

PERFORMATIVITY AS POLITICS: UNLOCKING ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY

CONFERENCE

University of Toulouse*
October 23rd, 24th & 25th, 2008

GENERAL ABSTRACT

The purpose of this conference is to investigate the political dimensions of the performativity of economics. The conference will bring together key authors who developed either the concept of performativity in sociology or a political perspective on markets and/or economics in order to reintroduce politics within the market analysis. It is argued that an approach of *performativity as politics* can move the debates around the performativity of economics beyond their present location in economic sociology and consequently contribute to: (1) develop a more robust and general theory of performativity; (2) reinforce the political analysis of markets; and (3) cross-fertilize economic sociology with other fields of sociology such as gender studies and/or political sociology.

SPEAKERS

Judith Butler (University of California in Berkeley), **Michel Callon** (CSI – École des Mines de Paris), **Roland Canu** (CERTOP – Université Toulouse II), **Franck Cochoy** (CERTOP – Université Toulouse II), **Peter Dixon** (University of California in Berkeley), **Paul Dugay** (University of Warwick), **Martin Giraudeau** (CERTOP – Université Toulouse II), **Jean-Pascal Gond** (University of Nottingham), **Sarah Green** (University of Manchester), **Claes-Fredrik Helgesson** (Stockholm School of Economics), **Petter Holm** (Norwegian College of Fishery Science – University of Tromsø), **Jacques Igalens** (LIRHE – Université Toulouse I), **Hans Kjellberg** (Stockholm School of Economics), **Liz Mc Fall** (University of Manchester), **David Martin** (CERTOP – Université Toulouse II), **Tim Mitchell** (New York University), **Philippe Steiner** (CESS – Université Paris IV), **Aurélie Tricoire** (CERTOP – Université Toulouse II / LATTS – Université Marne-la-Vallée), **Karel Williams** (University of Manchester).

ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE

Franck Cochoy (cochoy@univ-tlse2.fr), Martin Giraudeau (giraudeau@univ-tlse2.fr), Jean-Pascal Gond (jean-pascal.gond@nottingham.ac.uk), Jacques Igalens (jacques.igalens@univ-tlse1.fr).

* The conference will take place in the Salle du Château – Université de Toulouse II / 5, allées Antonio Machado / 31 058 Toulouse cedex 9 / France. Complementary and updated information will soon be available at <http://w3.certop.univ-tlse2.fr/>

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OVERVIEW OF THE WORKSHOP

The concept of ‘performativity’ was introduced in economic sociology by Michel Callon (1998) to suggest that “economics does not describe an existing external ‘economy’, but brings that economy into being: economics performs the economy, creating the phenomena it describes” (MacKenzie & Millo, 2003: 108). This idea is today recognized by many authors as one of the major contributions to economic sociology (see, e.g., *Economy and Society*, 2002; Holm, 2007; MacKenzie & Millo, 2003; MacKenzie, 2004) and has been accompanied by vivid debates in various social sciences about the actual influence of economics and economists over economic practices (e.g. Miller, 2000; Callon, 2005; Ferraro, Pfeffer and Sutton, 2005; Ghoshal, 2005; MacKenzie, Muniesa & Siu, 2007) and more generally over society and political processes (see, e.g., Bazerman & Malhotra, 2006; Fourcade, 2002, 2006). In a recent contribution, Callon (2007) insists on performativity being a socio-technical process and introduces the idea that various socio-technical worlds are struggling to be performed within society and consequently to influence the shaping of economy.

However, this “political” dimension of performativity, if acknowledged, has yet to be investigated. To explore the political aspects of performativity, we suggest bringing together sociological authors who have either investigated the language as a political arena through the notion of performativity or acknowledged the political nature of economic activities (Latour, 2005; Cochoy & Grandclément, 2005). The first line of research is illustrated by authors such as Judith Butler (1988, 1997) who highlighted the political process at play in language through the notion of performativity. The second perspective encompasses works from economic sociology aiming at capturing the political dimension of economic activity (see Fligstein, 1996) – as well as the political role played by professional economists (Fourcade, 2002, 2006).

The purpose of this workshop is therefore to highlight the divergences and/or convergences among these various authors, i.e. to confront their perspectives in order to further investigate the political potential of the concept of performativity. By calling for a more political approach of economy and economics, such an approach of “performativity as politics” can move the debates about the performativity of economics beyond their present location in economic sociology and can eventually contribute to the cross-fertilization of economic sociology with political sociology as well as gender studies.

During the workshop, we seek to pursue two lines of inquiry: (1) investigating more in-depth the very notion of performativity and its sociological potential to explore economic and political activities; and (2) analyzing the various political and social consequences of economic performativity.

CONFRONTING THE PERSPECTIVES ON PERFORMATIVITY

WHAT IS PERFORMATIVITY?

On the one hand, performativity will get a chance to be explored negatively, in its differences with neighbouring concepts: what are, for instance, the differences one may observe between performativity and “self-fulfilling prophecies” (Merton, 1957) or “effects of theory” (Bourdieu, 1984, 1987)? Performativity will on the other hand gain positive definitions, through answers to the question: “how do (economic) theories contribute to structuring practices (in an economy)?” Consecutively to debates in the field (Butler, 1993; Callon, 1998, 2007; Mol, 2002), a specific focus will have to be made on the specific contribution of “objects”, or “matter”, to performance processes, and its compatibility with the use, by analysts, of the theatrical metaphor (i.e. the analysis of performativity as resulting of actors’ “performances”).

WHAT ARE THE SOCIAL EFFECTS OF PERFORMATIVITY?

The successes of and limits to performativity will be discussed. Complementary to the previous focus on “objects”, what are the effects of the specific properties of theories on the success of their performance? Do theories have to be relevant to the world in which they are being performed for this performance to succeed (MacKenzie, 2003, forthcoming; Lebaron, 2000, 2003)? Besides the more or less successful realization of particular theories, what are the side effects of the process of performativity itself: does it change the social status/value of some actors (e.g. economists) and actants (e.g. market goods) involved in the process? Does the performativity of economics have effects outside economics (e.g. in gender relations)?

EXPLORING THE POLITICAL POTENTIAL OF ECONOMIC PERFORMATIVITY

ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY AS POLITICAL ECONOMICS?

The political potential of economic performativity may lie in the influence of public and private policy on performativity (Fourcade, 2001; Holm, 2001): how do “traditional” political actors (e.g. public administrations, industrial lobbies) and actants (e.g. legal texts, norms, etc., as described in Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2005) participate in the performance of economics? Another political potential of economic performativity may also exist in what Callon recently described as “performance’s struggles” (Callon, 2007): how may the struggles of competing possible worlds be accounted for? What are the political regimes that govern the choice between certain economic worlds and others? And what is the part played by economic sociology in such political orders? Does the performativity paradigm move economic sociology further (or elsewhere) than new economic sociology?

PERFORMATIVITY IN ECONOMIES BEYOND ECONOMICS:

The range of performativity analysis may also be extended upstream, by taking into account the variety of theories and scientific “disciplines” (Cochoy, 1998), that may be performed inside economies. What non-neoclassical economic theories get performed (e.g. Giraudeau, 2007)? What influence do marketing theories have on business practices? How are ethics put into being in firms (e.g. Gond, 2006)? And how does the performance of non-economic sciences influence the performance of economics in the economy?

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PROVISIONAL PROGRAM*

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23RD:

8h30-9h30 *Morning coffee and registration*

9h30-10h00 Welcome address by Franck Cochoy & Martin Giraudeau

MORNING: PERFORMATIVITY AND THE POLITICS OF EXCHANGE

10h00-10h45 David Martin (CERTOP, Université Toulouse II): “Writing Markets, Performing Economies, The Non-Random Walk of Financial Derivatives.”

10h45-11h30 Karel Williams, with Julie Froud, Sukh Johal, Adam Leaver (CRESC, University of Manchester): “Financialized capitalism as performance: from shareholder value to private equity and hedge funds.”

11h30-12h15 Philippe Steiner (CESS, Université Paris IV): “Gift-Giving or market? Economists and the Performance of Organ Transfer in Transplants.”

12h15-14h00 *Lunch*

AFTERNOON: PERFORMATIVITY AND GOVERNMENT

14h00-14h45 Paul DuGay (Warwick Business School): “Max Weber and the ethics of Office: exploring the political and ethical dimensions of ‘performance.’”

14h45-15h30 Peter Dixon (University of California in Berkeley): “Development as Government or Development as Freedom? The Case of Human Development.”

15h30-16h00 *Coffee break*

16h00-16h45 Aurélie Tricoire (CERTOP, Université de Toulouse): “European RTD Policy and Endogenous Growth Theory: a Performance Story?”

16h45-17h30 Timothy Mitchell (Pr., New York University): “Carbon futures.”

20h00 *Dinner*

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 24TH

MORNING: MIXING THE ECONOMY AND POLITICS AS PERFORMATIVE EXPERIMENTS

9h00-9h45 Martin Giraudeau (CERTOP, Université de Toulouse II): “A physiocratic business plan? Political ideals and economic computations in Dupont de Nemours’ original ‘project of establishment’ (1801).”

9h45-10h30 Michel Callon (CSI, École des Mines): “Civilizing markets: carbon markets between in vitro and in vivo experiments.”

10h30-11h00 *Coffee break*

* The communication language will be English. Translation in French will be available.

11h00-11h45 Sarah Green (Social Anthropology and CRESC, University of Manchester): “Contingencies of performativity: on relocating money, the political and the social in the Aegean.”

11h45-12h30 Petter Holm (Institutt for Samfunns): “Performativity and politics: The political agency of coastal cod.”

12h30-14h00 Lunch

AFTERNOON: POLITICS OF PERFORMATIVITY

14h00-14h45 Liz McFall (CRESC, University of Manchester): “Pragmatics and Politics: the case of industrial branch assurance in the UK 1880-1990.”

14h45-15h30 Franck Cochoy (CERTOP, Université Toulouse II): “‘How to build display that sells’: the politics of performance—*Progressive Grocer* (1929-1959).”

15h30-16h00 Coffee break

16h00-16h45 Roland Canu (CERTOP, Université de Toulouse II): “Into the depth of performativity. The language of advertising on the French market for telecommunications.”

16h45-17h30 Hans Kjellberg, with Claes-Fredrik Helgesson (Department of Marketing and Strategy, Stockholm School of Economics): “Values, Markets and the Politics of Performativity.”

20h00 Diner

SAMEDI 25 OCTOBRE 2008

MORNING: PERFORMATIVITY AS POLITICAL DISCOURSE

9h00-9h45 Jean-Pascal Gond (Nottingham University) and Jacques Igalens (LIRHE, Université de Toulouse I): “Saving the World with Words? Analyzing the Performativity of Corporate Social Responsibility Discourses.”

9h45-10h30 Judith Butler (University of California in Berkeley): “Critical Responsibility as Performativity: Arendt and Maruyama in the postwar years.”

10h30-11h00 Coffee break

11h00-12h30 Panel discussion

12h30-14h00 Lunch

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University of Toulouse
October 23rd, 24th & 25th, 2008

REGISTRATION FORM

Please send this form back before Friday October 10th 2008 to Marie-Noëlle ROZELET:

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NAME:
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PROFESSIONAL ADDRESS:
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Registration fee (including admission to the conference, lunches and booklet of the conference summaries):

- 90 €
- 45 € (student fee – please join copy of the student ID).

I will have (free) lunch on: October 23rd October 24th October 25th
I will have (charged) dinner on: October 23rd (+ 26 €) October 24th (+ 32 €)

I hereby sign up for the international “*Performativity as Politics: Unlocking Economic Sociology*” conference of October 23rd, 24th and 25th at the University of Toulouse.

I pay the amount of 90 € (or 45 €) + dinner expenses (26 €, 32 €, ou 26 + 32 = 58 €) by international bank order to the following account: FR 76 1007 1310 0000 0010 0132 691 BDFEFRPPXXX (IBAN). Please specify the destination of the order as “Conférence Performativité et Politique.”

Date:

Signature: