6th ECPR General Conference

University of Iceland

25th-27th Aug. 2011

Section 109 - The Argumentative Turn Revisited: Policy Discourse and Public Deliberation

Panel 357 - Revisiting Language Based Approaches to Policy Analysis

The tell-tale heart of political science: Literal vs. Metaphorical Use of Narrative in Analysing Power Relations

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« **The tell-tale heart of political science : literal vs. metaphorical use of narrative in analysing power relations** »

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Abstract:

Judging by their current uses in policy analysis, the merits of notions such as 'policy narrative' and 'meta-narrative' seem to reside more in their evocative or suggestive character than in any capacity to "tell a story". Narratives constructed by political scientists mostly have a representational content that bears little similarity with what narratology as a discipline studies. Breaking up with this metaphorical use, we propose to take the storytelling dimension of policy narrative more seriously, ie. more literally. Though narratives proved useful in understanding the articulation of discursive patterns and power struggles in policy processes, we think it paradoxically failed to provide a consistent analysis of what is at stake when agents and institutions get "entangled in stories" (to take the expression of German phenomenologist Wilhelm Schapp). What would happen to policy narratives if, according to the strictly technical, narratological sense of the word, we suddenly turned actors and agents into "characters", who get transformed through a series of trials and tests? Similarly, if we restored the notion of perspective (what narratologists call 'focalization'), what would be the consequence for the policy analyst to be envisaged as a narrator?
In our paper, we propose to confront literal and metaphorical uses of narratives in analyzing power relations. We suggest that both frames of analysis are actually complementary: once explored and revisited as 'narratives' in either use of the word, concepts of 'innovation', 'development' and 'modernity' already appear to function as plot engines, under a broader narratological perspective.

Introduction

In our paper, we propose to focus on the concept of narrative and the way it has been used so far in political science, especially in policy studies. We will refer to narratology as a scientific discipline to stress a more literal approach to narratives than the one followed by most policy analysts who, as we understand it, only address a rather metaphorical notion of narrative. We insist on the fact that this should not downplay the relevance of a metaphorical approach to narratives, but rather be thought of in a complementary way. To that extent, the notion of "pathway" will help us introduce open-endedness and a multi-level dimension in metaphorical narration.

The contribution we would like to bring is twofold. First, we intend to complete the

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policy analyst's methodological toolkit by taking into account the power dimension of narratives. Second, we believe that, even at a metaphorical level, bringing together policy analysis and narratology not only clarifies the notion of narrative we usually refer to but, more importantly, also has a normative self-reflexivity component: we as policy analysts should be careful when we behave as if agents were telling each other stories. Instead, we shall acknowledge our own structuring role in putting together the representational elements of policy-making and turning them into "narratives". It is within such a broader conceptualization, so our argument goes, that will it be possible to consider narratives not as a mere instrument of power, but as the heart of its distribution.

Although it originates from literary theory (Eco 1979; Genette, 1979; Van Dijk, 1975; Citton 2010), the power of narratives in shaping beliefs and actions is today supported in a variety of academic research fields including policy studies (e.g. Fischer, 2003; Stone, 2003; Roe, 1994; Jones and McBeth 2010) communications (e.g., McComas & Shanahan, 1999), marketing (e.g., Mattila, 2000), neuroscience (e.g., Ash et al., 2007), psychology (e.g., Gerrig & Egidi, 2003), sociology (e.g. Latour, 2003; Claisse and Delvenne 2011) or science and technology studies (e.g. Delvenne and Rip, 2011). These disciplines usually study narratives as an empirical concept, using traditional methodologies to build explanatory theories of narratives.

Yet despite the apparent power of narratives in shaping arguments, discourse and reality, we agree with Jones and Mc Beth's diagnosis (2010, p. 330) when they consider that "policy studies, although significant steps were taken by the postpositivist school of public policy, have largely remained on the sidelines of the empirical study of narratives, failing to provide methodological alternatives to the study of narratives"[2]. In this contribution, we will suggest that narratology can bring up additional clarity, constructive formalism and fresh conceptual rigor to policy analysis. Policy studies have often discussed narratives in an instrumental way, turning them into strategic tools used by actors struggling for power. This creates some particular issues that the present paper claims to address. Indeed, it is important to recall that policy narratives are not narratives *per se*: they are transformed into narratives by the analyst whose task is to order the social world by attributing meaning and making sense of reality. Most of the time, however, policy studies have tended to ignore the existence of various narrative levels, which created misleading assumptions about the almost intrinsic power of narratives (e.g. Radaelli, 2000a). In the literature, for instance Bridgman and Barry (2002), who use and expand on Emery Roe's (1994) narrative policy

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[2] Jones and McBeth define a narrative as "a story with a temporal sequence of events unfolding in a plot that is populated by dramatic moments, symbols, and archetypal characters that culminates in a moral to the story. Narrative, understood here as both a particular category of communication and a method of cognitive organization, functions as a seemingly universal device for individuals to sharpen certain elements of reality while levelling others. Indeed, there is increasingly persuasive empirical evidence to support such a claim as narrative is found to be a primary means by which individuals organize, process, and convey information. In fact, narrative cognition may be fundamental to a meaningful human existence" (2010: 329-330).

analysis framework, metaphors are emphasized because they seemingly embody "narratives" and "counternarratives".

However, when referred to in this way, narratives have a representational content that bears little similarity with what narratology as a discipline studies. As a provocative way of putting it, one could say that there is no narrative in a policy narrative. At best, one can argue that there are shared repertoires or storylines but the role of the policy analyst — giving account of the actors' narrative accounts — is rather puzzling for understanding who is telling whose story. Breaking up with this metaphorical use, we propose to take the storytelling dimension of policy narrative more seriously, ie. more literally. Though narratives proved useful in understanding the articulation of discursive patterns and power struggles in policy processes, we think it paradoxically failed to provide a consistent analysis of what is at stake when agents and institutions get "entangled in stories" (to take the expression of German phenomenologist Wilhelm Schapp). What would happen to policy narratives if, according to the strictly technical, narratological sense of the word, we suddenly turned actors and agents into "characters" who get transformed through a series of trials and tests? Similarly, if we restored the notion of perspective (what narratologists call 'focalization'), what would be the consequence for the policy analyst to be envisaged as a narrator?

In our contribution, we propose to confront literal and metaphorical uses of narratives in analyzing power relations. We suggest that both frames of analysis are actually complementary: once explored and revisited as 'narratives' in either use of the word, concepts such as 'innovation', 'development' and 'modernity' already appear to function as *plot engines*, under a broader narratological perspective.

Innovation for development and the golden Eden of Modernity

All over the world, science, technology and innovation policies and strategic plans integrate and reproduce the narrative of innovation for development through economic growth, using concepts such as « national systems of innovation » (Lundvall, 1992) or « knowledge society/economy ». Even when such a model of innovation was not ideal or unadapted for local realities, it has been put forward again and again by international institutions such as the World Bank, the Interamerican Bank for Development or the International Monetary Fund. The equation at the heart of the narrative has always been the same: fostering innovation — thus investing in order to strengthen its place in the national economy — should unavoidably lead to further economic benefits that should ultimately help improve the level of social welfare. As a matter of fact, national systems of innovation theoretically exist wherever innovation is performed. Making the system come true and be efficient sounds like a precondition for competitiveness and further development. However, in reality,

those systems merely exist in most developing countries who use it a legitimation discourse for activities that cannot actually take place because of economic dependence to the global North, lack of resources and wide social inequalities. Importantly, pretending to take the « knowledge society pathway » seriously, e.g. by establishing an institutional structure for a national system of innovation, becomes the motor of further public policies funding.

When innovation is finally performed, it thus means that power has been unequally distributed amongst a number of actors that took part, in one way or another, to a complex systemic process including natural resources extraction, fundamental and applied research, industrial applications and economic competitiveness leading to further benefits. Such a process implied an active participation of stakeholders who confronted various lines of arguments, discursive resources, economic visions and socio-political priorities. Most of the time, when developing countries embraced the narrative of innovation for development, they somehow fell victim of a dominant narrative which is actually entrenched in or somehow related to an hegemonic structure (Radaelli, 2000), a consistent pattern that reflects the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000).

Inspired by Beck and Lau's idea of "patterns of meta-change" (2005, 529), we propose the notion of "pathways" of development (specifically, in this case, the pathway of "innovation for economic and social improvement") to introduce open-endedness in metaphorical narration. "Pathways" are understood here, as the Oxford English Dictionary phrases it: "a sequence of changes or events constituting a progression." What the "progression" is needs not be specified beforehand. Pathways are open-ended and have to be reconstructed by taking their open-endedness into account[3].

A further analytical step is to locate such a pathway empirically. And this is where the narratives come in. It is indeed possible to point out a patchwork of actual or potential master narrative strands and overall socio-political constellations at the macro level (what Roe would call a metanarrative) which have an impact on institutions, affecting their functioning and influencing the practices of actors. In some historical periods, an evolving master narrative can be identified (like the one we just outlined) which creates discursive order and has an effect on institutions and practices. Thus, the macro-level patchwork acts as a backdrop to institutions and interactions at meso level, but is also the outcome of such interactions. When there is some stabilization a reversal occurs and the macro level shapes the meso level, at least for a time. Since institutions and practices have their own dynamics as well they will never be completely captured and shaped by a master narrative.

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[3] The notion of pathway is discussed in broader detail in Delvenne (2011), who discusses reflexive modernization in general, and in Delvenne and Rip (2011), who suggest a methodology for tracing pathways of science and technology institutions under conditions of reflexive modernization.

The tentative justifications offered by the actors in the "innovation for development" pathway are located at the macro-level, but the pathway is created and supported at the meso-level of institutions and corporate actors (in the sense of Coleman, 1990), including civil society organisations. Such pathways are not given, just inviting actors to follow them. They are open-ended and co-constructed. Actors pursuing open-ended paths will introduce notions of more or less desirable directions that will shape discussion and action. Experiences of reactions and outcomes, and the reflection on what happens, will go into the combination of actual evolutions and projections of desirable directions.

A concrete instance of a narrative taking a life on its own and to some extent becoming an external force exerting a pressure on actors and institutions is the narrative of Modernity since the 18th century. For the sake of helping so-called « developing », « less advanced », « underdeveloped » or « traditional » countries to reach the golden Eden of Modernity, political decisions are being taken everyday at the highest decisional level by respectable international institutions. As we have just explained, it is evident that those political decisions influence the design of public policies in developing countries. We underlined that these decisions were not neutral because they primarily serve the interests of more developed (mostly Western) countries. However, it is difficult to argue that international public officials do engage in narratives for advancing the Modern project. But the analyst might say they do, even though unconsciously, because they are embedded in power structures where projections and attempts at anticipation occur all the time.

Where does the particular salience of the narrative of Modernity come from? One explanation can be given by referring to an asymmetrical importance and visibility of two separate sociological traditions. The first one is Eurocentric, hegemonic in the way it frames the Modern project and its claims to universality. This tradition considers modernity as a set of European phenomena that first developed in Europe before spreading out to other parts of the world which were — and still are — by definition or by opposition traditional, primitive, less advanced, underdeveloped. Ulrick Beck and Anthony Giddens stand for influential authors in this trend of thought. For example, Giddens inaugurates his book *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990, 1-3) by stating that "modernity refers to modes of social life or organisation which emerged in Europe and that sociology is a study of *that* modern social life" (our emphasis).

As Beck and Grande (2010) acknowledge:

> This […] encouraged the denigration of […] colonized societies, which were widely perceived as inferior and backward compared to their European and American counterparts ('traditional'). Many theories of modernity have consequently drawn on a very narrow range of national experiences (e.g. England/Britain in the economic realm, France in the political domain and Prussia/Germany in the field of bureaucracy), which are presumed to be

universally valid or, at the very least, a model to be replicated in other regions of the globe (412).

Further in the same article, Beck and Grande (2010) even confess that:

> In its initial formulation (see, e.g., Beck 1992; Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994), the theory of reflexive modernization was very much a theory of 'Western' modernity itself. It shared a number of basic assumptions with traditional theories of modernity and modernization. Among others, it had the same universalist aspiration, i.e. it assumed that its norms, principles and institutions could (and should) be applied (sooner or later) throughout the globe. This idea must be revised and replaced by the idea of 'cosmopolitan modernities' (416).

Nevertheless, from a Euramerican point of view, this remains the main visible line of academic thinking of modernity if one looks at what can be found in libraries as well as in high impact peer-reviewed articles in scientific journals.

The second, less visible, sociological tradition of modernity is driven by authors from the "global South" (e.g. Quijano, 2000; Lee, 2008; Patel, 2010; Randeria, 2002) who heavily rely on a research programme whose aim is to unfold the history of modernity in order to reconstruct the way it has been presented again and again by the victors (the dominators), in science, literature or in the classrooms. Although these authors (mostly neo-marxists and post-structuralists) remain marginal in high impact peer-reviewed scientific journal, their important points address modernity as a hegemonic process that *does not clearly assume itself because it systematically tones down the question of power*. Historical power but also — importantly for our purpose — actual power exerted by the beneficiaries of Westernized modernity. However, they stress that *coloniality* (Quijano) or *indigenity* (Patel) are crucial concepts to understand the current balance of powers in a world dominated by small set of countries belonging to the "global North".

Until his recent publication with Edgar Grande, Ulrich Beck never stopped presenting reflexive modernization as a linear process, continuing to push forward the latest developments of the Western modern project. In this vein, interconnectivity and global dynamics are said to render to world so complex that modern achievements, capitalism and supranational cooperation along the lines defined by international institutions are key to ensure good governance in the 21st century.

Eisenstadt's attempt at coining the term "multiple modernities" (2000) is an important achievement in the direction of equitable and possibly more "socially fair" social science. However, as underlined by Patel (2010), he is mainly convincing in demonstrating how several modernities could develop and follow separate historical trajectories, *almost separately from one another*. The next

important step (for us, for social science, for the Modern project) is to provide evidence as to how those various modern trajectories have actually been interacting along the lines of processes of domination by a few on many others. In other words, we need to tend towards *the study of a variety of pathways towards different interconnected modernities*.

Towards a literal approach to narrativity

The notion of *pathway* we presented in the previous section in order to describe multi-level sequences of actions in macro-processes such as innovation, development or Modernity is in itself no less metaphorical than the notion of *narrative*. It doesn't "tell any story": it has been designed to organize and structure heterogeneous sets of representations and discourse. But it has at least the merit of open-endedness, whereas Roe repeatedly (and minimally) defined a narrative as something that must have "a beginning, a middle and an end" (1992: 563). Not having an end is even, according to Roe, a distinctive feature of a *nonstory*. Yet, most actors engaged in a course of action are capable of elaborating several storylines regarding "what could happen next", even if they don't know for sure what exactly is going to happen. They have the ability to imagine alternatives; they have expectations, desires and cognitions that are oriented toward the future, even if that future is unknown or uncertain. These open-ended routine activities of interpretation match the definition of a narrative in a much better way that Roe's criteria.

Anticipation and possibility are also central to the cognitive activities involved in telling, reading or listening to a story. When interpreting a story, the reader establishes a complex relationship with the text that combines synthesizing and forecasting: even if the reader doesn't know the end of the story, he or she develops, in cooperation with the text, strategies of interpretation that clear paths among the possible worlds made accessible by the narrative. As a result, the lack of an ending is not determinant to discriminate between candidates for a story: even better, it is precisely how narratives are meant to function. From the agent or the reader point of view, any sequence of action can be described as a story regardless of whether it has reached completion or not. "*What happens next?*" is the pivotal question any reader has got to ask himself when confronted to an unfolding story. The criteria used by Roe to build the notion of policy narrative seem to miss that key feature.

Incidentally, Deborah Stone uses approximately the same criteria to define what a narrative structure is: "Definitions of policy problems usually have narrative structure; that is, they are stories with a beginning, middle, and an end, involving some change or transformation. They have heroes and villains and innocent victims, and they pit forces of evil against forces of good." (2002: 138)

If stories are not something that, as Roe or Stone put it roughly, have "beginnings, middles and ends", then how could we improve that definition? In *Lector in Fabula*, Italian semiotician Umberto Eco tries to determine the basic elements of a narrative sequence. He starts by summarizing a series of conditions proposed by Dutch narrative theorist Teun van Dijk (1975). According to the latter:

> "A narration is a description of actions that requires, for each action described, an *agent*, an *intention* of the agent, a *state* or possible world, a *change*, along with the cause or the point that determines that change; one could add *mental states*, *emotions*, *circumstances* to that; but description is critical (…) if the described actions are *difficult* and only if the agent does not have an *obvious choice* as to the course of action to take in order to change the state that doesn't correspond to his own desires; the events that ensue from that decision have to be unexpected, and some of them must appear unusual or strange." (1985: 137, our translation).

The most important elements here for the purpose of our communication are the notions of *possible world*, of *state changes* and of *mental states*. Indeed, as we shall develop in the last section of our paper, these elements are also distinctive components of modern (re)definitions of power, so that power and narrative should be thought together, as mutually embedded social constructs rather than two separate phenomena.

For now, if we take a closer look at van Dijk's definition of narrative found in Eco's work, we could say it bears some similarities with Stone's attempt (except for the lack of reference to beginnings, middles and ends), especially in the last elements. But Eco immediately minimizes the importance of these elements that emphasize "difficulties" and "unusual" events, discarding them as "excessive" for a general definition of narrative. He then simply goes back to Aristotle's *Poetics* to limit the prerequisites of a narrative to a shorter list comprising:

> "An agent (be it human or not); an initial state; a series of changes oriented in time and produced by causes (which do not have to be specified at all cost); until a final result is reached (be it transitory or interlocutory)." (1985: 138, our translation)

This definition is now opened enough to allow Eco to identify a narrative level even in short segments and utterances of texts that do not appear as narrative at first sight - for example, the detailed chemical procedure required to produce lithium, or the definition of substance at the beginning of Spinoza's *Ethics*:

> "By *substance*, I mean that which exists in itself, and is conceived through itself; in other words, that of which the concept does not need the concept of any other thing, from which it must be formed." (Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part I, definition 1)

Eco claims that this definition contains at least two embedded *fabulas* (which can be defined as basic narrative units): in a first *fabula*, an agent achieves an action of signifying or meaning and, doing so, passes from a state of confused knowledge to a state of clearer knowledge about what God is. But there is a second *fabula* behind the first one, provided we understand the verb "I mean" (latin *intelligo*) as a genuine act of institution: if we do so, we understand that, through his own act of definition of God, the agent institutes his own object as a cultural unit, literally making it be. In the first *fabula*, God is not modified by the action of the agent; in the second one, he is instituted as an object. Yet, it would seem that nothing happens in the definition. Eco is aware that he chose a borderline example, but it is precisely the point: Spinoza's definition is obviously not satisfactory as an adventure novel, but it sort of gives a "zero degree" for narrativity. Far from being a "nonstory" in Roe's sense, this *fabula* found countless "Model Readers", as Eco puts it, capable of enough textual cooperation to experience the kind of metaphysical emotion it encapsulates.

Now that we rephrased the notion of narrative so that it goes beyond the basic feature of having "beginnings, middles and ends", we can face another problem in the most common definition of policy narratives. As we suggested in the first section of our paper, there is no "real" narrative in policy narratives, just like there is no real "pathways" of development or innovation: narratives are a mere conceptual tool used by the analyst to give account and make sense of the way agents make themselves sense of their actions. In ethnomethodological terms, one could say it is an "account of accounts", adopting the form of a narrative as a particular "ethnomethod"[4]. The policy analyst behaves as if agents were telling each other stories, but he or she is actually the one who puts the elements together and builds the macrostructure of the metanarrative. As a second degree elaboration, it has the good points and downsides of a metaphor.

There is no denying that narratives do help policy makers structure their environment and so reduce uncertainty and complexity, certifying and stabilizing the hypotheses necessary to decision making. But the same goes all the more for the policy analyst, who also uses narratives to structure otherwise conflicting representations and perspectives. Roe develops powerful "metanarratives" that in turn inform policy makers of their own representations, which in the end, in the best-case scenario, fosters a mutual learning process and encourages the search for consensus.

This should not be a problem if the analyst kept a clear distinction of who does what in the process. But the notion of policy narrative actually mixes up different levels that, in our view, should remain distinct and would do so if we adopted a more literal take on narrativity. On what level exactly would be a "dominant policy narrative"? Is it:

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4 That is: "a shared method used by members of society to mutually construct the meaningful orderliness of social situations" (Anne Warfield Rawls, in Garfinkel, 2002: 5).

- The very sequence of actions, the "content" of the narrative, so to speak – for example, what we get when we extract a *fabula* from a segment of text, just like Eco did with Spinoza's definition of substance? This is what narratology bluntly calls the *story*, or the *diegesis* (see Genette, 1980). With Roe's focus on structures and pure contents of narratives, this should be the most natural level at which dominant policy narratives operate. This is also the level of Deborah Stone's "causal stories", which correspond to general patterns of stories implying different ways of attributing causality and responsability;

- But it could also be the *narrative* itself of that sequence, that is, the very words by which Spinoza ordered that sequence of actions — the oral or written discourse in charge of "telling the story". Confusingly, and although policy narratives are mainly a convenient metaphor, this is also the level at which some analysts seem to locate dominant narratives. Radaelli, for example, insists that policy narratives do not "float in the air" (2000b: 262) and have to be backed up by institutions in order to be fully efficient as components of a cognitive structure – which is another way to say that stories have first to be told in order to be heard. Undoubtedly, to think otherwise would amount to succumbing to some kind of idealistic bias. But the confusion remains – all the more since the reader often has little information as to the basic material used by the analyst (interviews, statements, reports, …);

- Finally, the third and last narrative level is the narrative act itself as a speech act, the *narration*. As any speech act, narrations have perlocutionary effects that can indeed be very powerful: narratives can persuade, scare, inform, enlighten, entertain, and in general get someone to do something he would not have done otherwise. These effects have also been acknowledged as they should by policy analysts. Radaelli (2000b), to quote him again, reminds us that hegemonic narratives are powerful not only for what they say, but for what they do – and what they do best is perhaps to reduce rival or alternative narratives to silence.

Narratology's task as a subdiscipline of linguistics is to study the relationships between these three levels (story, narrative and narration), in terms of:
- *frequency* (the possibilities allowed by the separation between an event and its narration);
- *duration* (leading to a difference between narrative time and discourse time);
- *voice* (who narrates and from where? In short, narration can be from inside or from outside the text, and the narrator can be a character within the story or not);
- and *mode*, which is a matter of distance and perspective of the narrator, that is a problem of focalisation.

However, as we could see, these three levels are often mixed up by policy analysts, and their articulations never studied – not surprisingly, since, for the most part, there are no real utterances of narratives to begin with. Even at a metaphorical level, we believe these distinctions should help us policy analysts

not only clarify the notion of narrative we refer to, but, more importantly, identify ourselves as "ghost narrators" in the policy narratives machine.

Narratives and counter-narratives

Another way of exploring more literal uses of the notion of narrative in policy studies would be to follow the recent suggestions made by French literary and political theorist Yves Citton in a short essay entitled *Mythocracy* (2010). Citton tries to understand the growing hold that storytelling as a new marketing paradigm came to have on our daily lives: nowadays, it would seem that everybody has a story to tell, and especially that everybody who has something to sell can't do so without telling a story about it (Salmon, 2010). This pervasive "power" of narratives in the most trivial sense of the word led Citton to analyze the relations between power and narratives more deeply, with the purpose of building efficient "counter-narratives" that would be at least as powerful as the ones developed by marketers.

Citton points out a deep-level homology between narratives as narratology analyzes them and Foucault's definition of power. In one of his last papers, "The Subject of Power", where he tried to return to and expand on his underlying conception of power in his work, Foucault gave indeed some of his most insightful definitions of what power is about:

> It is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions." (1982: 789)

> The exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome. (1982: 790)

> To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others. (1982: 790)

This is where Citton found some kind of homology between power and the way narrative functions. His own definition of the notion, though more minimalistic than the ones we commented on earlier in our paper, continues the trend: "a narrative is the relation [ie. the act of narrating] of *transformation of states* affecting the connection of a certain subject with a certain object" (Citton, 2010: 70, our translation). One could say Citton's approach of narrative and power is just as metaphorical as Roe's since it is based on a purely analogical line of reasoning. The difference resides in the underlying conception of narrative, which

is, in itself, more literal than the narrative at stake in "policy narratives", and more faithful to the narratological tradition.

Foucault was actually not the first to break up with the common-sense conception of power as a substance or an attribute. Not necessarily going back to Robert Dahl's classical definition of power as the capacity of A to "get B to do something that B would not otherwise do", (Dahl, 1957: 202-203), we can locate a similar shift to a relational conception of power in disciplines as different as sociology of organizations, cybernetics or theory of information-system. For example, this is how Daniel Dennett defines a relation of control:

> "*A controls B* if and only if the relation between *A* and *B* is such that *A* can *drive B* into whichever of *B*'s normal range of states A *wants B* to be in." (Dennett, 2002: 52)

In other words, it is possible to generalize Citton's suggestion that power and narratives share a set of basic components :

- first, they both imply a *transformation of states* : a relation of power between A and B constitutes an embryo of actantial model;

- second, they both unfold in *time*: there is always a time interval between A's action and B's response, and B's response is anything but mechanical. As Citton says, there is a "writing phase", in which A "scenarises" B's action, thoughts, desires, cognitions or behaviour, and a "completion phase" continuously unfolding, allowing for improvisation and permanent readjustments;

- third, what Foucault said of power "guiding the possibility of conduct" can also be said of narrative. Power and narrative are two ways of structuring a field of possibilities, and *possible world* semantics apply in power relations the same way it does in narratives. The transformation of B's states implies a multiplicity of possible states B could be in. A's effort consists in reducing this field to the states he wishes B to be in. This is particularly obvious in Foucault's and Dennett's definition, but it is also the case with Erhard Friedberg's sociological definition of power as the "unbalanced exchange of possibilities of action between a set of individual and/or collective actors" (1997: 123, our translation);

- fourth, power implies something of a perspective or *focalisation*, a narrative "point of view". A and B each have their own internal point of view on their respective possibilities of action, just as they have their own cognitive and affective states. The story can be told from either point of view, or from an external point of view – this would be the analyst's point of view;

- fifth, this means that the distribution of possibilities of actions between A and B also distributes something like narrative or diegetic levels. The aim of A, in any power relation, is to "scenarise" B's action, to write his/her story, to impact his/her narrative world. But B tries to do the same to A in return: even if asymmetrical, this relation also has an element of reciprocity. Depending on his margin of manoeuvre, B can counter-scenarise A and try to modify his/her narrative actual and possible worlds in retaliation.

Let us now recapitulate these points. Transformation of states; actantial model; relation to time; interval between a "writing" and a "completion" phase; relation to possibility and possible worlds; focalisation and narrative levels: all these minimal elements which, as we just saw, are necessary components of a narrative are also involved in power. One could say that agents are constantly busy trying to control each other, and that this form of control, in Yves Citton's terms, amounts to *scenarising* the actions of other agents. "What's the story I'm in?" can be translated in: "Who is currently telling my story?", "Whose story am I involved in?". A controls B insofar as s/he can scenarise his/her course of action. In the same way, A can be led to modify his or her narration because of B's attempts at counter-scenarisation.

As a result, there is actually no such thing as "power of narratives". Narratives are not some kind of cognitive resource that would supplement pre-existent relations of power. Whenever we are confronted to relations characterised by unbalances of possibilities of action, we are likely to see activities of scenarisation and counter-scenarisation. Narratives are not to be found at the margin of power, but at its core.

Conclusion: bridging the gap between policy analysis and narrative theory

As we are reaching the conclusions, we would like to restate an important point. Our purpose was not to disqualify the use of narrative in policy narratives for being "too metaphorical". We think the notion helped emphasize essential and otherwise hidden cognitive dimensions of the policy making process. After all, in the first part of our paper dedicated to pathways of development, we also used narratives in a metaphorical manner. Our point is that narratology could help policy studies clarify what is at stake in narratives and avoid the pitfalls and confusions inherent to the multi-level character of the narrative phenomenon.

At the end of his article published in *New Literary History* in 1992, Emery Roe spoke in favor of new synergies between policy analysis, social science and humanities. His pedagogical scenario was to establish "joint degree programs leading to a specialisation in applied narrative analysis" (1992: 575). This program would of course include microeconomics, statistics, Law, organization theory, but also modules introducing the student to literary and cultural criticism.

As Roe says, policy analysts are bound to be *amateurs* in the specific disciplines that make up policy analysis, and *specialists* in cross-disciplinary work. Narratology appears to be just one of these specific disciplines policy analysts come across when analyzing public policies.

In other words, the narratological distinctions we reminded here could only strengthen the notion of policy narrative and broaden the range of its possible applications. There would be nothing worse than calling the "metaphor police" to exclude policy narratives from consideration because they would not be "faithful enough" to the notion initially developed in its source discipline. We have nothing to object to conceptual nomadism and hybridation. Our intention in this communication has been to follow Roe's invitation to bridge the gap between policy analysis and literary theory.

Moreover, a notion like scenarisation shows another homology, maybe more fundamental, between power and narratives. If Yves Citton is right, to control a person's behavior amounts to scenarise that person's possible actions as well as the states that person could be in. Relations of power and activities of plot setting could then be considered synonymous. If this homology works, it would mean that the place of narratives in our discipline is actually even more central than we imagined: to quote the title of Edgar Poe's short-story, there could be a "tell-tale heart" beating in political science.

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