Conventions for measuring and questioning policies: the case of 50 years of policy evaluations through a statistical survey

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Conventions for Measuring and Questioning Policies. The Case of 50 Years of Policy Evaluations through a Statistical Survey

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Abstract: *»Konventionen für das Messen und die Prüfung von Policies. 50 Jahre Policy Evaluationen auf der Grundlage eines statistischen Surveys«*. Statistics are used to make critical judgments about society and fuel policy debates through different configurations that link together three components: a) the questioning of policy appropriateness and fairness; b) the categories and statistical tools used in evaluations; c) the economic, social and political theories invoked in interpretations and explanations. Using convention theory and the sociology of engagements, the article offers a perspective view of how these configurations have changed over nearly half a century in France, based on a single statistical source. This approach to "the politics of statistics" identifies four main configurations around four main measurements of human characteristics: social origin, occupational skills, human capital, migration history.

Keywords: convention theory, discrimination, ethnic categories, history of statistics, human capital, migration, objectivity, state policies, social class, social inequality, social mobility, social origin, occupational skill, power, sociology of statistics.

Statistics are used to provide the "big picture" of society, make critical judgments about its current state and fuel policy debates. Though figures by themselves prove nothing, but they play their role in configurations that link together three components: a) the questioning of policy appropriateness and fairness; b) the categories and statistical tools used in evaluations; c) the economic, social and political theories invoked in interpretations and explanations.

We have at our disposal a perspective view of how these configurations have changed over nearly half a century in France based on a single statistical source: a periodic survey entitled "Training and Occupational Skills" (Formation et Qualification Professionnelle: FQP), conducted since 1964 by France's *National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies* (INSEE). This survey

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I am grateful to Robert Salais to have carefully revised the translation of the insert on the sociology of engagement, and would also suggest the reader to refer to his own contribution in this volume on the notion of configuration.
Translated by Susan Taponier.

(statistically representative) is not as restricted as its title sounds; in fact, it covers extremely diverse aspects of the individual life histories of the respondents. The interviewees were questioned about the main phases of their lives starting with their schooling (in great detail since kindergarten) and their employment history from their first job to subsequent activities or unemployment, going all the way back to their parents' diplomas, occupations and marital status. The survey has been regularly used to make the questions addressed to policies measurable.

This article stems from research carried out with Olivier Monso on a *corpus* made up of the series of questionnaires in FQP surveys from 1964 to 2003, along with the broadest possible bibliography of works that have used the surveys in discussing various topics (Monso and Thévenot, 2008) as well as interviews of the survey officials and researchers who made use of it.[1] We have thus been able to bring to the fore how the questioning of French society and its public policies has changed over time. In an era when statistical data has become an important ingredient in policy evaluation, this historical perspective allows us to situate current topics and methods in a broader context. It brings out changes in the scale from the national government, European and worldwide ones, as well as a shift in the locus of power away from the state to non-governmental authorities. It also reveals profound transformations in the kinds of measurements that are permitted and the way policies are challenged.

This article begins with an introduction to our approach to the "politics of statistics", how it developed and what it requires. We will go on to comment successively on the four major configurations brought to light by empirical research on the *corpus* of questionnaires, interviews and publications. The concluding section proposes a synthesis of the changes in polity construction accompanied by changes in scale and locus of authority.

1. How Should the Politics of Statistics Be Approached?

This article is part of a long-term research project on policy equipment and the role of the instruments used to format and establish equivalences of the world in modes of government (Thévenot 1984, 2002, 2009a). It deals with the relationship between statistical measurement and policy evaluation only in cases pertaining to the qualities of persons: in these instances, they raise questions affecting polity construction. How are the qualities of individuals recognised and expressed as variables? How are these qualifying operations linked to the use of formatted data?

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[1] The bibliographical references in the present article are merely a rough guideline and should be placed in the context of the full *corpus*. The working document of the Centre for Research in Economics and Statistics is included in a publication by INSEE presenting the raw material for this article: Monso and Thévenot (2011).

This questioning derives from the interest shown by Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss (Durkheim and Mauss 1971 [1903]) in the role of categories, those "laboriously forged instruments" that Durkheim compared to a form of capital (Durkheim 1960 [1912]), a Durkheimian legacy that was later enriched by Mary Douglas (1966). Unlike other countries where this type of questioning was pursued exclusively in universities (Bowker and Star 1999), in France it was developed at the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), the organisation that produces most of the country's statistics. In the 1970s, a line of historical and sociological research on statistical instruments and categories emerged at INSEE (Affichard ed. 1977, 1987; Desrosières, 1987 [1977], 1998 [1993], 2008a, 2008b; Guibert et al., 1971; Desrosières et Thévenot 1988, Salais et al. 1999 [1986], Thévenot, 1979, 1983, 1987) connected to historians and to sociologists[2] working with Pierre Bourdieu and Luc Boltanski at the *Centre for Sociology of Education and Culture* (Boltanski 1970, 1982; Bourdieu and Boltanski 1974), and later within the *Groupe de Sociologie Politique et Morale* created in the early 1980s and spearheaded by Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot and their publications on "*Economies of Worth*" (Boltanski and Thévenot 1983, 1987, 2006 [1991]). The fact that this research was based at INSEE gave it a particular turn due to the special attention paid to techniques of production and analysis of data. Research was carried out at INSEE to produce the nomenclature of Occupations and Socio-professional Categories (PCS) along with studies on the conditions of its production and more broadly on its statistical formatting (Desrosières and Thévenot 1979; Desrosières, Goy and Thévenot 1983).

This research was a major source of inspiration for the "*convention theory*", a current that brings together institutionalist economists and sociologists, which was first outlined at a conference sponsored by INSEE (Salais and Thévenot 1986). In addition to the contribution of Olivier Favereau, this current benefited from research work conducted at INSEE in the mid-1980s by François Eymard-Duvernay, André Orléan, Robert Salais and Laurent Thévenot (Eymard-Duvernay et al. 2006; Orléan 2004 [1994], Revue économique 1989; Diaz-Bone und Thévenot 2010).[3] From the outset, the conventions and measuring devices associated with policies were an important focal point of this current, even before indicator-based policy assumed the central role it plays today in the European Union (Affichard and Lyon-Caen 2004, Salais 2004, 2006). This approach, based on conventional forms and instruments of coordination, was

2 "Study days on the history of statistics" in Vaucresson (23-25 June 1976), followed by systematised work on the statistical system (Affichard 1987). Further "Study days on the history of statistics" with more modest ambitions were organised in 2006 and 2008 at INSEE: <http://www.insee.fr/fr/insee-statistique-publique/default.asp?page=colloques/jhs/jhs.htm>.

3 For an introduction in English, cf. in particular: Thévenot (2006b).

popularised recently by the topic of "government by instruments" (Lascoumes and Le Galès 2004).

Research on "social coding" and on the concept of "*investment in form*", which grasps the costly establishment of a form of equivalence between persons (or between things) to ensure coordination (Thévenot 1984), led to the study of "the economics of conventional forms", and later to a programme of the *analysis of the* "*politics of statistics*" (Thévenot 1990), which is extended in this article.[4]

The approach we are proposing establishes a connection between three orders of conventional forms involved in three operations of representation: the representation and statistical representativeness ensured by the instruments used to measure and process data; the political representation of individuals arising from different constructions of the polity and of policies; the theoretical representation derived from interpretive and explanatory theories in the social, economic and political sciences (Thévenot 2006, Ch. 7).

Yet the notion of representation, however, does not bring out the fact that joining policy to statistics involves evaluating the qualities of people as capacities or powers that are either enhanced or threatened (qualifications or occupational skills, capital and disabilities of a social or otherwise discriminatory nature). In policies and in the statistics used to evaluate them, individuals are represented by capacity traits. To differentiate those capacity traits, we have to go back to "capital powers" that people have acquired. Where do these powers come from?

Along their lives, people engage in a series of so-called investments – from personal attachments to wider community (or, better and more open, commonality) engagements – that provide individuals consistency over time and prevent them, unequally between people, against social vulnerability.[5] These investments result, for each person, in what can be said "capital powers" (Thévenot 2009b). Such powers allow people to sustain their relationships with others. Capital powers and, with regards to them, inequalities between people which arise when they try to build commonality with others are at the core of the *sociology of engagements* (Thévenot 2002, 2006a, 2010a, 2011b, 2011d). Such sociology extends and absorbs earlier research: first in investments of forms, which support coordination between agents; later on economies of worth, the object of them being to define what coordination is the most legitimate and how it could become such, thanks to investments devoted to qualify people in relation to their contribution to the common good.

[4] For a comparison between the sociology of engagement developed by the author, which serves as the backbone of our analysis, and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice and John Dewey's pragmatism, cf. Thévenot (2011c).

[5] By the way, several of the sociological and economic theories implied in the interpretation of these statistics have developed concepts of capital to grasp individual capacities.

The statistics we consider in our contribution are precisely about policies that promote the good or combat the evil (policies regarding justice, social inequalities, efficiency, discrimination, etc.). As those policies are affecting the capital powers of individuals, we will employ the framework of the sociology of engagements for analysing the corresponding statistical tools and the statistics they produce. The excursion below offers a brief presentation of this sociology.

Excursion*:* The *sociology of engagement*

On Powers Invested through Different Types of Engagements…

Empirical research on the way people are on quest of confidence in their relationship to the world and to their self made evident for us the necessity to consider several types of engagement.[6] Traditionally, only dichotomies are used, between the individual and the collective, or between the public and the private. Many of recent policies are now targeted towards "responsible individuals"; to create and maintain such capacity for individual responsibility, new types of investments are required which cannot enter these classical dichotomies. They differ from intimate personal attachments (though these continue to play a prominent role for maintaining the consistency of the person), as well as from qualifications publicly recognized through the participation to the common good.

So we define three types of engagement: personal familiarity; planned individual project; and publicly justified engagement toward the common good. Each of them endows people with powers: respectively, intimate personal attachment, individual autonomy in achieving project, and attribution of worth resulting from participating to the common good. Each of them ensures a corresponding good: respectively, personal ease, individual accomplishment, contribution to the common good. All of them maintain self-consistency over time, as required for personal identity and a fair connection to the external world. By committing him/herself to one of these engagements, the person becomes rightly linked to him/herself through his/her belonging to a properly arranged environment. This happens thanks to the environment's formatting, which depends of the engagement: respectively, accommodated to the person, functionally built, qualified for achieving the common good. Such formatting, as we will see later in the contribution, has the property to make salient for the person what has to be tested in this environment and what is already proved.

[6] This research concerns tensions and disagreements brought to light in conflicts over the environment and in efforts to govern by standards. In English, cf.: Thévenot, Moody and Lafaye (2000), Thévenot (2001, 2002, 2009a, 2011d).

The notion of regime makes it possible to discuss the way the different phases in the process of engagement are dynamically and indissolubly linked, which broadens the initial perspective about conventional forms. Research on such forms already brought out a paradoxical tension in social coding (Thévenot 1979) between "the conventional" in the sense of what one can trust, and "the conventional" in the sense of arbitrariness which consequently rises critics about the losses it generates. Every regime has both sides, and not only engagements into the most publicly legitimate conventions. The first side could be labelled "closing one's eyes": we confidently rely upon salience with confirms our belief; the other one, by contrast, could be said "opening one's eyes": we with pain doubt about the salient mark, focusing on what has been sacrificed. These two sides have their own specific translation in each regime. In the "closing one's eyes" face: relying upon routine in the familiarity regime; sticking to normality in the plan regime and claiming justification in the common good regime. In the "opening one's eyes" face, respectively: groping, being indecisive, developing critics.

The issue in distinguishing several regimes is not to create ideal-types isolating "pure" situations; it is, over all, to apprehend tensions arising from their conjunction in the "living together" and to shed light on those pressures and oppressions which arise when one regime and its invested powers take hegemony over others regimes. Such pressures and oppression are not usually grasped by critics, whatever it come, from actors or from social sciences (Thévenot 2011c, 2011d).

To illustrate these three regimes, let us take the example of work. To be comfortable at work, a person has to accommodate his or her workspace and tools through *familiar engagement*. The immigrant worker described by Robert Linhart in *L'établi* achieved greater ease when positioning and arranging his workbench by his own way and practice (Linhart 1978). Working himself in the same industrial workshop, Linhart has become aware of the deleterious oppression that the plan regime surrounding this worker in that plant exercised on his parcel of familiar environment mastering. The normal equipment of the plant is totally designed by and engaged into the plan regime; beyond, it has been widened in order to take the status of a common good through the engagement in the order of worth of *industrial efficiency*. The engineers who discovered the workbench arranged in a familiar way set about replacing it by a functional workbench commonly qualified as efficient. Nowadays it is no longer merely supervisory authority but also the imperative of an individual *plan* presupposed both by the theory of human capital and by recent activation policies that put pressure on the *familiar good.* The same imperatives put pressure, as well, on *common goods* that are guaranteed by *orders of worth* other than efficiency, in particular those also invested in work like solidarity guaranteed by the *civic* order of worth. Over against this oppression, expressing one's concern about what affects the other at a *familiar*, deeply personal level presupposes there is room for an engagement more intimate than the *plan*, regardless of whether the concern is felt by a family member, a colleague or a professional social worker (Breviglieri and Stavo-Debauge 2006). In acknowledging the role of practices, habits or habitus, the social sciences usually conceive of them as social, i.e. collective, or even linked to collective identity. As a result, they fail to recognise one of the most severe tensions in the living together, which are created by this *familiar engagement* and its resisting against collectiveness. When these sciences refer to routines, they tend to grasp only the blind side of familiar engagement or even to assume collective habits.

… Diversely Taken into Account When Building Commonality "in the plural"

Once we have differentiated the powers invested in the various regimes of engagement and the kind of good each one maintains, the difficulty of politically building commonality with others becomes fully apparent. Even if we limit the discussion to these capital powers, how can such a wide variety of perceived goods or evils and of the corresponding formatted realities be taken into account? As soon as we move away from simplified, holistic constructions such as a shared culture, which implies alignment and unanimity, and *a fortiori* from substantial conceptions of community, one has to leave room to the way people express in common their differences. We found that modes of composing commonality vary according to the regime of engagement that each mode favors to take into account differences among people's concerns. That is why, in the course of comparative empirical studies of the grammars in use in various contemporary worlds (Western Europe, the United States, Russia), it seemed helpful to distinguish among the grammars of commonality "in the plural" along two dimensions:[7] (1) the mode of *communication* that would be apt to transform what affects each person into an expression conducive to its inclusion in commonality; (2) the mode of *composing* commonality best suited to incorporating the major differences among these expressions into one composition (think here of a kind of musical composition).

We have thus distinguished three models of building grammars apt to achieve commonality: a grammar that relies on the *plural orders of worth* through *their qualification for the common good*; a *liberal grammar built by individuals opting in public*; a grammar by *personal affinity to a plurality of common places*.

The first grammar, based on *plural orders of worth – qualified for the common good* – stems from *Economies of Worth* (Boltanski and Thévenot 1987, 2006 [1991]). We have to add to this plurality the normative consideration that community policy requires the integration of a plurality of orders of worth.

[7] Grammar here designates the basic elements of a skill.

This construction is clearly grounded in *engaging into public justifications for the common good*, which is the kind of investment required to participate in commonality, forcing what affects people to be included in one of the plural orders of worth. *Composing commonality* over critical tensions between orders of worth requires compromises among different orders of worth, with a normative opening to the wider variety of these orders. By representing the public interest, the *civic* order of worth ensures anonymous solidarity, and thereby combats inequalities. It is a main component of what is often designated as the "French republican model" although encountered in many other political contexts (e.g. in the recent reform of health care funding in the United States). It supports the criticism of paternalism inherent in personal dependence and developed in the domestic order of worth. The *industrial* order of worth of technical efficiency and the *market* order of worth are involved in the compromises of so-called neo-liberal new management now being introduced in public services, particularly at the expense of the *civic* order of worth. By treating education as investments source of returns on a market, the notion of human capital is an extension of the compromise between the present order of worth of *market* competition (focused on the present) and the *industrial* order of worth of investments (turned toward the future).

The characteristics of the second grammar – *liberal grammar of individuals in public* – stand out more clearly (Thévenot 2010b, 2011b), when contrasted to the preceding one. *Communication* by which the person takes part in commonality supposes him or her to appear, when intervening in public, as an individual *choosing* among *options* also accessible to other individuals. Such a grammar emphasizes and selects as relevant the differences between individual choices, being granted that they are made public under the form of opinions or interests. *Composition* takes place by *negotiation* among the opting individuals through preferred options that must be publicly recognisable. Participating in commonality presupposes that what affects the individual is included in such a format – chosen options to be publicly recognizable – that it could appear as the expression of an individual *engaged into a planned project*. The connection between the market order of worth and this *liberal grammar of the public* is often a source of confusion in the identification of neo-liberalism. The person is represented as an individual choosing among options, except that the choice is reduced to market options in the market order of worth, whereas in a liberal construction, it involves an interest or opinion negotiated among *stakeholders*. This confusing connection is used to justify social policy reforms that promote market services and denounce the "paternalism" of state social policies, understood in this case as preventing the agent's freedom of choice (de Leonardis 2009).

The third grammar by *personal affinities with a plurality of common places* makes it possible to go beyond the usual characterisations of communitarianism, which tend to overlook the ways person can differ. Although it was first approached in a comparative Franco-Russian programme called "From ties of proximity to places of commonality" (Thévenot ed. 2005), this grammar sheds light on a very ordinary and widely spread way of creating commonality, often referred to vaguely as "conviviality" or just "socialization". It is observed especially in the workplace and threatened by new management. It sheds light on references to shared cultures or identities mentioned in the debates over the configuration based on migration history. *Communicating* in these instances implies using *common places* (this expression has no pejorative connotation and refers instead to places of commonality). These places are flexible, ranging from things and spaces frequented in common to canonical topoi. Such common places allow people to participate in commonality, while *appropriating* them personally for themselves and indexing them to their own situations. This grammar builds on *familiar engagement*, which is not welcome in the other two grammars. Appropriation is enriched by an emotion of communication; when this emotion of communication is missing, it discredits the use of the common place, thus reducing it to a superficial cliché. Unanimity is not required: there is room for different appropriations and for the need to *compose commonality* with them. Differing is made possible by discrepant associations among common places (Koveneva 2011).

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In contrast to the first type of construction, the characteristics of the second – *liberal grammar of individuals in public* – stands out more clearly (Thévenot 2010b, 2011b). The operation of *communication* by which the person takes part in commonality necessarily involves an individual in public *choosing* among *options* accessible to other individuals. The difference between individual choices, which are made public as opinions or interests, is the difference that this grammar privileges. *Composition* takes place by *negotiation* among the opting individuals through preferred options that must be publicly recognisable. Participating in commonality presupposes that what affects the individual is included in such a format, so that this construction is based on the transformation of a prior *engagement in a plan*.

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Certain statistical sources regarding individuals are particularly conducive to achieving a historical perspective on the politics of statistics. These sources are surveys on social and professional mobility, or more broadly, life histories, which document changes in condition from one generation to the next or from one period to another over a person's lifetime. An initial set of research works examined the "social origins of surveys on social mobility", ranging from the tables of mobility and "correlations" established by Galton concerning "heredity talent" and "eugenic social value" to FQP surveys and "qualitative demography" surveys conducted and published by the National Institute of Demographic Studies during the 1950s and 1960s on "bio-hereditary causes", "phenotypes" and "the upward mobility of the gifted" (Thévenot 1987, 1990). The present article extends this earlier work with a recent study of all the FQP surveys that focused on four different configurations based on social mobility, occupational skills, human capital and migration history (Monso and Thévenot 2008, 2011).

The analysis of various policy constructions governing the way people are taken into account in the community help us understand the congruence of the three components in each of these configurations: a) how people are taken into account in a policy; b) how they are counted in a statistic; c) how their behaviour is accounted for in a theory.

Construction by *order of worth* takes the person into account by qualifying him or her on the basis of a characterisation of the common good and establishes critical tests against values that are unjustifiable in view of the principle of common humanity (particularly racism and eugenics), unjustified shifting from one qualification of an order of worth to another, leading to accumulated powers or disabilities, or undue qualifications revealing an abuse of power (Boltanski and Thévenot 1991). The construction of commonality by a *plurality of orders of worth* highlights the conjunction of several orders of worth by integrating the pluralism of possible qualifications. It is to be distinguished from a construction of commonality *by individuals in the plural in a liberal public*, which, instead of highlighting the conjunction of qualifications for the common good, shows the conjunction of individual opinions or interests in favour of options accessible to other individuals (Thévenot 2011a, 2011b).

2. Four Configurations Linking Together Policy Constructions, Statistical Tools and Economic, Social and Political Theories

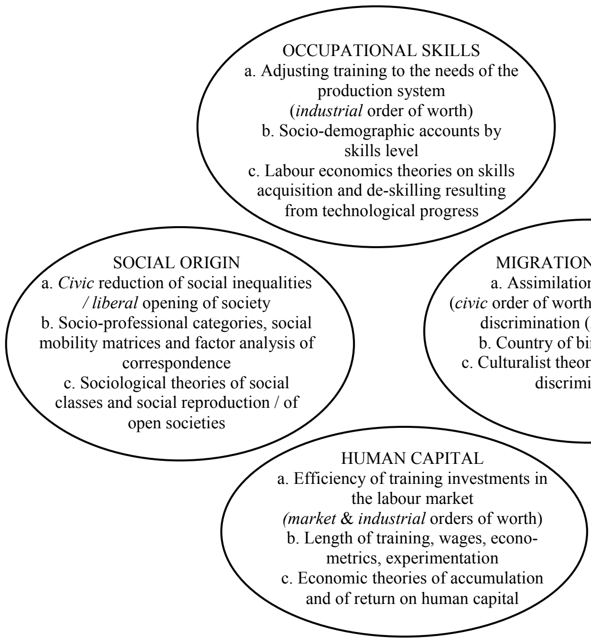
2.1 Social Origin: Social Inequalities, Heredity and Open Society

Two relatively different policy orientations lead to the construction and use of data on social origin in relation to distinct social theories. They coincide on certain topics (social inequalities) and common statistical tools (social categories, matrices of mobility). FQP surveys have long been a preferred source to situate the person in his or her original social milieu, even though the designers of the first survey in 1964 presented this utilisation as "of secondary importance" (Praderie 1966).

2.1.1 The Struggle Against Inequalities and Collective Solidarity Policies: Policy Construction Judged According to the Civic Order of Worth

a) The first policy perspective is oriented towards the public interest supported by collective solidarity policies that help reduce social inequalities. It is concerned about the fact that a person's social origins may unjustly affect his or her academic performance, job prospects or career due to social inheritance.[8] The solidarity of the civic order of worth (Boltanski and Thévenot 1991) justifies policies in favour of schooling as well as continuing education to foster social promotion. It is opposed to unjustly transferring a qualification belonging to the domestic order of worth to academic performance, which leads to the accumulation of powers or handicaps.

Figure 1: Four Configurations Linking Policies, Statistical Tools and Economic, Social and Political Theories



b) The main statistical tool associated with this type of questioning is socio-professional classification (PCS). This classification is grounded on the idea of a set of correlated properties characteristic of belonging to a social milieu, based on Jean Porte's original conception (Desrosières 1977) and that of his subsequent reformers (Desrosières and Thévenot 1988). An-

8 The inheriting of a social milieu was measured by the first mobility tables as a form of genetic heredity measured for the purpose of eugenic policy construction (Galton 1972 [1869]). This violated the principle of common humanity that governs the plurality of *orders of worth* (Boltanski et Thévenot 1991), since it governs the "eugenic" production of individuals (and not merely their reversible evaluation) to the advantage of the most "serviceable" (Thévenot 1990). In contrast, by studying inter-generational correlations in relation to a desirable "circulation of elites", Vilfredo Pareto placed a different value on mobility (Merllié 1994).

other main statistical tool is the mobility matrix showing a temporal dependence expressed as social heredity. Finally, factor analysis of correspondences was abundantly used to represent closeness or distance between social milieus.

c) Several sociological theories have proposed frameworks to explain how inequalities are reproduced, ranging from Marxist views of social classes to the approaches developed by Bourdieu and Passeron to account for social reproduction (Bourdieu and Passeron 1964). In the first case, the statistical tool of socio-professional categories was questioned concerning its ability to describe social classes in terms of relations of production, and in the second case, concerning its ability to grasp different forms of capital (economic, cultural).

This theoretical orientation dominated the sociological studies that drew upon the first FQP surveys (Bertaux 1970; Baudelot 1974). Questioning with regard to social heredity has continued (Thélot 1982; Gollac and Laulhé 1987), and can be found in recent work revealing inequalities in academic paths (Duru-Bellat and Kieffer 2008).

2.1.2 Opening up Societies and Enhancing Individual Capacities: Liberal Polity Construction

a) The second political perspective pertains to the degree of societal openness, i.e. the opportunities societies offer individuals to participate in the good of the community. These opportunities should not depend on social origin. They are manifested by individual social mobility more than by the relative improvement in the position of one social group compared with the others. Rooted in a *liberal* political orientation, found especially in North America, this evaluative perspective has led to a comparison with European societies viewed as restrained by corporatist interests that hinder liberal emancipation.

b) Once again, the analytical tools used are socio-professional nomenclatures, with special attention given to the evolution of social structures (margins of mobility matrices) to bring out the "fluidity" of societies.

c) The theories linked to societal "fluidity" were examined in relation to the "constant flow" argument (cf. Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992). International comparisons were made from this standpoint, relying notably on the 1970 FQP survey purchased for that purpose by the University of Indiana in Bloomington and the University of Oxford. French research based on FQP surveys provided evidence contradicting the "constant flow" theory, at least with regard to France, showing instead a trend towards slow growth of the "fluidity" among social groups (Vallet 1999).

2.2 Occupational Skills: Growing Needs or Job De-skilling Judged According to the *Industrial* Order of Worth

The second configuration corresponds to a different type of question addressing which kind of society which is desirable and the sort of policies that must be implemented to achieve it. This configuration is marked by economics and oriented towards the system of production. The 1964 FQP survey was designed to extend a project presented by Alain Girard in the early 1950s. The project aimed to determine the "ideal organisation of education", which "should take into account, over the long- or medium-term […] the nature and number of skills required when children leave school or occupational training to enter the production sector" (Girard 1953, 650). The survey was expected to provide data on the relationship between training and jobs and a clear grasp of occupational mobility in order to make "projections by five-year leaps" (Praderie 1966).

a) The policy questioning here concerns how the training system should respond to "economic needs". In an evaluation based on the *industrial* order of worth, this means planning efficiently to produce the number of trained people required to satisfy these needs.
b) The connection between training and employment is at the core of statistical equipment here. The data is harmonised so that a correspondence can be established between training and job nomenclatures through skills levels. This correspondence enables the construction of "socio-demographic accounts" that associate the school system exits with employment structures in the production apparatus.
c) In economics and the sociology of labour, the theoretical debates relating to this configuration are polarised around two theories. One theory views technological progress as the source of greater training needs, which tends to raise the overall skill level. The other, on the contrary, associates technological development with job de-skilling.

In this second configuration, the social debate concerning policy evaluation was confined to a particular political arena. The second survey in 1970 was used in preparing the 7th Plan (1976-1981) based on socio-demographic accounts. These accounts, which were incorporated in the forecasting model (Thévenot 1976) and based on a kind of "training-job balance sheet" (Affichard 1976), fuelled debates among "socio-professionals" who debated in special committees at the National Planning Agency (*Commissariat Général du Plan*) over which policies should be adopted.

2.3 Human Capital: Investment Efficiency or Harmful Rigidity Judged According to the *Market* Order of Worth

In this third configuration, policy questioning is also centred on economics and linked to the connection between training and employment. However, the formulation of policy, the definition of statistical tools and the economic models are totally different from those characterising the configuration based on occupational skills.

a) Unlike training system orientation policies planned in relation to the amalgamated needs of the production system, in this configuration the "efficiency" of training policies is questioned with regard to the returns on the individual's investment in training and his or her productivity for the firm.
b) The variables associated with configuration issue are part of a quantified approach to training and its outcomes (the number and length of training sessions in the FQP surveys). Using econometric processing, the variables are compared with the expected increase in productivity or employability. In its desire to come as close as possible to "experimental" situations, this approach favours measuring the "purest" possible causal factors in order to provide levers for policy action. The search for causal factors has been implemented, for example, using FQP surveys pertaining to on-the-job training (Fougère, Goux and Maurin 2001).
c) The underlying theory, in line with the work of Gary Becker (1964) and later of Jacob Mincer (1974), defines "human capital" as knowledge and know-how that can have a value in the labour market. This capital is associated with an investment by the individual, which entails a cost and is motivated by a return. The theoretical and causal breakdown of the relationship between the choice of training and the consequences in terms of returns was established using econometric valuation tools. In so doing, it contributed to disseminating the economic theory and the econometrics to implement it at the same time. Starting in the 1970s, several studies used FQP surveys to calculate the "returns" on training – whether initial or on-the-job –, notably those by Louis Lévy-Garboua (1973), Michelle Riboud (1975) and Alain Mingat (Lévy-Garboua and Mingat 1979).

In contrast to the previous configuration, theoretical orientations are the driving force in this case, which profoundly affects the choice of statistical methods as well as the formulation of policies and their objectives in France and at the European Union level. Thus, the economists who refer to the theory of human capital expect that improving and systematising these methods will provide a basis for evaluating and orienting policies. This objective was clearly formulated, for example, with regard to on-the-job training policy by Cahuc and Zylberberg (2006).

2.4 Migration History: Integration, Recognition or Discrimination Judged According to the *Civic* Order of Worth or a *Liberal Multicultural* Grammar

The thrust of this last configuration, unlike the preceding ones, is not initially economic but rather directly relates to how the political community is conceived. The issue is far from settled in France, where it has proved sufficiently controversial to generate opposition to the use of so-called "cultural" or "ethnic" categories.[9]

a) These positions stem from two different conceptions of good policy. The first, which underlies the themes of "assimilation" and "integration", emphasises the cohesion of the national community in an ideal of common equality and solidarity inspired by a construction of the community based on the civic order of worth. It leads to discrediting any fragmentation of the public interest into particular interests or differences – even among statistical classifications – that might differentiate communities on the basis of membership in one or another ethnic-cultural group.

   The second conception rests on a *liberal* grammar of commonality. Developed in the United Kingdom, it is now backed by EU law, fuelling criticism of the previous construction for concealing discrimination and impeding the struggle to eliminate it. This second conception led to assigning the task of policy support to an independent authority rather than to the state which provides support in the previous configurations.

b) These two policy perspectives give rise to antinomic positions concerning the construction of specific categories. The researchers most reluctant to build and use "cultural" or "ethnic" categories argue instead in favour of the relevance of the existing social categories that underpin the configuration based on social origin and the critique of inequalities based on the civic order of worth. Yet usable questions regarding country of birth and nationality have been present in the FQP survey since 1985. They allow for distinctions among migration histories without directly entering into the debate on the relevance of "ethnic" categories. These distinctions give rise to types of data analysis and representations in line with very different models. In the first methodological orientation, which sociologists tend to share, the category identifying migration history is used in a similar way to social origin, i.e. it refers to a complex set of properties resulting from belonging to this milieu, which are interdependent and should not be consid-

[9] The most systematic work on this topic has been done by Joan Stavo-Debauge in his thesis devoted to the question "Venir à la communauté: une sociologie de l'hospitalité et de l'appartenance", EHESS (2009). Regarding the statistical controversy, cf.: Stavo-Debauge (2003). On the problems raised by variables of origin ("social" as well as "ethnic") for statisticians, cf.: Thévenot (2006c).

ered in isolation. The second methodological orientation is quite different and is akin to the one we saw earlier in the configuration based on human capital. In this case, econometric tools are employed to dissociate causal factors rather than to establish the consistency of the whole in the case we just mentioned. Discrimination is measured by the gap separating the reference group from the group subject to discriminatory treatment, which is not explained when the correlations with the variables of human capital are taken into account, along with other variables that may enter into the factors determining wages or access to employment (cf. Aeberhardt et al. 2007, based on FQP 2003).

c) Extremely diverse theories in political science, economics and sociology have been marshalled to oppose these categories or to demonstrate the need for them. The social differentiations based on social origin that we saw in the first configuration, which support sociological models of reproduction of social inequalities, are opposed to "ethnic" differentiations according to three lines of argument that can in fact be combined. The first one is concerned that so-called ethnic differentiation might mask differentiation arising from social origin. The second is concerned that ethnic categories included in official statistics might legitimate distinctions that perpetuate racist prejudices. The third views these distinctions as a vehicle to strengthen community identities that threaten the civic egalitarian aim already mentioned.

Theories may favour these categorisations for two very different reasons. On the one hand, they may invoke the enhancement of a collective identity of origin rooted in culturalist orientations associating behaviours with a shared origin or cultural background. On the other hand, they may refer to totally different models concerned not with positive recognition of cultural differences but with discriminatory behaviours based on stigmatising traits. This second orientation, which has developed considerably since the last FQP survey in 2003, relies chiefly on the theoretical model we examined in the configuration based on human capital. In this model, inspired by the work of Gary Becker (1957), discrimination is a deficiency in the valuation of human capital, which has a negative impact on company efficiency.

Finally, as we pointed out, today the struggle against discrimination is largely supported by European law, which is itself inspired by English *liberal* law. However, this legal perspective, which is more fundamental than the viewpoint emanating from economists, demands statistical data due to the extension opened up by the notion of "indirect" or unintentional discrimination. It should be noted that even in this perspective, which aims at fundamental equality between human beings, the labour market still plays a significant role in specifying the kind of test that reveals unequal treatment (access to employment, remuneration, promotion, etc.).

3. Changes in Political Construction, Scale and the Locus of Government

Measuring a person on the basis of a certain quality that we focused on in each configuration makes sense only in relation to political construction that ties this quality to the person's capacity to take part in commonality and generates questioning about the injustices or inefficiencies the policies are supposed to correct. In this concluding section, we will look at these constructions to bring out the changes in the locus and framework of government, which is no longer limited to states.[10]

The *civic* order of worth occupies a central place in the configuration that is concerned about social disabilities starting with the measurement of social mobility. This order of worth is found especially in the notion of public service, which is being undermined today by the European Union, and the excessive importance it gives to the *market* order of *worth*. The *civic* order of worth is invoked to justify public policies of solidarity in the areas of education, health, social work and employment. Though solidarity policies may be decided at the state or national level, the civic order of worth is now increasingly sustained by associative and social movements at the international level, by NGOs that are playing a growing role in government, independently of the state. The *civic* order of worth is internationalist and offers the most solid foundation for criticising social inequalities and their reproduction, regardless of the level at which they occur.

The *industrial* order of worth of technical efficiency, highlighted in the configuration based on occupational skills, has long been at the core of the French state system, in a compromise with the civic order of worth. The progressive goal of state planning, extended to the entire community, found support in this order of worth by equipping itself with socio-demographic projections based on occupational skills. During the 1960s, the National Planning Agency was an important locus of governing authority in France, combining *civic* representation through parliamentary mandate with *socio-professional* representation. Representation by social partners is also the source of collective agreements, particularly those governing correspondences between training levels and employment. It should be noted that, like its civic counterpart, the *industrial* order of worth, is not necessarily centralised and state-based. Taylorism proposed a substantial reduction of this order of worth, centred on firms. Despite the increasing importance of the *market* order of worth used to denounce now extinct planned economies, the *industrial* order of worth still plays a significant role in today's world in the locus of governing authority, which no longer resides in

[10] For a long-term, historical typology of the relations between the state and statistics comparing ways of thinking about society and the economy, modes of action and forms of statistics, cf. Desrosières (2008a, 56).

national governments nor solely in large, multinational firms. Nowadays, these places of authority need to be transnational standardisation bodies that govern the standards used to certify qualities throughout a network of unprecedented scope (Thévenot 2009a).

Unlike the previous orders, the *market* order of worth, which lays claim to the common good of competition, cannot rely on the state as the locus of government, which is why it helped to change the scale (through globalisation) and shift the locus of governing authority elsewhere. The economic notion of investment, extended by the theory of human capital to all human relations, has paved the way to a compromise between the two orders of worth – *market* and *industrial* – that economics has tended to confuse and naturalise. What was once a national plan has been reduced to an individual project; it no longer satisfies a good on the scale of the common good of *industrial* worth, but merely a good inherent in *individual engagement in a plan* (cf. excursion).

The possible connection between the market order of worth of competition and the *liberal grammar of individuals in public* (cf. excursion) is used in arguments against racism (Lamont 2000). This seems odd to the French, who ground their argument in the civic order of worth or directly on the principle of common humanity (Thévenot and Lamont eds. 2000). We have detected the same combination in the measurement of discrimination in the configuration based on migration history. The civic order of worth underpins opposition to constructing categories for this measurement whereas the grammar of *personal affinities to common places* (cf. excursion) underlies the arguments in favour of recognising cultural identities and resisting discrimination.[11] The *liberal* grammar feeds suspicion regarding any form of state supervision, and hence, like the *market* order of worth, helps to shift the locus of government away from the state. It generates the creation of independent authorities, such as the British authority set up to fight discrimination, which includes representatives of the populations that are victims of it. We have noted that the fight against discrimination relied particularly on European law as a tool of supranational government. In these instances, authorities based outside the state make their own requests for statistics.

As the configurations evolved, the critique of one encouraged the development of another[12], rather than simply replacing it. The results of the research presented in this article converge with work carried out during the same period on the transformations of authorised evaluations and their criticism in the course of several critical waves of reform and protest (Thévenot 2011a). The

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[11] In the research devoted to this subject by Michèle Lamont, Crystal Fleming and Jessica Welburn, African-Americans talk about "having a bond" and "being on the same wavelength" (Lamont, Fleming and Welburn 2011).

[12] Regarding the development of the "management by project" approach in response to criticism in the 1960s, cf.: Boltanski and Chiapello (1999).

first wave in the post-war period was opposed to the paternalistic authority of the *domestic* order of worth. Initially it was expressed in terms of the *civic* order of worth, promoting social solidarity policies to combat handicaps stemming from inequalities of social origin. In the 1960s, it turned into a "modernising" critique based on the *industrial* order of worth and was used in support of the configuration based on occupational skills. The 1968 wave that succeeded it attacked authoritarianism embodied by the authority of both the *domestic* and *industrial* orders of worth with the slogan "ni dieu ni mètre". The slogan, a reformulation of Blanqui's anarchist rallying cry, played on the homophony in French between the *domestic maître* (master) and the *industrial mètre* (metre). In response to this wave of criticism, the market order of worth was joined to *the liberal grammar of the public* on the grounds that together they would replace centralised, top-down authority by decentralised, horizontal relations among individuals empowered to make their own autonomous choices. The configuration of human capital is part of this conjunction, in addition to including the *engagement in a plan* (cf. excursion).

To conclude, let us emphasise that the profound changes in what we take to be the voice of authority in evaluation and in the locus of government have been accompanied by upheavals in the conception of the role of statistics in government and where they are produced. Questioning about social inequalities and handicaps stemming from *social origins* rely on integrated national statistics. National public policies, particularly on education, are questioned in relation to inequalities. National integration of the evaluation also implies the representation of a multidimensional social structure that maintains these inequalities. That is why classification according to social milieu has played such an important role and was promoted in opposition to one-dimensional revenue scales for example. For some of these approaches, questioning about *migration history* also presupposes an integrated conception of society and of systematic, national statistics based on adequate classification. However, determining how a multiethnic or multicultural society should be represented has proved to be a highly controversial matter, including among researchers. The cautious stance proposes to avoid the systematic use of ethnic classifications in surveys and reserve them for specific surveys. The "haunting worry" (Stavo-Debauge 2009) that such national nomenclatures and classifications will end up rigidifying differences does not exist with regard to social classifications, although there is still no consensus on their appropriateness and any reference to "*classes populaires*" is problematic in INSEE publications. In the configuration based on *occupational skills*, the statistics are necessarily national, whereas the nomenclatures, which presuppose a correspondence between skill levels and training levels, are not only national but also reflect a particular conception of public policy. Moreover, in this case statistics play a role in a kind of national accounting. Here the most striking contrast is with the configuration based on *human capital*, which frees itself from both nomenclatures and national requirements of statistical production in favour of longitudinal analysis of individual data from panels and of decentralised, local use.

Our analysis of the politics of statistics deals with the relation between the two terms but it is not limited to grasping how the interests of social agents affect statistical production (which indeed can be observed) which is the most usual way of tackling this relation. It takes us back to a more fundamental level on which statistical, epistemic and political representations are joined together (Thévenot 2002, 2006a, Ch.7). It contributes to the issue of objectivity, which holds a central place in works on the history and sociology of the sciences and technology (Daston and Galison 2007, Porter 1995). The configurations we have identified are differentiated not only by the type of policy questioning, but ultimately by how they define what constitutes a valid scientific fact. The configuration based on *social origin* is rooted in the notion of social milieu and in the search for similarities and areas of consistency (represented notably by factor analysis of correspondences). The configuration based on *human capital*, on the other hand, relies on purely causal factors (using instrumental variables). Here the producers of statistical data play a different role in policy decision-making than they do in the other three. Supported by theoretical models and econometric data analysis, economists offer governments a validation of efficiency factors, which they present as scientific and value-neutral, in order to implement policies reduced to plan objectives. This relationship between statistics and politics, which claims to isolate the evaluation of the causal factor from any policy consideration regarding the goods to be achieved, extends beyond human capital, by the way, to so-called evidence-based policy evaluation. There it encounters a new mode of "objective government through objectives" (Thévenot 2011a), which today affects the way policy measures today are fashioned and evaluated and the kind of statistics required for that evaluation. In the regime of the *plan*, policy is fragmented into actions that in turn are reduced to their objectives; the objectives become confused with the measurement of their fulfilment, which is mistaken for the final aim. Pre-empted and invalidated by a predisposed evaluation, any challenge is paralysed or forced to borrow an imposed format to present evidence, information, surveys and in the end the policy and the good in question.

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