

Contents

List of Figures	<i>page</i> xi
List of Tables	xii
Acknowledgements	xiii
How to Use This Book	xvii
Introduction: Organisations as Worlds of Management Tools	1
PART I THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THINKING ABOUT MANAGEMENT INSTRUMENTATION	9
1. Theoretical Foundations: From the Study of Technique to the Analysis of Management Tools	11
Spontaneous Discourse about Technique	12
Denial of Technique, or the Insignificance of the Object	12
Technophile Euphoria	14
Technophobic Reaction, or Technique as a Snare	15
False Debates and Real Impasses	17
The Contributions of Anthropology	18
Considering Technique: The Technological Project	18
Concerning the Study of Technique and Its Tools	21
Some Lessons for the Study of Management Tools	22
Management as an Intangible Technique	24
Management: A Technique Unlike Others	24
The Specificity of Intangible Techniques	25
What Is a Management Tool?	26
A Common-Sense Notion	26
Describing a Management Tool	27
Conclusion	31

vi CONTENTS

2. Traditional Approaches: Management Tools in the History of Organisation Theory	32
Rationalist Theories or Technique as a Solution	33
Management Tools from a Scientific Management Perspective	34
Management Tools and the Rational Systems School	37
Management Tools and the School of Contingency	38
Normative Theories, between Forgetting and Minimising Technique	39
The Pervasiveness of Rational Beliefs	43
The Rational Discourse Prevails Despite the Alternation of Theoretical Orientations	43
The Rational Approach Is Reinforced by the Consultants	47
Going Beyond Classical Approaches	48
The Socio-Technical Approach	49
The Behavioural Theory of Organisations	50
After the 1980s: Renewed Interest for the Instrumentation of Management in French Academia	51
Conclusion	53
 PART II THREE MAJOR TYPES OF SOCIAL SCIENCE APPROACHES	 55
3. Critical Perspectives on Management Tools	59
Thesis 1: Tools Implicated in Relationships of Domination	61
The Tool as an Element of a Social and Economic System	62
The Tool in the Legitimation of Social Hierarchies	64
The Tool as a Lever of Exploitation	65
The Tool as the Result of Power Relations	66
The Tool as a Resource in a Struggle	68
Summary Sheet (Thesis 1)	73
Thesis 2: The Tool as a Technique for Discipline and Government	75
Management Tools as Apparatuses of Knowledge/Power	76

Management Tools as a Disciplinary Technique	77
Management Techniques as a Tool of Government	79
Management Techniques as Technologies of the Self	81
Summary Sheet (Thesis 2)	87
Thesis 3: The Tool Alienates and Dehumanises	91
Clinical Approaches	91
Critique of the Manipulative Project	94
The Critique of Technicism and the Discarding of Subjectivity	96
Summary Sheet (Thesis 3)	98
4. Institutional Perspectives on Management Tools	100
Thesis 4: Management Tools Influenced by Institutional Strategies	102
The Founding Concepts: Field-Level Institutions and Isomorphism	102
From Similarity to Variety: Research between 1990 and 2000	105
The Distinction between Legitimacy, Efficiency and Decoupling	107
Power, Conflict and Institutions	108
Transnationalisation and International Standards	110
Summary Sheet (Thesis 4)	115
Thesis 5: Tools as Investment in Forms	118
The Conventionalist Approach	118
The Sociology of Quantification and Classifications	121
Analytical Perspectives on Management Tools	127
Summary Sheet (Thesis 5)	138
Thesis 6: Technology Is Both Constraining and Enabling	142
Structuration Theory (ST): Some of the Central Concepts	142
The Place of Technology in Processes of Structuration: Two Different Ontologies but Complementary Empirical Results	146
Summary Sheet (Thesis 6)	150

viii CONTENTS

5. Interactional Perspectives on Management Tools	153
Thesis 7: The Tool Is a Human/Non-Human	
Arrangement	155
The Symmetry between Humans and Non-Humans	155
Network and the Translation Process	156
Objects as Human/Non-Human Arrangements and the	
Notion of Performation	157
Understanding the Implementation and Role of the	
Management Tool within an Organisation	158
Summary Sheet (Thesis 7)	166
Thesis 8: The Tool Is Nothing outside the Activity System	169
From Tool to Instrument	169
Individual Activity Mediated	171
Activity and Collective Work	173
Summary Sheet (Thesis 8)	177
Thesis 9: The Tool as a Language Being	179
Written Text as a Management Tool	180
The Management Tool as a Support for Sensemaking	184
The Management Tool as Text	185
Summary Sheet (Thesis 9)	187
Thesis 10: The Effects of the Tool Are Conditioned by What	
Actors Do	189
The Relativisation of the Formal System	190
Change Rather Than Functioning	191
Tool and/or Rules?	192
Summary Sheet (Thesis 10)	195
 PART III SYNTHESIS	 199
6. The Agency of Management Tools	201
A Framework for the Analysis of Management Tools	203
Vocabulary Issues	203
Functions	204
Effects	207

The Epistemic Effects of Tools	208
First-Order Effects Linked to Epistemic Function	208
Effects of Reactivity Linked to the Epistemic Function	214
The Pragmatic Effects of Management Tools	217
The Specific Effects of Tools Linked to Their Pragmatic Function	217
The Effects of Reactivity Linked to the Pragmatic Function of Tools	219
The Political Practices of Management Tools	222
Political Effects That Are Proper to Management Tools	223
Reactivity and the Political Effects of Management Tools	224
Conclusion	225
General Conclusion	227
Studying Management Tools: A Project of Emancipation	227
The Analysis of Management Tools as Counter-Expertise	227
Towards a New Socio-Technical Approach	229
An Approach for a Project	231
Multiply the Angles of Analysis	231
Dialogue between the Grids Themselves	232
Revisiting Older Questions	235
Going beyond the Macro–Micro Distinction	235
Renewing the Theory of Organisations	239
Thinking about the Transformations of Capitalism	241
Management Tools Perspective: A Research Strategy	244
Appendix 1: Cross-Reading the Theses on Some Generic Questions	246
How Did We Get to This Point?	246
What Is the Tool Made of?	247
How Does It Work?	247
How Does It Evolve?	248

X CONTENTS

What Is the Effect?	248
Appendix 2: Studying the Tool in All Its Various States	250
(1) The Circulating Form (the Tool Outside a Specific Situation)	250
Describing the Management Tool as a Technical Object	250
Identify the Conventions, Representations, Models of Judgement and Action, Premises That Are Present in the Tool or That Support Its Purpose	251
Establish the History of the Tool	251
Study the Modes of Circulation	252
(2) The Inscribed Form (the Tool in a Specific Situation)	252
Describe the Organisational Context	252
Identify the Actors in Their Relation to the Tool	252
Reconstitute the History of the Tool in the Organisation	253
Identify the Different Effects of the Tool and/or the Transformations That Accompany It	253
Bibliography	254
Index	283