



# Made in France: Power relations, Institutions and Political Work



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Presentation to the Manchester Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence seminar,  
University of Manchester, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020



# Why France? Why this book?

Two practical and personal reasons:

- A series of failed funding bids
- A means of 'celebrating' 30 years of being in France!

Some more scientific reasons:

- To deploy and defend a generic approach to societal analysis and, in so doing, elucidate numerous empirical issues
- There is a lack of syntheses of the French case that defend a point of view, in particular for the period 1980-2020
- To showcase a wide-ranging amount of French research, nearly all of it of high quality and largely unknown outside of France



# The generic thesis

1. As with any longstanding society, that of France is strongly structured by:
  - Its institutions (stabilized rules, norms and expectations)
  - Asymmetric power relations (within social 'fields': Bourdieu)
  - The interplay between institutions and power relations analyzed here around the concept of 'political work'
  
2. Societal structures are nevertheless contingent because they are constantly being politically worked upon around 3 overlapping processes:
  - i) Problematization (the 'social construction' of public problems)
  - ii) Instrumentation (the formulation of instruments for public/collective action)
  - iii) Legitimation (the cognitive justification and symbols attached to i and ii)



# From the cradle to the grave...

- Introduction
- Chapter 1 - Childhood, Families and Initial Schooling: Conservative Primary Socialization
- Chapter 2 - Secondary, Vocational and Higher Education: When 'Merit' Reproduces Inequalities
- Chapter 3 – Going to Work: Income, Identity, Collective Action and Individualization
- Chapter 4 – Business Time Within Neo-*Dirigiste* Capitalism
- Chapter 5: That's Entertainment! 'Culture', Sport and their Elitisms
- Chapter 6: Social and Political Activism: Organizational Fragmentation
- Chapter 7: Growing Old and Passing On: 'Social Protection' or Structural Reproduction?
- Conclusion



# What I aim to present this afternoon

1. The three frequently made causal claims on societal change that are reformulated and 'tested' throughout the book
2. The general conclusion



# Three causal claims made by others

1. Since the mid-1980s, France has experienced a profound neo-liberalization of its societal structures (Denord, Amable, Dezalay)
2. During this period, France has also fallen victim to 'globalisation' and has thus become 'globalized' (Culpepper, Goyer)
3. Meanwhile, social mobility in France has undergone a deepening of individualization, a process that can even be qualified as *embougeoisement* (Laferté)




# 1. Some neo-liberalisation but what of liberalism and *dirigisme*?

*The neoliberalisation claim:*

A France now structured by 'free markets' supported by a strong state (Waquant, 2012).

*My initial reformulation:*

- Recall that prior to 1940 France was above all marked by liberalism (before being 'dirigiste' from 1944 into the 1970s);
- Underline that increases in the visible presence of neoliberal 'problems', instruments and registers of legitimation do not automatically mean they have been causal
- Let's find out, issue area by issue area, the hybrids between liberalism, dirigisme and neo-liberalism which now structure France.



## 2. Globalisation as a political weapon rather than a cause of change

*The dominant thesis:*

Globalisation has obliged French decision-makers to change their institutions and, in so doing, profoundly changed power relations throughout France (Culpepper, 2006)

*My initial reformulation:*

Opening up national markets, the multinationalisation of firms and the internationalization of their management has not mechanically changed French societal structures.

Rather, since the 1980s 'globalisation' has become a register of legitimation for numerous actors seeking to change 'problems', instruments, and thence institutions and power relations, in many French issue areas (Hay 2006)





### 3. Has causal social mobility occurred?


*The dominant claim:*

Since 1983, French societal structures have changed alongside the increased individualization of its citizens (Castel ; Algan, Foucault et. al.,). Parts of the latter have even become *embourgeoisées* (Laferté)

*My initial reformulation:*

The individualisation of social practices does not necessarily lead to greater individualism.

Rather, as a category of thought, 'the individual' has become a register of legitimation frequently used to construct 'problems' and build policy instruments



## Two sets of arguments made in the general conclusion

1. Which French societal structures have changed, or not, since the 1980s?
2. What have been the causes of this change or reproduction?

<i>Reproduction</i>	<i>1st order change</i>	<i>2<sup>nd</sup> order</i>	<i>3<sup>rd</sup> Order</i>
<p><i>Education</i></p> <p>Adult-centredness</p> <p>Teacher power</p>	<p>The introduction of primary-level testing</p> <p>The role of <i>les grandes écoles</i></p>	<p>Expansion of lycées</p> <p>More 'profession-centred' schooling</p> <p>More private higher education</p>	<p>A rise in private <i>collèges</i> &amp; <i>lycées</i></p>
<p><i>Capital-labour relations</i></p>	<p>Manager-employee relations</p> <p>Inheritance laws</p>	<p>The role of women at work</p> <p>Pensions</p> <p>Health Policy</p>	<p>Greater precariousness</p> <p>Devaluing of trade unions</p> <p>Revaluing of the MEDEF</p>
<p><i>Business</i></p> <p>Company hierarchies</p>	<p>Women on company boards</p>	<p>State involvement in production &amp; markets</p>	<p>More 'impatient capital'</p> <p>And foreign ownership</p>
<p><i>Activism</i></p> <p>State involvement</p>	<p>Environmentalism</p>	<p>'Spontaneous' protesting</p>	<p>Decline in union &amp; party memberships</p> <p>Collapse of PS &amp; centre-right</p>



# The causes of change or its absence: political work

No direct causal role for either neoliberalism or globalisation

But both, combined with 'the individual' (= NGI), have contributed to change in issue areas ranging from education to employment. In so doing this political work has deepened the decline of Unions, empowered representatives of business, encouraged the financialization of capital and placed both the PS and LR in disarray

In cases where reproduction has prevailed, however, this is because:

- Either NGI has not been politically worked up, e.g. the internal management of firms, state involvement in NGOs and political parties, *les grandes écoles*
- Or it has successfully been resisted by collective action-based political work. E.g. primary and (public) secondary education, the *gilets jaunes*