



## REPORT ON STSM 2.1

Scholars 'perceptions of research quality and notions of quality (WP1)

### INVOLVED INSTITUTIONS AND RESEARCHERS

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### DATES

**Septembre 08, 2017-September 22, 2017**



## **AIM STSM**

### **Description of the topic:**

Within WG1 sub-group 4 “notions of quality”, qualitative interviews will be conducted on how experienced researchers perceive what makes research excellent work. This STSM serves to prepare the qualitative interviews that will be fielded in different countries. By analyzing pre-test interviews and comparing them across countries, a framework will be developed for conducting qualitative interviews to investigate notions of quality.

The STSM would contribute to the following objectives of the Action:

- To observe what kind of scientific and societal interactions characterize SSH disciplines in general, and some in particular.
- To understand and explain patterns of dissemination in the SSH, through confrontation of information stored in national databases and field interviews.

### **PROJECT’S OBJECTIVE AND MAIN RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

The main objective is to collect scholars’ subjective appreciations of “high quality” research. As SSH is recognized as a quite heterogeneous field, our main hypothesis is that notion of “quality” varies extensively across the field, because they rely on contrasted epistemologies, research methods, outputs and quality measurements (Lamont, 2009). A second hypothesis is that academic disciplines have strong “national backgrounds”; for example, Mangset (2009) shows that in France historians consider themselves as social scientists while they see themselves as part of the humanities in Norway. In addition, we make the hypothesis that national training traditions may carry over different perspectives over the quality of academic outputs. A third hypothesis, drawn from sociology of science, is that the perceptions of quality may differ according to scholars’ “academic status” (Bourdieu, 1988). In this study, individual status will be measured by the position held by the researcher in his/her profession i.e. assistant/full professor.



Basically, the hypotheses are that subjective perspectives on high quality research differ based on a) the specific discipline, b) on national traditions, and c) academic status.

### **Sample / Method**

Focus on two disciplines that rely on contrasted epistemologies, research methods, outputs and quality measurements.

### **Sample:**

2 disciplines: Literature & Economics

4 scholars in each country (2 in Literature, 2 in Economics)

In each discipline, select a full professor and an assistant/associate professor

### **Countries involved**

France

Cyprus

Slovenia

Switzerland

### **Schedule**

#### Stage 1: October 2017

4 test interviews led in France, English transcripts available

1 test interview in other countries

#### Stage 2 : March 2018

2 interviews in each of the two selected academic disciplines in the 4 countries => 16 interviews in total.

#### Interviews



The objective of the interview is to let the scholars comment on a piece of research they made that they are proud of.

The language of the interview can be English or the interviewee's native language; in the latter case, the interviewer will have to translate the interview into English.

### **Current Stage:**

**During the STSM, we completed our tasks:**

- \*Discussion on questionnaire;**
- \*2 interviews were completed in France (economics & literature);**
- \*Transcription-completed (below);**
- \*Translation-completed (below);**
- \*2 more interview scheduled till beginning of November;**
- \*Discussion on further activities and tasks defined.**

### **INTERVIEW GRID**

*Make sure to let the interviewee know that the interview is confidential and that both his/her names and institutions' identities will not be disclosed in any of the publications derived from the research project.*

*Ask for the interviewee's Vitae (if he/she agrees)*

*Ask for a copy of that research [so that our group can study it and use its features for our analyses]*

### **QUESTIONS**



**In general, could you first let us know how you judge the quality of a piece of research in your own discipline/field?**

[let the interviewee comment freely on this question / ask the interviewee to give one or two examples of a “great” piece of research in his/her own field and comment on the various aspects of its qualities]

**Pick a published piece of research that you are the most proud of/that you believe has had the most impact from your work?**

\*Could you provide us with a brief overview of this research? [it can be a published or unpublished item]

\*If published item, in what forms has this study been published? (article, book, PhD thesis, other)

### **The emergence of the research**

\*Comment on the initial project of the research. When did it start? What was the major idea underlying the project? What was the original significance of the study?

\* Was the research an individual initiative? A collective one?

\*Was it funded? By whom?

\*Were the stakeholders involved at the beginning of the research? What role(s) did they undertake?

\*Were other researchers (same institution, other institution? National/international? Same discipline/Other disciplines) involved?

### **The process of the research**

\*Describe the different steps for building the final “outcome”

- conditions of data collection
- intermediary drafts/reports



- communications in conferences
- presentations in research seminars
- different steps in writing the final piece
- publication process

\*Did you receive any help in making this piece of research (including comments from peers)?

From whom?

\*What turning points can you identify in the course of the research?

\*Did any partners join in the course of the research?

\*Which obstacles had to be overcome to build the final outcome?

\*How long did it last?

\*What methodology was used in the study, and why was this methodology selected?

### **Why are you (eventually) proud of it?**

\*Because this piece was recognized by peers/external audiences? Whom?

\*Because you overcame many difficulties in achieving it?

\*Because it is intrinsically “beautiful”?

\*Because you enjoyed the process of the research?

\*Because you learnt a lot doing it?

\*Because there was a part of serendipity within it?

\*Because you covered a research gap?

\*Because it is scholarly significant (numbers of citations/informal congratulations...)/

socially-politically significant?

\*Because the articulation between data and theory is original?

\*Because it is authentic?

\*Because it is innovative ?

\*Because it had a great impact?

\*Because it is rigorous?



**Was the quality of your piece of research recognized by external evaluators? Whom? (peers, external stakeholders, ...)**

**For what reasons do you believe that this study was good? Successful? Had such an impact?**

**What advice would you give to young researchers in order to help them produce high-quality/impact research?**

**Some elements of the scholar's career, personal trajectory**

### **BONDING/NETWORKING**

The candidate and the host have worked together and have regular meetings. This has results in agreement on at least one joint publication. Additionally, we discuss further meetings that we simplify paper publication.



### **Transcription: Economics- Full Professor**

- Can you tell us briefly, your professional trajectory? Actually a period since your thesis, basically, and then until today. And then what led you to choose the area of research on which you are, and so on.

- Yes, it will be long ... Finally long ... it can be long but I will be short. So thesis, a long time ago: December 98. Then ...

Where did you get it?"

- In Paris I.

-Okay.

- Paris I, here. And then I was ... so I did a thesis on the choice theory. Choice Theory, Consumer Theory. Then ... so there was a slightly mathematical component, a statistical component. And so I was recruited after my thesis at the INSEE to work in one of their schools, called ENSAI, which is in Rennes. And so I was teaching assistant there. Then I was recruited to ... I wanted to return to the Paris region so I was recruited in Evry. In Evry, I stayed ... I did two years. And I had a detachment - first delegation then detachment - in the Center for Employment Studies. So from the Center of Employment Studies I returned to Rennes, like head of the Department of Economy. From Rennes, I returned to Evry.

- Still at the ENSAI it was?

That's always at the ENSAI. And Evry here in Paris.

-Okay. OK fine.

- So it was very ... And meanwhile I was also a scientific advisor to France Strategy. France Strategy is the former Commissariat au Plan.

- Okay, and then you can talk a little bit about your intellectual trajectory. What did you do?





- So, it is true that it is ... Well, my thesis, yes, that, it really interested me because it is a meeting with François Garde, who was my thesis director that I had met at a seminar. So I did a masters degree in applied math and so what he was saying pleased me a lot. He told me a trick on consumer theory, I found it really ... I was seeing an application of math actually. It amazed me then I asked him if I could make a thesis with him, and then he said yes. So I made my thesis with him. So I really started to work on individual behavior, preferences, on modeling preferences. So how to relax the utility function hypothesis. How to construct somewhat broader functions, and some more flexible functions, which are called threshold functions. And I worked a lot on it. And then I came a little bit to the end, quite simply. I think that's a bit of the case for most people who work on preferences. At one point, once we release, let the preferences be softened, sooner or later we ask ourselves the question of where the preferences come from. And here we stumble on it. And then we have the answer, we have a somewhat intuitive answer, which is that preference comes from language. So, to be able to model this, you have to be, in my opinion, a theoretical computer scientist. That's what I think. I think that the work that was done afterwards proved me right on this point, since the most promising, most fruitful current research that is done on preferences is done by computer scientists.

Notably the people from Dauphine, from the Math lab of Dauphine (I forgot the name). And then the people of IRIA is a research institute in computer science, applied computing. And in fact they work on ... they build preferences ... finally from the preferences, they build what is called a language. A language in the computer sense of the term. Then they put that language in automatons. Because they are interested in building automatons that can communicate with one another and are autonomous. So inevitably, to be autonomous, it is necessary to upload a language in these machines. And they do it really well. It is a truly French, truly European research. They are the best, they are French researchers and German researchers who work on it. When I saw that, I think I honestly said to myself, maybe it's time to work on something else. And then there were also meetings that had - in fact, to be honest, my research was based on the meetings I had.

- By your network.



-Here. And I think that it must be the case of many researchers elsewhere. There are people you meet, and then you want to work with them. And so, the second part of my research. The first part, then, was preferences, consumer theory, choice theory. I keep working on it again. I make a paper about every three years on this topic. My transition to the ENSAI, School of Statistics, forced me to put myself back to statistics and to see also the potential of statistics. And above all to see the link between statistics and choice theory. Because there is a strong link, since most people who conceived me, who built the theory of choice were also statisticians. So I was able to make the connection. So obviously from the stats, we figured why not work on data and on the things involved. And it was also thanks to a meeting that was fundamental for me, it was the meeting with Nathalie Greenan from the Center for Employment Studies who interested me in subjects on organization, on organizational changes, on wages. In particular, the mechanisms of wage incentives within companies, and in particular how these mechanisms can ultimately affect employees and the performance of companies. So it was a big research theme, which became my main theme. In terms of dates, I would say that end of my dissertation from January 1999 until February 2002, pretty much, I was always on the themes such as preference, theory of choice. From 2002 - 2003, there was a shift towards the theme of organizations.

- Is not it too hard to move from one theme to another? It is not the same literature, it is not the same reviews. Are these the same methods?

- In fact, I think that my chance, since I had good notions in choice theory, I could understand the link between what I had learned in choice theory and the question posed by organization. Because in fact, when we look at it, the theory of choice was constructed with the theory of individual choice. Then there was the collective choice. In the collective choice, there are two questions. On the one hand, the question of the aggregation of preferences: one assumes that the preferences are given, then one wonders that it is the good function of aggregation which respects certain conditions. These are the works at the Arrow [?], Which our colleagues at the University of Caen are investing quite well. But there is also another question that is asked in the collective choice: it is the question of strategic interaction between agents.

-Since, almost everything, agents, from a collective perspective, may have an interest in lying on their true preferences. We are in a problem of sincere revelations of preferences. This gave



rise to the work of Satterthwaite and Alan Gibbard, who gave a piece called mechanism design. If one restricts the collective choice to two individuals, one obtains the main agent model. So the whole theme on the organization, I understood pretty quickly because I saw it as a kind of sub-theory. It is not pejorative. It was very fast. Then it was the adventure of the Center of Employment Studies, it was really not bad. And then more recently, but rather in methodological terms, I began to develop works in two directions. On the one hand, always preferences but in risk, with a Russian colleague named Gleb Koshevoy we developed what is called the theory of random sets. And then another direction which is that of data science, trying to see what became econometrics, statistics, when working in large data. Since, a priori, it must make obsolete all our tools, since modern statistics was built in a context of rare data. It would be too costly to collect information on a population, so techniques such as surveys were developed to draw a sample from the population that was major. The French population, 62 - 62 million, well instead of having info on everyone, I randomly pick 3,000 people. The problem is that now we can have the whole population almost, so we can work almost exhaustively. So theoretically if one can do it, it would be enough to make averages and standard deviations. It's enough.

- And that, it questions the principles of econometrics? Finally, it is a question.

- Finally, it could put us potentially unemployed. So it's interesting to see the transformations induced, and even in our ways of teaching statistics and econometrics. Now econometrics is no longer taught in the same way as five years ago.

Then we'll talk about work you've done very precisely." But I would like you to tell us, what is a good research in economics for you? We can also start from examples of works that you admire elsewhere. What is the quality criteria for you to research in economics?

- It's really a good question. I think there are really two criteria for me. It is either a theoretical work that is axiomatic, and therefore very clear at the level of the presuppositions. And that fits into a literature. So we understand very well the contribution of what is done. Or, it is an empirical work that starts from the ground. I know it sounds a bit paradoxical, especially for a statistician, because I also consider myself a statistician. I admit that I admire the work that

leaves the field. It's really paradoxical. But I've seen a few presentations. There is someone I can quote whose work I admire, Philippe Askenazy, and who is able to do that. But to be able to do that, you also have to have a background in sociology that economists do not necessarily all have. And so I think his career, he is able to do that. It couples field data, with survey data, and it happens to produce very interesting things.

- And when you say land, for you what is a land?

- I saw, he did it sociological survey, it was on cashiers, and they went to a supermarket ...

- And suddenly they interviewed the cashiers ..

- Absolutely, there. They even measured their ways of positioning themselves, and that sort of thing. And so it gave much richer results, because we had both a bit performance aspects that can give the survey data, but we also had things a little more qualitative that came to enrich all that. And I find it very interesting. So, it is getting more and more, especially we have English colleagues who do it very well too.

-And you do that too?

- No, I would. I admire that.

- Do you think that for your research subject, it might be relevant to do that?

- Totally, yes yes. That would be totally relevant. But one can not improvise either sociologist. There is the methodology that we do not have. And that, I find it a pity. But in Paris we start, there are some masters where they teach that. So it's really the two types of work, say, that impress me.

- But in economics, in France, there are also ... So I do not know, Askenazy, in what paradigm it is, but there are big conflicts between economists. Among what I know, now it is the heterodox versus the orthodox. And you, you position yourself in all this? What do you think of these struggles?

- To be frank, and without contempt, yes I think there is no fight between heterodox and orthodox, for the simple reason that heterodoxes do not even represent 2%. So from there ...



well, I do not want to be mean, but there is no fight in terms of numbers or quality. Here. This is a bit hard to say, but does not mean that heterodox does not tell interesting things.

- We'll talk about your work. So I would like you to tell us about one or two research that you have produced and that you are particularly happy with.

- With the whole process.

- -Can you, among your works, select one or two works that you really like. And once you've thought about it, what would be interesting, actually, is that you retrace the genesis of this work. It can be something published or not published, it's up to you to choose.

- Report, book, article ...

- It can be any kind of output.

Can I quote two?

Of course, and then you're going to tell us the two stories.

- So there is a text on the empirical level, which I liked because it was another exercise and which paradoxically was not a research work. Finally, in the sense that one hears it. It is a report I did, a CSR report, which I did for France Strategy, and which I liked very much. I liked the exercise, because obviously we made some estimates, we put scientific rigor in the report. But it was also necessary, since the report was supposed to be read by everyone, to popularize it to the maximum. So I really remember very long discussions with my two co-authors, with our colleagues from France Strategy, some of which are enarques or come from Sciences-Po. And we could talk around a word, saying, "No, we can not put that word because ...". Because what we wrote was engaging us, engages France Strategy. And this exercise of popularization, precision on words, precision of our intention, I liked it.

-Did they put pressure on you to write? As it was not the way you wrote the papers. Were they lobbying?

- So it was not a strong pressure, but let's say it was friendly pressure, since there was a rereading, first with our head of department, but also with the general director of France



Strategy. All reports passed through him, or by the Deputy General Director. So yes, the words were really peeled, everything was weighed, under-weighed. But on the other hand, we were flexible about words, in the sense that we were paying attention to the words we used, but we were very firm with regard to the message we wanted to convey.

-But did you find that it cut off your liberty?

- No, because in fact the message we wanted to get across was our responsibility. I give a very simple example: it was a time when we had to ask ourselves whether we should help companies financially to have a CSR approach. Obviously, in most reports, the question of aid helps everyone. And we were firm on that. It has been said that no, on the contrary, we must above all not help, and we have explained why. Saying by a lack of bargain effect, etc. That if CSR is voluntary and must help, ultimately one would have selection effects, one could risk attracting "bad enterprises.

- And you held on to it? Because on the side of the general director of the department of France Strategy, it stuck a little on this idea or not?

-No. As the question of aid is something a little reflex Pavlovian, as soon as there is a thing, hop it must help. And so the question was put to us and we said no. And in fact the reports are also read by the partners: by the MEDEF, etc. So we had to explain why we did not want to help companies, finally help financially.

- Why are the words measured? Because the way you express yourself in the report is different. Did you target any audience other than the academic public?

- Exactly. In fact, in the good reports of France Strategy, there must be a kind of progressivity. This means that at some point someone who does not know the technique must be able to stop and understand everything. The technique must be, for example, in Chapter 5, but those reading from Chapter 1 to Chapter 4 must have understood everything. Even they must have understood everything from the executive summary.

- Did it help you afterwards to improve your scientific papers in your writing?



- Yes, absolutely. That really helped me. You know my work. It is true that for example in my work of maths, from the introduction I already put equations. But even in my math papers, I could better explain what I want to do. And I insist on that: "Attention, this is what we want to do. If you think we can do that, it's not what we want to do, we want to do this. And I think it helped me, especially in revising articles, I'm asked a little less often now to explain a little better.

-It's interesting. A work for a public sponsor that also helps in improving his scientific skills. So this report, you were a scientific adviser at that time. I would like to know the source of the report. You had several reports to make? What is your mandate as a scientific advisor?

- So as a scientific advisor, it was really fairly framed. That means that every year we had a kind of editorial meeting where we decided on themes. And then, there was a division between the councilors and the missionaries. Obviously, there is also somewhat more punctual work, in the order style of the minister, the Prime Minister who needs such figures on gender equality ... But in general these are just notes that must be provided . So one of the themes that we had proposed and that was selected was CSR.

-And your two co-operators, were they also scientific?

-No. There was one who was in charge of mission for France Strategy Selima , and the other who was professor of university Patricia. Both are economists. Salma, she has a doctorate in economics, she has had as PhD thesis director Philippe Askenazy besides. Then she did the LSI, and then she went to work for France Strategy.

So you collected original data for that report? How did you proceed?

-Yes that's it. We took two types of data. Data from the INSEE was used - Sustainability Survey and then the COI data was employed.

- I never asked you that question. Is your report well received in the scientific world?

- Yes, I think in the scientific world, yes. Since then there are seminars that are done. I have not really done any seminars. But for example Selilma, she has done seminars in many places. I





think she had presented at Dauphine to the symposium that had been organized. She showed up everywhere, and it was fairly well received.

- But you never quote, huh?

Did you make any papers from that? Or your colleagues?

- So I would have managed to do that anyway, indeed, I was always able to come out with scientific work from all rapports from France Strategy. I also worked in ENSAI Where I had a relationship with Eric Delattre and Aza Azizza. And then we made a paper that was published.

-Is that what you're trying to do generally?

- Yes, to exploit too ... well, here.

-So that work, you love him very much. Did you learn anything?

- That's it, absolutely, because I learned to write. It can be paradoxical.

- You've had some impact anyway. Finally an impact, I do not know if it's easy to measure.

- If, in France Strategy, by press releases, and then also by the number of appointments requested by the social partners, on the one hand the MEDEF and the trade unions on the other. And Selima, basically, from the time the report was published, the year that came she spent her time doing after-sales. She was solicited everywhere, she sat on commissions thanks to that. Then it boosted his career too, and so on. So we can measure the impact.

- But it's also the biggest report you've ever done to CAS, right?

-Yes. I also wrote about psycho-social risks. And then I also made notes of analyzes, which are smaller works, 4 pages. Likewise, some have had echoes: tips on the evaluation of employees.

-And that one pleases you more than the one you have done on psycho-social risks.What more does he have?

- Because I think it's a societal issue. And then there was a message, which was really clear. Which was to say that the resource, in a very down-to-earth vision, is first and foremost a management tool that works.





- Was it hard for you to really change this way of writing? Are there any conflicts, in the literary sense, between you and Selima? Because I imagine she knows how to write these reports and you, statistician, are more academic.

- Yes, yes, Selima is more about this reflex. Well, she's a very good economist, she did a thesis in economics at the Paris School of Economics, she did LSI. So she could see right away what they meant. And then she would say, "No, be careful, we can not say it necessarily like that, in this way, otherwise a group of pressure will fall on us, and so on." Here. It was said anyway, but in another way. By choosing the right words.

-And this report, how long did it take you?

- It took us a year and a half. And in a year and a half, I would say that the writing took us a year.

"Because there is a lot of negotiation between you, about the weight of words. Okay, fine, we go to the second research.

- Ok. So second research, so it's a set of research on preferences that I do. So why do I like it? I think that here too there is a message which was to show that we can not entirely respect the classical axioms posed by economic theory without necessarily being irrational. More precisely, I wanted to show that by positing an axiom that was used by economic theory, it therefore introduced a contradiction within the theory of choices. But a theory must not be contradictory, so it forces us to choose between the theory of choice and economic theory. But economic theory sees itself as a girl, as a sub-theory of choice theory. So there was a contradiction that went wrong. And so, that was pretty well received. Even though I currently do not regularly work on preferences, I am often regularly invited to talk about it.

- And that's a set of works, you already have several articles, right? And who date from?

- This dates from my thesis until the last work with XXX Published 2014 and another one that is in progress. So it's a set of works that please to people since they get the message well. I also give a seminar in a master of the history of thought in Paris I which also deals with the subject.



I was given this seminar to talk about this to the students, so that they understand a little about the issue of the theory consistency.

- It's a very theoretical job, right?

- Let's say more theoretical than the work I did for France Strategy, it's true.

- And also on the data.

- So, let's say more conceptual.

-And is it published, in what kind of journals?"

- It is published mainly in economics, but economics-math journals. Mathematical Social Science, Journal of Mathematical Sociology. Or Journal of Mathematical Economics, this type of journals.

- And they are journals that are known, and I mean, in the field of economics?

- Are they classified CNRS?

- Yes. Mathematical Social Science is ranked CNRS eco.

-The level?

- I am not sure, but I think it should be 1 or 2. And Journal of Mathematical Economics is also classified, Paris I, it's even one of our colleagues, Bernard Cornet, who is editor of this journal. And then Journal of Mathematical Sociology is not ranked eco but is ranked math, I believe.

- Do you consider yourself more like eco or math?

- I'm an economist. No, I'm really an economist. Even if in Paris I, here on the 5th floor, it is the floor of researchers eco-maths. In the 4th it is rather eco, eco-psycho. Finally there are specialties per floor.

- Maths are up.

- It's not on purpose!



- And I wanted, on two reports, on your work presented here, you thought about the beauty of the research a bit. What did you learn ? And why did not you choose a paper that ranks 1 CNRS with a wide audience in economics? Because the second one is still a little restricted.

- Yes, absolutely.

-The second ? Which are you talking about?

- Of his theoretical work.

- Work on preferences.

-Ah, you think of other things he has produced.

- Why did you not talk about your rank 1 that is accepted by everyone, which is great for the economic community in France.

- It is true that when one gets older, in fact one is interested more, it is not at all pejorative, but one is interested a little to its legacy, of what one will leave, or of the message finally left. Finally, this is what we are interested in. And a few times, what ... So I think that for a lot of researchers, it must be a bit like that, it's a bit frustrating, you have to be frank. We publish a thing but there is no ... It's not like a concert where you have the audience, it is opposite, it is pleased, it applauds. If the audience is not happy, they whistles. We do not really know. You can still perceive from time to time what ... why people ask you. And also what you like. And really that's what it is ... I finally realized it when I was invited to the summer school in Italy. And I realized this because, during my presentation, I had to make a kind of summary of what I had done to explain a little my approach of what I wanted to present. And in the end we realize that what interests us revolves around the same thing. That's pretty strange.

-Yes, but in the end we are going to be tried, especially in France, by our publications, are not we?

- Yes but good, to be frank ...

-Why do we make papers? Why publish?



- No, I agree, we must do them, for the career is good, but it is not necessarily what is interesting. So I do not know how to say it ...

Do you manage to balance between what you have to do for your career and things you like?

- I think that at one point in my career, no I did not get there. Since at one time I did things, or published ...

- ... for visibility.

-Yes exactly. And then somehow, it worked. But now I realize that if I could have done otherwise, I would have done it. If I had been able to do what I was interested in, I would have done. Well, a few times ...

- And now you can do it.

- Yes, that's what I meant. Have you thought like that since you are full professor?

- To be frank, yes, more. Maybe I have a little less pressure. But yes, it's true that ...

- This relief.

- Yes, to be able to do what you want to do. Obviously, I think it is always interesting to do other things, not to shut oneself up, not to think that what interests us is necessarily interesting to others. But if what is being done is beginning to attract more and more people, and they let you know, even though it may be a little less interesting for most of the economic research, I think we still have to do it. But by saying that ... I say that, I say nothing, because I did not really have this strategy myself.

- And how do you judge the quality of your colleagues? For example if you meet them at the seminary and you want to see the level. What do you have to do ? Going on the Internet and googling names?

- I think I would have done that before. I used to do that. Even during seminar, in the middle of a seminar, the person speaking and then I look at his profile ... Oh, he did [?] ...

-I might speak to you ...



- No, it's terrible but it's true that we all do this a little ...
- No, but less and less. Really now what interests me is really the approach of the person.
- In what way?
- The scientific approach. So someone who knows what he does.
- But you just saw it, what. How can you judge him? He presents a paper.
- Yes, sometimes it can even be in a totally orthogonal thematic. In the way of presenting it, in the sequencing, in the sequences of presentation, you manage to see if the person masters. I do not know how to explain that, but ...
- That's qualitative. It's not quantitative.
- There you have it.
- It's a bit of intuition based on experience. On some idea how to do good research. It is true that it is difficult to materialize by clear criteria.
- That's what I noticed. But hey, here.
- I just want to come back to a little thing you said earlier that I found interesting when you were talking about summer school in Italy. You said, finally you realize that what you do, it always revolves around the same thing. So what did you mean by that? it means that in fact you have, since you are a young researcher, a sort of obsession but that was not really clear? And now that it is clarified?
- That's it.
- That's it ? And how better are you to present it?
- Absolutely.
- Okay.



- To structure it, to present it, to assume it as well. I think I realize that I have always been interested in why people do things. Why they choose A rather than B. What's behind it. I think I get the impression that this is what--

- It's dizzy! But why did you do this, why do you ever get to choose?

- Finally when I say the why, it is mainly how one can predict, how one can explain, how can rationalize. And in a series of works that I made that looked really different, actually when I did the XXX, I realized that no, they were still turning around this issue.

And that was already in your HDR?

- Yes, it was already ... Even if in my HDR, I had done something a little narrow, where I was rather started from the theory of choices ... Finally, it was really super linear ...

- So you do not like it too much. It was not a job that you enjoyed, that you like a lot ...

- Yes, especially the way we do the theory of encounters, you see in economics what. We put together articles, we put an introduction, a conclusion. That's it that's all. So I know that in other disciplines, it's more ...

- In management, that may be it.

- But in eco, that's what. I do not have my HDR. But my colleague who is there has just passed his HDR. So I can show it to you a little while ago, so you'll see that it's very small like that.

-Is that a pity, you think? No ? You find that ...?

- No, it depends on what sanction the HDR. In this case, in eco, the HDR sanctions the past works. So all we did. So of course it is enough to put together all that we did, to put an intro, a conclusion, and it's good.

- Yes, absolutely. Especially in Paris I, I think it is necessary, for example to pass the HDR in Paris I, I believe it is necessary to have at least seven articles published.

-And then there are ranks that must also count.

-Yes.



-Okay. Ok. Sanja, do you have any more questions?

- No, it's okay.

-It's okay ? Very good. Thank you, very interesting. Thank you so much. It's really interesting. It's very different from Ms. that we met the week ...

### **Transcription: Literature- Full Professor**

I am a former student of the Ecole Normale Supérieure, which at the time was located in Boulevard Jourdan. I hold, of course, the aggregation and I made a thesis which was already a thesis "New Regime". So, if I give the subject, it is obvious that I could be identified. My thesis was on the theater which addressed the youth in the eighteenth century. It was the first thesis on a set of texts that had never been studied in its entirety. I was interested in the eighteenth century and in the theater, essentially by my taste. After the aggregation, my research director proposed me several subjects and I chose this one.

What was the specialty of your research director?

We did not say like this at the time, but he was in fact a history specialist what we now call the history of ideas or the history of forms in the eighteenth century.

Alright Alright. When you say "new state thesis" ...

Compared to state theses.

Okay. Very good. For Sanja, maybe it's ...

It is the current thesis. It is PhD.

Very good. And after that, after your thesis, you were recruited at the university.



So, I taught eight years in high school. Like many people of my generation. And then I was actually recruited as a lecturer at the IUFM in Créteil.

Okay. You remain loyal to Créteil.

Absolutely. And so, I continued my work around the relationship between literature and education, literature and moral. And as the literary type to which I was most interested was the theater, I had a sort of second field of research which is related to the theater, but it was not what was called in the eighteenth century the "theaters officials ". Actually, theaters does not present public performances since this theater was for youth, it is either played in colleges or in the family setting. As a result, I was interested in a completely different sector of theater activity in the eighteenth century called theater of society. In fact, it was, the theater of amateurs in the following centuries.

Okay. Could you describe for us a little bit the scope of literature in France because we do not know anything about it. For me, it's a little mysterious, all that. Is it organized by periods like history, for example? Like when we take American historians ...

In higher education?

Yes, in higher education!

Oh yes, absolutely. We have an organization for centuries even if university research tends to show that there is a great seventeenth century, a great eighteenth century. Of course, the eighteenth century did not begin in 1700 and did not stop at the French Revolution and that, for example for the eighteenth century, the idea of what is called the "turn of the eighteenth century" corresponds to the years 1780 to 1805/1810, and so on. But for recruitments for example and for the CMU, a secular classification still works. So, with the classification of position now, one arrives to have positions called "classical age" with for example seventeenth and eighteenth



centuries, positions eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is relatively recent and we are careful when recruiting students for PhD, since we have to avoid that a choice which is justified from a scientific point of view plays a bad turn in their recognition by the institution. In other words, to avoid being, neither a eighteenth nor a nineteenth, being in between.



Ah yes ! It's better to be still stamped ...

... Identified  
... to a period.

Positions are still very often, there are exceptions now, published in the form of position in literature of the sixteenth or position in literature of the seventeenth century.

So to give us an idea, the field of researchers in literature in your period, this great eighteenth century, is a community of how many researchers in France?

That, I can not tell you.

You have an idea?

No.

No it's impossible.

I can look, but like that, from memory, I absolutely can not say. We have an annual journal called "eighteenth century", which is multidisciplinary, in which we find articles from literature, history, art history, geography, legal specialists. It is an international journal that has studies from all over the world not only focused on eighteenth century. We have a very big congress every 4 years. But I can not give you a precise figure.



Okay. Even in France, it is not known whether it is a small community or a large community.

I think it is a relatively important community because the eighteenth century attracts both literature, historians, philosophers, of course, political scientists ... So I think it's a broad community but I would not risk give a figure.

And so, since this is a period that is studied by several types of discipline, has it led you in your trajectory to work with researchers from other disciplines?

Ah yes ! Me, I always crossed ... just by working on the theater, we work necessarily with researchers from theatrical studies, performing arts. And then, it is obvious that if we work, for example, on revolutionary theaters, we have an approach with historians. If one is working on such a text edition, one is collaborating with art historians as soon as it is illustrated editions. There yes! The connection to other disciplines is very strong.

OK. So your peer community is not restricted at all.

It is multidisciplinary, indeed.

Is it the case of all research in literature? Or is it very specific to the period you are studying? I know this period particularly well. And I see this mixture particularly active for the eighteenth century and I think it remains very valid for other centuries. One can not imagine a researcher for the nineteenth century, for example, with a historical period as turbulent as the nineteenth century, which does not actually work with historians, legal scholars, but also linguists, language specialists, which would deprive itself of a number of skills. When we organize conference it is always multidisciplinary.

Okay. Interesting. I had not heard of that at all.



At the theater, for example, fine arts and architects are welcome.

And you publish together?

So, we publish together very clearly when it comes to proceedings of conference, collective works resulting from meetings or an editorial project. Less obviously when it comes to the scientific edition of a text. There, we are more between literary and linguistic historians because it is more the study of the text in itself that takes precedence.

So, that's interesting. What is the scientific edition of a text?

The scientific edition of a text is an edition that comes from manuscripts, if there are any, variants on several manuscripts if there are several manuscripts. When it comes to a theatrical text, the consideration of representation with manuscripts (for example, the so-called blower manuscripts) concerns in particular the library of the French comedy. And an edition that takes into account what is called the establishment of the text, i.e how the text, if possible in the last edition, verified by its author or the edition done after his death, such as the author has been able to monitor or may have wished, and which is brought to the attention of a public at present. So, both with a text preserved in its authenticity, I would say, and with all the contributions that we can currently have on this text, this author, this period, this literary type ...

Okay.

So on editions with a big critical appearance, with an introduction, notes, variants, everything you want.

Variations?

Variants of the text.



Okay.

The different strata ...

And so, if you look at the whole range of your publications, you do more often analysis, scientific publishing, texts ... Is it balanced?

It's balanced! There are at the same time participations in large enterprises of complete works, that is to say the complete works of Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot, Madame de Stael, and then we also try to bring to the knowledge less known texts, for example in the form of anthologies. So, anthologies of complete texts, such as news, plays, but around a sector. That is to say that we will choose a sector unit to make known a piece of literature.

Okay. Very good. So maybe it's a question that's going to be difficult to answer. In fact, we would like you to choose one of your research that you particularly like. That is, something you are particularly proud of. There may be several of which you are not necessarily happy. For example, there are things I have published that I do not particularly like. Notably my thesis. I do not like my thesis at all. I think we all have different opinions to differentiate from our different work. In fact, I would like you to choose a job that you are really satisfied with and try to tell us how this work emerged, how it was woven, how it was received, and so on. From the emergence of his youth to his reception.

Here, for example, if I take the example of my thesis, I am immediately identifiable.

Yes, all right. Let's talk about it, we'll see later. No matter ...

So, in general, I would say that when we re-read what we have published, as we go along, we always have a retrospective look that is critical because we advance, we search, things evolve and we said that we might not do it exactly the same way, and then there is a galloping



bibliography. So everything is very fast not obsolete but would benefit to be immediately brought back to the taste of the day. At the same time, there are still achievements that remain.

Me, I .... We're going to talk about this book and we'll see later. I had worked for my HDR on this particular theatrical practice of the eighteenth century that is called the theater of society. So, briefly the ancestor of amateur theater. And it was the first synthesis work since monographs both very detailed and very partial, very anecdotal that had much flowered in the nineteenth century which were stuffed with very interesting information, which made a sort of cartography, a little puzzle, places where theater was played. Particular aristocrat had particular member of his family, his society (society, that is, the relational circle), such a play at such and such a moment ... And so I tried to synthesize these theatrical practices from all these elements to try to understand this phenomenon, both as a theatrical, social, aesthetic phenomenon, proposing an approach I would say synthetic. Who played how, why, what time of the year, what type of repertoire, and especially analyzing this theatrical practice compared once again to the official theaters of the period to see who played in theaters, if those plays were written, who resembled those who played in the official theaters, or if there were places which belong to the private or intimate sphere in which one can do absolutely everything.

So what was the conclusion?

Well, it's pretty mixed. And contrary to what some would have liked me to find, it is not only erotic theater in the salons. Not at all. But it's very practical, very mixed.

Okay. So there have been effects of diffusion in the theater between ...

There is a whole system of bridges, actually, because the texts circulate, because the authors circulate and because the actors themselves circulate. The aristocrats or the bourgeois are not going to play in the professional troops, but there are actors, professional troops who come to



play on these so-called private stages. Private, in the sense of the eighteenth century, and not the private theater of our days.

Of course ! And how did you get this idea to work on this subject?

The idea came to me precisely from the first sphere of my work, literature and education, which at the beginning relied heavily on family theater, young people and colleges, theater, either created or adapted for young people, and already played in a circle, one can say either institutional if it is the scene of a college (perhaps in the framework of an institution for young girls), I think in the seventeenth century to Comedies en Proverbes written by Madame de Maintenon for Saint-Cyr, and thus, of these scenes, which are not official scenes nor public, but related to education. These non-public, unofficial scenes are for private use.

Before you plunge into it, you knew that there was theater in the spheres of family, private ...

Yes, my thesis was about the equivalent of youth theater in the eighteenth century.

Okay. So already, you had elements. And it was already at that time that you had knowledge of all scattered monographs ...

In fact, I had worked on youth theater, the so-called theater of education in the eighteenth century, and I knew that there were indeed, in parallel, other forms of private theaters which concerned essentially this time of adults.

Okay. Very good. So it was your HDR and then you made a book.

Yes.



Okay. I see better how you started doing this project. How much time did you spend thinking from writing to finalizing?

The HDR?

Yes.

It seems to me two years. With a sabbatical semester.

Ah ... That's the dream. It's a bit necessary. It's not that big, in the end. And you had in mind to write a book right away or did it happen later?

I had the idea of making a book of it right away. I did not see the HDR as a second thesis. My thesis was published, of course.

Is that something that is rather classic in letters?

Yes.

Okay. This is important because, very few scholars write books based on HDR in management,.

This is a second book, actually. A ninth work. We have the obligation for the HDR, the obligation, the tacit content in the universities and the one where I prepared my HDR, I did Paris 4 Sorbonne, we call it an new one. Thus, the unpublished actually takes the form of a book.

What is it, a 'new one'?

It is not the gathering, it is something that has not been published before. It is not, unlike a thesis on works, for example, it is not the gathering of articles or communications given before. It



does not have to come to nourish, but it is something that appears as a new step, a coherence of course and some form of continuity with the previous work, it is always what is appreciated, but it is something new again.

Okay. Entirely new. Very good. It's also interesting because it contrasts with what we have in sociology for the HDR. One must in part have an original ground, but all the rest of the memory, it is the trajectory of research since the thesis. For the rest, it's different.

We have an unpublished, but we also join the whole work ...

Is it the same, then?

Evaluation of the HDR ... I also take care, at the doctoral school, in the commission of doctoral training, from the HDR to the IPE. Indeed, we provide the whole file because it is still a look at the whole production of the researcher. But in literature, the unpublished are big new. That's 250 - 300 pages.

Two years ... It's a job ... From what? You work from archives? What is your starting material, in fact?

So it was relatively long ago. Very little, if any, database at the time was accessible. I published ... I defended my HDR in 2000 and I published it in 2003. I put some time for personal reasons and therefore it is basically reading parts, reading manuscripts, research in archives and readings of memoirs and correspondences because it is in memories and correspondences that have the most testimonies of this theatrical life of living room, castle ...

Okay. That's the material. And at the level of the written work, you pass roughly ... Finally, I imagine that it is a permanent round-trip between material and writing, writing, but what is it? One year working on the material and a year working on writing?





It's a little artificial ...

It's a bit far, too.

Which part of the work you prefer? Writing ?

I like the part where the problematic is born. Where once we have the materials in mind, that we have read them, that we have annotated them, we see how we will arrange this for ... Me, anyway, my approach was problematic. That is, I did not want to make a catalog of the places

where the theater was made. I find it very interesting, I collaborated on a site that will work again which lists ... it can not be exhaustive, we find every day ... which lists the places where we did theater company or amateur theater in the eighteenth century, and what interested me was to try to understand the phenomenon a little, to ask questions. So, what I found interesting, a bit difficult but interesting, is the moment when it crystallizes. One thinks "who does what, why, when, what connection it has with the other theaters, with the other repertoires and is it sketching a typology of the authors, can we sketch a typology what are the reactions of the public, is it possible to sketch (as I have done) the repertoires, is it the imported, mimetic repertoire of things like that ... This is the most exciting time. This is the moment when we put in order everything we have found.

And I imagine that at the beginning, you had the problem in mind?

The idea for me was to check a little bit if what was found in the books of critics, because it is a phenomenon that I have not fully discovered, it had been little studied by modern critics. There were those little monographs, those bibliophile articles, and so on... on this phenomenon at the time, in that castle, was to put all that in perspective with regard to what was known, to what was well established the operation of the theater. And so to know whether it was radically different or whether there were, on the contrary, links between the two.

And after the publication of HDR and books, did you still exploit...?



Yes a lot ! And I continue, but here I am extremely happy because I continued to work on both fields, literature and education, and public theater, repertoire, links between official theater and unofficial theater, then changes during the French Revolution and there, there is a whole project, indeed, that takes shape not just in France but also in Switzerland, with young researchers. That's one aspect of the research. It's good when you're less alone in research and when very young people are resuming, launching things, and with technical means that I did not have at the time, especially the databases.

Understood. Let talk about the attractive things that you liked during the process. And I understood that technical problems and limitations in databases were a disadvantage. Is there something you did not like during the process?

I think this is an area in which we can not be absolutely exhaustive, but precisely the fact of not being exhaustive avoids probably the trap of the anecdotal. But it is true if I would have a whole team that could inventory a huge amount of memories, correspondences, multiply the data and not for the data themselves, but for what they deliver. We could probably have problematic nuances. There is, for example, a theater, the way in which the emigrants at the time of the French Revolution continue to make theater, for example, which is little worked and for which it would require more strength.

One thing you mentioned: now you are working with people in Switzerland and that is a good aspect in research when you can collaborate when writing your HDR and your books. Was it teamwork or were you alone?

I did it alone. First because the HDR is relatively isolated and then, without vain gloriol, I was still pioneer in the field. At the same time, there was a Canadian colleague who had launched a site to which I and another colleague were associated.



A website ?

A site for collecting data on private scenes.

A collaborative site, then?

Yes.

These are things that are multiplying, right now ...

Yes, it multiplies and gets bigger from a geographical point of view. These practices of social theater are not limited to France. There are some in Switzerland. There are some in England, and so on. So, yes, we are called to find a package of things.

Certainly because it could be ... It may not exist in every country in the world, but you could imagine that there are a lot of national companies that—

Here ! And then not only is there a spatial expansion, but there is a chronological expansion. And what is interesting is to work ... after all, you have to appeal to what you know about the century, the literary genres of which one is a specialist, but there is indeed a theater of this type in the nineteenth century a century which is oriented towards the theater of amateurs in the twentieth, twenty-first century, towards the theater of apartment. So, here we are on something that turns to court.

And throughout this period of writing the HDR and book, has it enabled you to have a better research technique, to better understand the subject?

Certainly yes. I believe that when one makes a work in its own which is a problematic synthesis, one actually implements a set of tools which are not exactly the same as if one makes an article, that if one makes a chapter of work , that if one directs a collective or if one makes a scientific hearing of a text. We have a synthesis capacity that is more solicited at that time. This is also why the sabbatical semester is preferable.



That's for sure.

Perhaps in brackets, I find that in my job, when one works full time, that one has responsibilities, one arrives to make articles, it is possible to organize colloquies, one can still re-read a collective work. The book in its own e is 250 pages long, but it becomes much more difficult.

I agree. And our institutions do not necessarily 'likes' sabbatical. Well, that's another story. How do Swiss colleagues come to you?

Because they know ...

When do they contact you? After the book was published? Before? At the conferences because you present your work?

So, no, time has passed, anyway. I published my book in 2003. It was well received. Afterwards, we also had a colloquium with a colleague around the theaters of society, and then we went to various conferences, and there were calls for communication for which we could give the example of these theaters, these directories we were working on. The interest of the Swiss colleagues in this form of theatrical life in France and in French-speaking Switzerland was a year ago. The realization of the project ... themselves had worked before ... but the big work in synergy, it is very recent.

So these are colleagues whom you met, whom you already knew, I imagine ...

That I already knew but with whom ... Bah ... We are not the same age, eh.

Are they younger?

They're juniors, yes.



What did your HDR editors bring you?

What did it bring me?

Yes.

I nevertheless had the impression of understanding a little how it worked and of having a clearer representation of what could actually constitute the sociability, the practice of certain cultural practices of certain social groups in the eighteenth century.

You are at the frontier of sociology, really.

Yes, but with a very strong focus nevertheless on texts and literary forms. Yes, there are questions of patronage, protection, progress towards the independence of the author, the author of second order in relation to the author who sells the equivalent of best-sellers, etc. But I do not have a sociologist's training, but I approach it in ... Because, necessarily, it interests the conditions of emergence of these texts. But yes, collaboration with sociologists would certainly be extremely interesting, but all the studies of the eighteenth century, more precisely the eighteenth-century studies, on the forms of sociability are certainly on the margins of sociology.

When you say that the book was well received, can you tell us who received it and how it manifests itself?

So, of course, it is well received in the academic world. We must not delude ourselves. There is a reception in a university circle. That is to say that one is published by a publisher who has a good reputation. We have complimentary reviews in specialized journals. Besides that, do not think ... As far as I'm concerned, it has not been a bestseller either. I did not go on a television set to talk about it.



But at the same time, it does not say anything about the quality of the work given the specificity of the work.

There is a specificity. That is why I think that if we now approach the phenomenon over a wider chronological extent, we can indeed have a greater audience by presenting these forms of sociability as ancestors of other forms of contemporary sociability.

So, in fact, behind the collective project, there is the challenge of enlarging your audience somewhat, in a way.

Yes. It seems to me that's important. I have a project for example of anthology of these plays, both theater of education and theater of society. Then, it will not be published in collections that will necessarily touch the very, very general public, but we can still hope to reach a wider audience.

Your editor ... How did it happen for the publication of the book? Are you looking for a publisher?

Yes. And at the time I published without giving money.

Congratulations! It's rare.

In 2003, it was still practiced for certain things. On the other hand, the books were expensive and they probably limited their circulation.

And what was your strategy?

I have argued. I supported and reviewed my text based on the remarks made by my HDR committee and then I returned it and it was accepted.



And why did you choose that publisher?

I published at Champion. They had an eighteenth-century collection that interested me. For the eighteenth century, they published mainly at the Voltaire Foundation and at Champion.

The two big publishers, actually ...

They are the two big publishers. Now, all that is edition of texts, one publishes much more in Garnier Classics. You must know the Garnier Classics. It's the yellow books.

I'm not sure I know. Perhaps. No, I do not think so ...

Now they are all yellow. The old ones were yellow with a black and white engraving.

Okay. Does not ring a bell. It's the black hole. I have not read many things like that in ... And the publisher? He asked you to rework your initial text?

No.

He took it entirely.

Okay. Very good. And you had a good chance? When you sent it, were you optimistic about the outcome of the process?

Yes, relatively.

Does your university also publish books?



No. In Creteil, there is no academic press. We never had one. It is not even something that has been reduced for financial reasons, there has never been. It was mentioned several times and it was said that in the Paris region, competition was such ... It is very heavy, university presses.

Yes, but if there was, would Champion be your second option?

I do not know. I did not ask myself because there was no choice. No academic press, so ... I did not do my HDR in Créteil.

And why this choice, moreover?

Because I wanted to keep the same circle of directors.

In fact, your intellectual community, it is rather at the Sorbonne or is it just because your HDR coordinator was there?

At the time, she was rather at the Sorbonne. Now it is more European and more international.

Interesting. We create invisible colleges, as they say.

It is because we have migrated, in various places. And we must not delude ourselves anyway: the bonds of friendship between colleagues make the networks, eh.

And then, I do not know if it's like literature, but are there schools of thought? In literature, can we oppose or at least contrast schools? For example, does the Sorbonne school have different approaches, different methods from other schools, other universities?

I do not believe so much. I believe that the great period of the critical chapels is rather the 60s, early 70s.

Has it settled?





Yes.

It was what ? What was opposed to that time?

I think that was all that was around the new criticism, in the years 66 and around 68. There are indeed all these approaches either psychoanalytic or purely socio critical. Instead, they were stopped to try to keep the best in order to have more complete approaches.

Okay. Very good. What are you most proud of in this work? Surely there are many things. Is it the fact that it is a pioneering research, that it is something innovative, that it is something that has, in retrospect, had a strong impact that can be extended? What are the sets of elements that ...?

So I do believe that it is the fact that it is a pioneer, the fact that it has personally concerned me with a bundle of elements very "puzzle", very "kaleidoscope". Something synthetic with a proposal of interpretation on the functioning and then actually the fact that it remains an open search since it could be extended to other places, other texts, other authors and possibly open it at other times. And then, as it is at the same time texts and representations, we work of course on the authors, the texts, the sponsors, the public, the way in which the reactions of the spectators are noted ... There is all this aspect.

It's like what Sanja said just now. It is something that can be extended to infinity.

Yes Yes of course !

And then after that, you published some more restricted things, papers ...

Articles ... I worked on some aspects that interested me. For example, there are authors who write only on the stage, only for this type of theater. There are writers who write for this at the



beginning of their career. There are some who come back. For an author who circulates on several types of theater, several types of stage or through several literary types, knowing when he turns to that theater, the reactions of the public ... Finally, rather spectators. It is not too "public". They are called "spectators." Who is coming ? How do we react and how is it recorded? In the theater, what is still the eternal problem, whether it is a public, private, official, or unofficial theater, is that for these epochs there are testimonies written a posteriori with all the distorting prisms that one can imagine. And it is exciting to flush out the prism and try to assess the degree of deformation and why?

But it's necessarily a posteriori, is not it?

Ah necessarily! It can be more or less a posteriori, that is to say, things that belong to the newspaper, so the time interval is not enormous, but for the theater of society, we have mostly testimonies in the memories, and especially in the memoirs that were written after the French Revolution. Because this theater appears as the striking manifestation of the aristocratic life and sociability of the old regime. So, at the same time, there is a memory nostalgic and magnified.

It's the golden age, what.

Yes that's it. At the same time, just as it is absolutely fascinating to work or attempt to work on conversation in the eighteenth century, the witticism, etc. but it is of the ephemeral that one tries to pin. And the pinned butterfly does not have the same colors as the one that flies.

It's certain. So in your writings, you're also trying to ...

Ah, yes, because we can not take ... We have texts, memories that are mines of information, but they are texts ...



Not at all. But the deformations are extremely revealing. When you cross and you get a little overhang, it is extremely interesting. The appreciation on the game of actors, for example, who are not professional actors, why is it said that it is great and why is it said that it is very bad. It is absolutely subjective.

Yes of course. Okay. Very good. Interesting. After that, you continued to exploit ... What indicators do you have of the good reception of this work? For example, I will compare with the economy. When you're an economist and you're published in a magazine and you're quoted hundreds or even thousands of times-

For participating in evaluations at the RHS and HCERES, you know that literature reviews are actually not rated. In fact, it has ceased to be evaluated.

There is resistance ...

There is terrible resistance because the excellent journals were not on the list or were not rated in A-rank.

How come?

I think that what is written in literature has so little impact that it does not fit. But on the other hand ...

But as soon as it is reviewed, everyone knows.

Of course. The RHLF, etc. are very old magazines that everybody consults.

So there is no ambiguity within the community about the hierarchy of journals?

Oh no ! Within the community, the hierarchy exists and is tacit.



It is tacit but it is clear in everyone's head.

Of course.

So it's still surprising that the HCERES peers, when they were asked to do reviews, did not record that one.

I do not want to make any mistakes. It should be checked but it seems to me that on the lists at the time, the RHLF was not present. Great magazines per century, classical literature of the seventeenth century, of the eighteenth century, I believe, did not appear in these lists.

It's in France ? Are there large international lists? So, in fine, the HCERES ... You know what the HCERES is. The AERES is the national evaluation agency which is organized by disciplinary field which evaluates the laboratories, the research units, which validates the Masters. Indeed, at a certain period, they have, by discipline, wanted to count the number of clients per laboratory. And to count clients, they had to make a list of magazines. So, in letters, it was abandoned, this story.

What has been kept as a distinction is publication in magazines with or without a reading committee. And those with peer review were judged to be more selective than the others.

Do you have a choice of magazines?

Yes still. We have a choice that is going to be reduced for economic reasons because it is expensive to publish. There are times when magazines have trouble, economically, and now it is true that we often publish proceedings on the Internet electronically, but ultimately ... Some colleagues deeply regret it, but I think sometimes, is faster and then, finally, it reaches a wider audience. Because by typing a few keywords, one comes across the articles.

Yes, it's open access.



And when you say "it's expensive to publish", do you mean that the magazine market is struggling to live?

Here.

And you could do it in a language other than French?

I also publish in English.

And in English, do you have a choice of magazines?

So I published in English, but rather in collective works. I was asked ... Or a colloquium which was in English or an article in English for a collective work.

Okay. Very good. I thought it was in the national language ...

Mostly, I publish in French.

But it is good to be able to publish in English to have a wider audience and for international cooperation.

I had heard about this controversy at HCERES

It was pretty violent.

I have a colleague, friend, who has done her thesis on HCERES evaluators in other disciplines: in geography, in literature ...

I do not agree with the classification of economic journals. So I think that's ...



It is like bibliometrics in terms of pure quantity. We must know if, we publish the same article or the equivalent X times, it is still ...

We make of numbers, we do not make quality.  
It's certain. And being quoted is something you're looking at?

Very little.

Does the community look at that?

We quote ourselves. And in the symposiums, it is very clear. When one proposes an approach, a notion, one refers to the work of colleagues, one refers for certain elements to my analyzes. After, no ... The Google score among literary is very, very little practiced. We even had a lot of fun with the hoax with the character who ...

The ResearchGate.

This is the guy who never existed and was quoted everywhere. But it is true that there is a fairly strong mistrust of the literature and humanities that carry out this type of evaluation. Very quantitative.

But in your community, you know where the hierarchies are and where the quality is, without the need for quantitative indicators. It is seized.

First of all, when we first exhume research banks that were not worked before, then, when we are in the innovation, in the excavation, and then when we propose analyzes, concepts of operation, definition models, problems that work, which advance understanding of a number of complex phenomena.

So it is by content that we can ...



Yes, it is by content. It is the content when we go beyond, when we bring something new with which we are not going to say that everyone agrees, but, at least, how it counted in the discussion, in the debate on these areas.

Okay. Very good. I do not think I have any more questions. See? We are on time. Great!

It was very interesting. Thank you very much !

On the other hand, I think I am totally identifiable.

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