NEW RESEARCH POLICY
and
THE ECONOMICS of
SINGULARITIES

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INTRODUCTION


OUTLINE

1) The New French Research Policy and its theoretical justifications
2) Its interpretations by the E.S
PART ONE

THE NEW FRENCH RESEARCH POLICY
Reinventing the State

Goals: Efficiency and Cutting public expenditure

In France, the ‘New Public Policies’ are the same in every public activity: research, education, administration

Central mean of action: the greater competition the greater efficiency

How to measure individual results?
MEASUREMENT TOOLS: GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Ranking scientific quality of papers and therefore of scientists
  - The value of the scientific paper = the value of the journal publishing it
  - Ranking journals → rating and calculation
  - Indicators: excellence vs productivity
- Association of ranking of scientific value with an incentive system. And public funding distribution
- Measurement tools replace “peer review” combined with collegiate power
JUSTIFICATIONS for the NEW RESEARCH POLICY (1)

- With or without digitized metrics (French social sciences), from hard sciences as well as from soft sciences → numerous international scientists’ criticisms of the measurement tools

- Without any impact. Why?

- Because the fundamental justification of science is given by mainstream economics
  - Efficiency increases with competition
  - Profit seeking strengthens competition
JUSTIFICATIONS for the NEW RESEARCH POLICY (2)

- NPM → ‘…a mixture of ideas drawn from corporate management and from institutional economics or public choice’ (Hood, 2010)

- But the research system isn’t a market: no supply and demand, no price, no self regulating mechanisms → the market theory isn’t relevant
JUSTIFICATIONS for the NEW RESEARCH POLICY (3)

- **The Tournament Theory**
- For an interesting contest: uncertainty, the best competitors and above all strong competitors’ *level of effort*
- The greater the potential gain, the greater the effort and the better the results → Conditional relations
- The greatest the gain, the greatest the level of effort (competition) and the greatest the efficiency
- Scientific demonstration of the validity of the new research policy.
PART TWO

- The Economics of Singularities
The ECONOMICS of SINGULARITIES (1)

- Refusal of the gain/competition/efficiency proposition as a general proposal
- Refusal of the postulate of goods and services general equivalence
- Refusal of the usual goods and services definitions based either on differentiation or on the distinction between ‘experience’ and ‘research’ products
THE ECONOMICS of SINGULARITIES (2)

- Characteristics of singularities
- Homo singularis,
- Judgment devices
- Qualification
CHARACTERISTICS of SINGULARITIES

- Combined Characteristics
  - Multi-dimensionality
  - Incommensurability $\rightarrow$ Commensurability according to each different point of view
  - Radical Quality Uncertainty $\rightarrow$ even probabilistic calculation of the activity/actor is impossible (Knight, Akerlof)
- Research activity as a creative activity and therefore as a singular activity.
**HOMO SINGULARIS**

- Homo economicus = one orientation of action (profit maximization)
- Homo singularis = Two orientations of action (M. Weber):
  - Symbolic action = value criteria
  - Material action = profit maximization
- Production/Reproduction of singularities implies the primacy of symbolic action over material action.
JUDGMENT DEVICES

- With the singular products how shall one choose the “good” or the “right” product? “Good” or “right” according to the different peculiar points of view \( \rightarrow \) Judgment but how dissipate opacity?

- Judgment devices: brands, critics, guides, networks, Top-te

- **Cognitive supports**, \( \rightarrow \) They are necessary to bring **oriented** knowledge to the actors

- Research judgment devices: journals, critics, networks
JUDGMENT DEVICES’ QUALIFICATION

- What are the effects of judgment devices’ on the singularities and on the actors?
- Qualification --> Interpretative or material operations that transform the products: “good” or “bad” article
- Different effects according to different types of qualification
  - Substantial devices (Product Content) (Critiques, Peer Review) vs Formal devices (Product Ranking)
- New Research policy: Replacement of substantial devices by formal devices → fragility of singularities
AS A CONSEQUENCE

- Anything that threatens the primacy of symbolic action over material action, which implies the primacy of symbolic competition over material competition, threatens the production/reproduction of (scientific) singularities

- A General Relation
SPECIFIC NEGATIVE INFLUENCE on SCIENTIFIC CREATION BY

Peculiar Propositions:

- Systems of material incentive, all the stronger when the incentives are short term.
- Strong material competition which reinforces the salience of material action
- Control of action: formal judgment devices
- Opposite results to those derived from the neoclassical theory
Social psychology: T. Amabile and creativity

Numerous empirical studies and results based on two main distinctions:

- Intrinsic vs Extrinsic Motivation → “a person is said to be intrinsically motivated to engage in an activity if that person views such an engagement as an end in itself”

- Algorithmic tasks (routine) vs heuristic tasks (uncertainty concerning means and/or ends)
Intrinsic motivation is conducive to creativity and extrinsic motivation is detrimental to creativity as it impairs internal motivation.

Extrinsic Motivations
- material incentives
- too much extrinsic competition
- control
COMPARISONS of EFFECTS ON SCIENTIFIC PERFORMANCE

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CONCLUSION

- Nothing should be taken as granted
## COMPARISONS of EFFECTS on SCIENTIFIC PERFORMANCE

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TWO THEORIES AND TWO OPPOSITE INTERPRETATIONS (1)

- Because the activity of research revolves around creation (and therefore radical uncertainty) it is not amenable to mainstream economics.

- According to the economics of singularities, the French New Research Policy is DETRIMENTAL to scientific creation → a general proposition that may be extended to other countries.
TWO THEORIES AND TWO OPPOSITE INTERPRETATIONS (2)

- Australia 1988-1988 → Rise of the share of publications and decline of the share of citations. But in France, no tool for “measuring” the changes in the levels of quality: a move toward disaster.

- What is true for scientific activity is true for all the other singularities: reasonings, results and action of the ES are not only different to those derived from the neoclassical theory, they may be absolutely opposite.

- Which is also true for the market