematic understanding of the selection of instruments” (Linder and Peters *in* Lascoumes and Le Galès).

The final product of decision-making in the Elyssar project can be divided in three categories of objects (Clerc-Huybrechts 2002): those which were considered as evidence, those which were presented as compromises and those which were left open for interpretation. Our argument is that evidence objects were about visions of urban planning and development, compromise objects were about public policy instruments and objects left open for interpretation were about how to implement the policy. This interaction between how objects appeared in the negotiation and what they contained is crucial for the outcomes: it shows what the actors really wanted to be or not to be in the project. We believe that the focus on the choice of instruments, which has been presented as a successful negotiation, has allowed inertia to take place in implementation because actors had already reached their goals.

We should begin by analyzing the first and the third categories. For evidence objects, there were no discussions while those were at the basis of the policy. It concerns the following points: the project's perimeter, the necessity of expropriating (Hezbollah and Amal never proposed rehabilitation instead of it) and the choice of converting the seaside into a commercial-touristy area. As said before, different coalitions had similar beliefs about urban planning and development: this could have been an advantage for implementation. The third category was precisely concerning implementation: several crucial elements were not discussed such as what would be the exact number of built houses, who would have the right to those houses, what would be the price of expropriated land, etc. Very few official documents were issued: only two decrees in 1995, while the final report was never published. Such blur in the policy process is a political choice: it allows actors not to be evaluated on their implementation. Since those aspects were not discussed, what implementation would include has not been debated in depth: it seems that actors were not especially concerned about it.

### **3.1. Giving all power to a powerless institutional instrument**

On the contrary, some decisions were presented as products of negotiation and more precisely as victories of the Shiite parties' action. Those decisions were about what instruments would be used to implement the policy. It is also about this field that mass media got involved in the policy process, while usually agenda setting is the most invested step. Hezbollah and Amal have presented the negotiation process as a clear opposition between two blocks: them and the residents on the one side, Hariri's coalition on the other side. However, as has been shown in the first part, the subsystem, when subdivided, is not as united as it seems: several actors of the Hariri's coalition were in fact not against the idea of a public agency for implementing. However, a posteriori reading of the negotiation has exposed this clear opposition because it was a good way of communicating for both parts: they could show that they had reached an agreement. The most crucial instrument was the institution that would implement the project: as said, Hariri was in favour of a private firm as for Solidere. The bad image of Solidere in public opinion mobilized Elyssar's residents and their “representatives” from Hezbollah and Amal. The groups have focused their efforts on blocking the advancement of the private firm; it is precisely at this point that they have joined their forces and presented themselves as a united coalition. The Research Centre of the Hezbollah published

several reports explaining why a public agency was better; the Amal president of the National Assembly blocked the legislative process. Hariri's coalition had no choice but accepting a public agency; if not, decision-making process would have stayed blocked. The clear interest for the Shiite groups was to get institutionalized in the process: they knew they would be included in a public agency while a private firm would have depended only on Hariri's coalition. However, it was also an acceptable decision for Hariri since the Elyssar agency directly obeys to the Prime Minister's office. The result of the negotiation process is particularly successful for the Shiite groups: they have shown that they were able to introduce the residents' will and to fight efficiently against the opposed coalition. Besides, by creating the Elyssar agency, Hezbollah and Amal "secure" the policy: they include themselves in the implementation step. Creation of a public agency is a positive aspect for the government in the sense that the policy appears as a "good governance" one: first, residents will be officially represented; second, the agency appears as an autonomous entity, which lowers the image of an omnipotent Hariri.

The result is a powerless instrument: Elyssar officially detains all powers, resources and tasks; while officiously it is an empty shell. The existence of this instrument directly represents the Shiite's groups' victory in the negotiation process; whatever use is made of it. As an institutional instrument, it also removes responsibility from the original coalition: if the policy fails, it can be attributed to the public agency rather than to Hariri. The existence of the instrument ensures that Elyssar will not be like Solidere, which is what residents feared. For both residents and Shiite groups, the point of this instrument is precisely about what the policy will not be; what the policy will be then becomes secondary. Howlett and Ramesh's taxonomy of policy instruments is interesting regarding the creation of Elyssar agency. Elyssar can be qualified as a *compulsory instrument*: "these are highly coercive instruments because they allow the government to do whatever it chooses within broad constitutional limits and leave little discretion to the target individuals, groups, or organizations". Elyssar can be ranged under the "public enterprise" instrument category, which holds three advantages according to Howlett and Ramesh: first, it is economically efficient if the good is not produced by the private sector; second, necessary information about the targeted subject is lower than in regulation; third, it "may simplify management if regulation is already extensive". Those supposed advantages actually show the weakness of Elyssar: its goal is not to deliver a good but to implement a policy in its entire scope; then it needs information because it has to create progressive regulation; finally, management is not simplified by Elyssar because regulation is not extensive at all. The question of resources is crucial: the main excuse during failed implementation is that Elyssar has no sufficient resources at that time. But no model has ever presented a possible financial balance for the institution: it was supposed to compensate costs with the selling of lands; however, it was sure that this compensation would never be enough. Therefore, it seems that all actors knew that Elyssar would not be able to implement correctly the policy. In fact, for the few implementation it has made, the State was the one providing money. For instance, in the case of some highways constructions, expropriations compensations have been given by the State. Because of its financial autonomy, Elyssar engaged in a vicious circle of inertia: it needed money to expropriate and rehouse but this money could only come after, when land would have been sold.

In the Elyssar process, there is no doubt that “instrumentation is really a political issue, as the choice of instrument—which, moreover, may form the object of political conflicts— will partly structure the process and its results” (Lascoumes and Le Galès). The choice of a public agency has structured both the decision-making and implementation steps; it has reinforced the consociational aspect of policy making in Lebanon by institutionalizing it in a new entity. Making that entity responsible of the whole process has encouraged the main coalition to implement what it wanted through other canals.

### **3.2. Bringing an unrealizable regulatory instrument to the centre**

The second instrument presented by Hezbollah and Amal as the successful end of negotiation has been the one of rehousing on site. As stated before, this was of crucial interest for Hezbollah and Amal: it ensured that they wouldn't lose their clientele. Against Hariri who was more in favour of financial compensation, they imposed two rules: first, all inhabitants would have to stay within the area, second, “the one house for one house” rule would have to be applied (every expropriated resident gets a new house). This was presented as a social fight by the Shiite parties and reinforced their image of resident's protector. Expropriating-rehousing as a regulatory instrument has been exposed as the key object of Elyssar, while officiously it was not the initial or main goal of coalitions. It induced that the opinion focus would concentrate on that portion of the policy; while the main coalition had never had a true belief in it. Therefore, one key aspect of implementation according to Howlett and Ramesh – “the decision-makers must state the goals of the policy and their relative ranking as clearly as possible”- was directly contradicted. This public policy instrument therefore became a burden: actors didn't want to implement Elyssar because they knew they had to begin by rehousing. The negotiation of this instrument is crucial for understand the Shiite parties' inertia: in both cases of implementation and non-implementation, inhabitants would stay on site; which means that implementation would have no major impact on their territorial implantation.

What makes the process stop at the decision-making level is that those instruments have a significant *political connotation* (Lascoumes and Le Galès): the one of good governance. Their symbolic is enough for actors to show that they have done something good. Studying the choice of those instruments is more useful than a posteriori discourses: while actors justify non-implementation by lack of resources, their instrument choice shows that there has been no option for giving sufficient resources to the structure in charge of implementation.

### **3.3. Going back to implementation: Elyssar policy becoming a policy instrument itself**

The introduced layer of instruments has shown how instruments were means for not implementing but also how they created non-implementation. Our argument here is that Elyssar –as a policy, not as an agency- has not been able to use the instruments produced for it but has rather become an instrument in itself for serving other projects and realizing some actors' frustrated aims. When looking back at the implementation step, it appears that the few implementation that has been done was in fact managed by other structures than Elyssar. Big infrastructure works, that are incontestably the main success of Elyssar, have been managed by the Council for Development and Reconstruction, while compensations for

expropriation in that case were provided by the State. In those cases, Elyssar has still served as a tool of justification: the projects were presented as related to Elyssar. It has been shown that Hariri's coalition primarily wanted modernization of the area and facilitation of the access to Beirut; while it didn't advocate for the central point of Elyssar (rehousing). In this sense, Elyssar has been useful for implementing what it wanted and not implementing what it didn't want.

Both the Hariri coalition and the Shiites parties have used Elyssar for its symbolic value of good governance: as stated by Le Galès and Lascoumes, "legislative and regulatory instruments exercise a symbolic function, as they are an attribute of legitimate power and draw their strength from their observance of the decision-making procedure that precedes them". As explained before, the stopping of the policy process at the decision-making step was conditioned to this symbolic gain: it was enough for actors.

As for residents, Elyssar has also been an *attribute of legitimate power*: it has recognized them and their houses; while before they were absent of any public consideration. Residents from the south-western suburbs have been made *legible*: the fact that Elyssar exists gives to them an existence in law; implementation of the policy is not needed for that. We could suggest that Elyssar has also become for residents a *new public policy instrument* (Lascoumes and Le Galès), more precisely an information-based instrument: Elyssar has become an intermediary for institutionalizing information given to inhabitants when a project gets applied to their area.

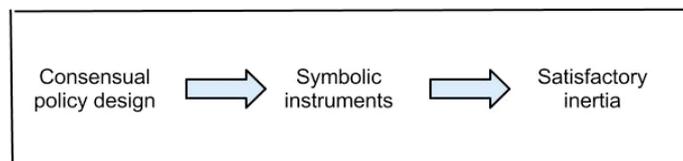
### 3.4. Justifying non-implementation

"ELYSSAR operations are kept away from administrative long procedures, it will work in cooperation with possible developers and investors to execute the development projects within minimum periods": the first sentence of the "Efficiency and Effectiveness in Implementing the Plan" website's part is significant about the authorities' way of communicating. No public announcements have been made about non-implementation: as stated before, all actors had apparently no interest in criticizing the failure. Different sections of the website itself are contradictory: in the "Implementation" section, focus is made on efficiency's improvement, so that it is directly explained that the State will finance Elyssar, which was not planned initially: "To execute the intended program, ELYSSAR has the capacity to draw on a multitude sources of finance namely :Allowances in the Lebanese Governmental Budget [...]". And yet, in the "Role" section, the supposed financial autonomy is reminded: "ELYSSAR is required to implement all the planning and development objectives set forth by the Detailed Master Plan. Hence, the agency will rely on its financial and administrative autonomy to approve development proposals, negotiate the finance of affordable housing and infrastructure works". More generally, consultation of the website is very striking about the disproportion of importance given to decision-making rather than implementation. Tables present very precise figures about how many square meters, people, housing units, roads and so forth will be implemented and about the execution in phases of the project. However, nowhere appears what has been executed yet; which is surprising knowing that a special website has been designed for the project and that it was supposed to start in 1995. This leads to a more general questioning: did actors have since the beginning an officious program, very different from the official one, or did they simply improvise along the process? In other words, is the big machine of implementation failure wanted or is it an unplanned process?

This has implications for actors justifying the failure. From what appears when looking at communication that has been made, neither the Hariri's coalition, nor the Hezbollah and Amal have wished to make the outcomes of the policy very public (contrary to the decision-making phase). It could indicate two possibilities: first, that actors have never planned to make the outcomes public; second, that they wanted to communicate on it but couldn't because of the failure. Those informations are very hard to extract but, since a website has been designed, it can be supposed that authorities were planning to communicate more on the outcomes than what they finally did. Most probable explanation is that actors (especially the Hariri coalition) had ambitious aims at the beginning, but progressively observed that decision-making was enough, so that they only communicated about that stage. As for Hezbollah and Amal, knowing the features we have exposed before, it seems that main goal was to keep some authority on the concerned territory, and that other aims were per se reactive and adaptive: if Elyssar had succeeded, they would surely have attached themselves publicly to the success. Since they didn't initiate the project and had no big interest in it succeeding, it is not a problem for them not to communicate about it.

#### 4. Conclusion: a unique big machine?

What we have shown for Elyssar is that indeed there was an interest for all actors to stop at the decision-making step: this step has been enough for actors to satisfy their goals, which were not the official goals presented by the policy. We have explained that phenomenon through the choice of public policy instruments in the negotiation process. What has made the particularity of those instruments is their high political connotation: they can be seen as "symbolic". The model can be presented as following:



This does not mean that the policy process was a success: final product of the big machine remains a failure. However, there has been no *failure* for the Hariri coalition in the sense that modernization works did happen in the area and that it gained a way of accessing the suburbs; there has been no *failure* for Hezbollah and Amal since they kept their territorial power and improved their representative position toward residents of the south-western suburbs; finally, it was not a *failure* for residents since they got recognized. Our analysis puts into question the fact of looking only at implementation for assessing the efficiency of a policy, particularly in the case of top-down approaches. What then could be argued is that the big machine of Elyssar is a unique non-replicable machine, with its unique buttons and belts, especially knowing the consociational context. However, we take the Elyssar case as inscribed in a general tendency of change in instruments gaining power over change in policy content, favouring "tendencies toward inertia" (Lascombes and Le Galès). This is of crucial importance for policy analysis: if instruments become, as in the Elyssar case, the central focus of the policy and allow the policy process to stop at the decision-making step, then the way of assessing the process and its outcomes should be rethought: in any case, it is not only the final product of the big machine that has to be evaluated. The point is then to find occurrence of certain public

policy instruments in different big machines: “remember that we don’t really want these results but engage in this machine-designing exercise as a way of systematically looking for everything that contributes to their occurrence” (Becker).

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