

# In search of academic quality

Prof. Catherine PARADEISE, University Professor (em.), Université Paris Est, Marne-la-Vallée and Laboratoire Interdisciplinaire Sciences Innovations Sociétés.

[Catherine.Paradeise@u-pem.fr](mailto:Catherine.Paradeise@u-pem.fr)

Prof. Jean-Claude THOENIG, Senior Research Fellow (em.), Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Université Paris-Dauphine and Dauphine Recherches en Management. [jeanclaude.thoenig@free.fr](mailto:jeanclaude.thoenig@free.fr)

Observations, intuitions, hypotheses

# **SETTING THE FRAME**

# « Excellence » policies

- Whereas HEI valuation used to be reputational, public policies have favored performance-based “excellence policies” at the turn of the 2000’s.
- They did it for various reasons including:
  - pressure of costs
  - changes in valued missions of universities
  - objections to collegiality as a governance model
- With the purpose to
  - Rationalize university organizations and diversify resources,
  - Increase the global efficiency of national systems in science production by encouraging concentration and stratification of universities.

# A new approach to quality

- The development of uni-dimensional metrics as tools to value universities and define “world leagues” is both a symptom and an engine of the globalization of HE.
- Whatever their limits (favoring the research mission, using disputable proxies of performance, etc.), such metrics naturalize *quality* under the name of “excellence”... As if they would be able to express the intrinsic value of any university and accordingly allow to rank them worldwide.

# What impact on universities?

- Differences between « models of HE » do not explain differences between universities within a given European country, while they were submitted to the same national regulations meant to fill the same missions by providing the same service
- Understanding the behavior of individual universities requires:
  - > Developing meso and micro-analyses considering them as local orders (March)
  - > Locating them in their (changing) strategic action fields (Fligstein & McAdam).
  - > Considering the impact of policies on their valuation processes (Merton)

# The issues

- How do universities— as local orders - deal with this tension?
- With what results?

# **OPERATIONALIZATION: A TYPOLOGY**

# Two quality regimes

Type of judgment	Mode of production	Source	Type of knowledge
<b>Prestige = Diffuse social valuation</b>  <i>Uniqueness</i>	<b>Opinions.</b> Endogenous valuation by specific social groups (academic elites, social elites, alumni, social networks)	<b>Based on socialization.</b> Contingent to a context (local, social, disciplinary).	<b>Synthetic cardinal judgment that may vary across social worlds : experience- based intuition</b>
<b>Excellence = Formalized valuation</b>  <i>Commensuration</i>	<b>Measurement.</b> Exogenous valuation by third parties (agencies, medias, etc)	<b>Impersonal, global (international), non-contingent</b>	<b>Indicator-based (ordinal) analytical judgment that opens the black box</b>

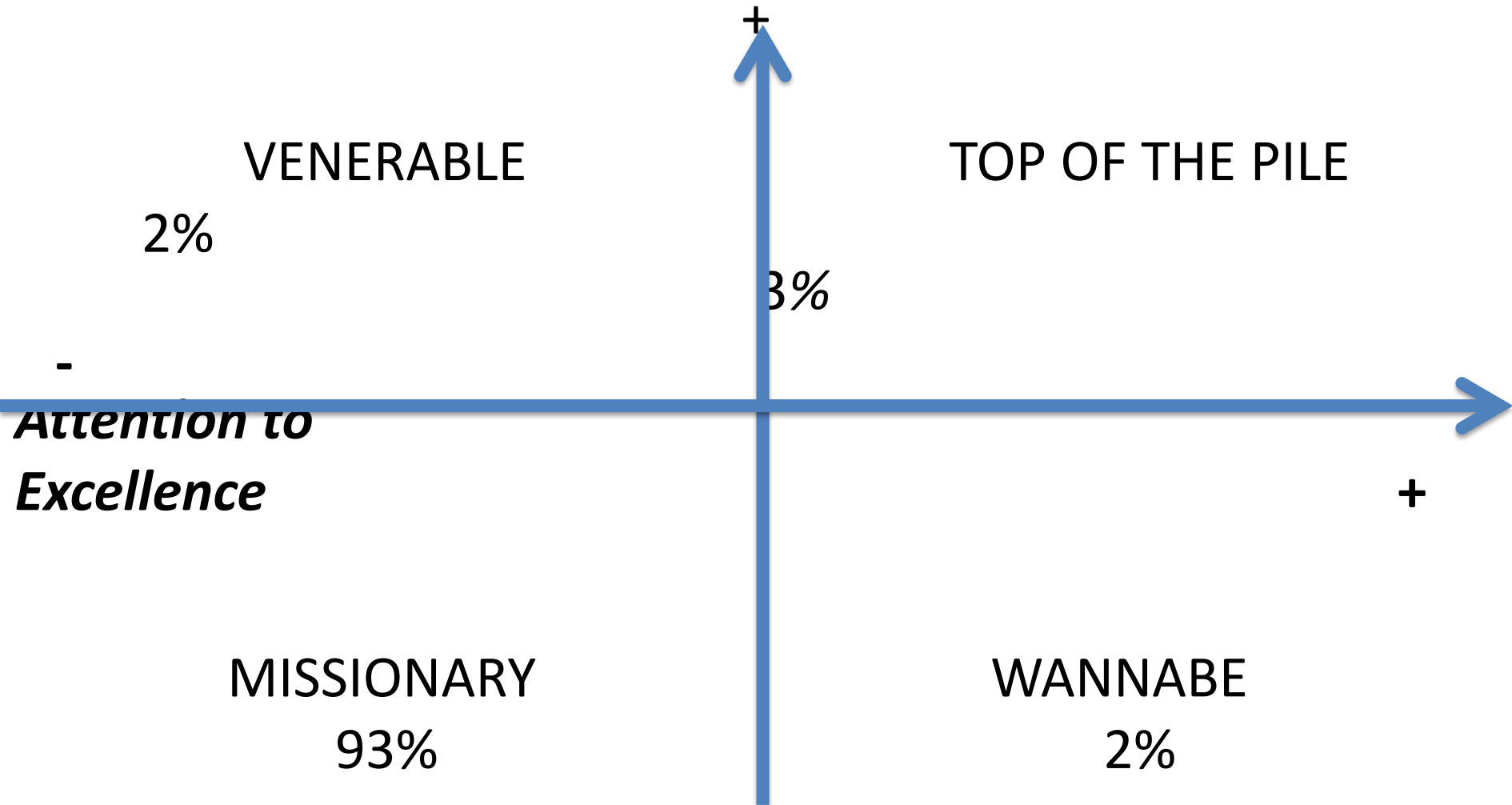


# Crossing regimes

- Although the regime of excellence does not erase the regime of reputation, it destabilizes social agreements established within given countries and within given social groups on the respective value of their national universities.
- Thus, each university in any country targeted by “policies of excellence” experiments tensions between valuation by « reputation » and by « excellence ». The degree of tension varies according to its specific characteristics as a local order.

# Regimes and types

*Attention to Reputation*



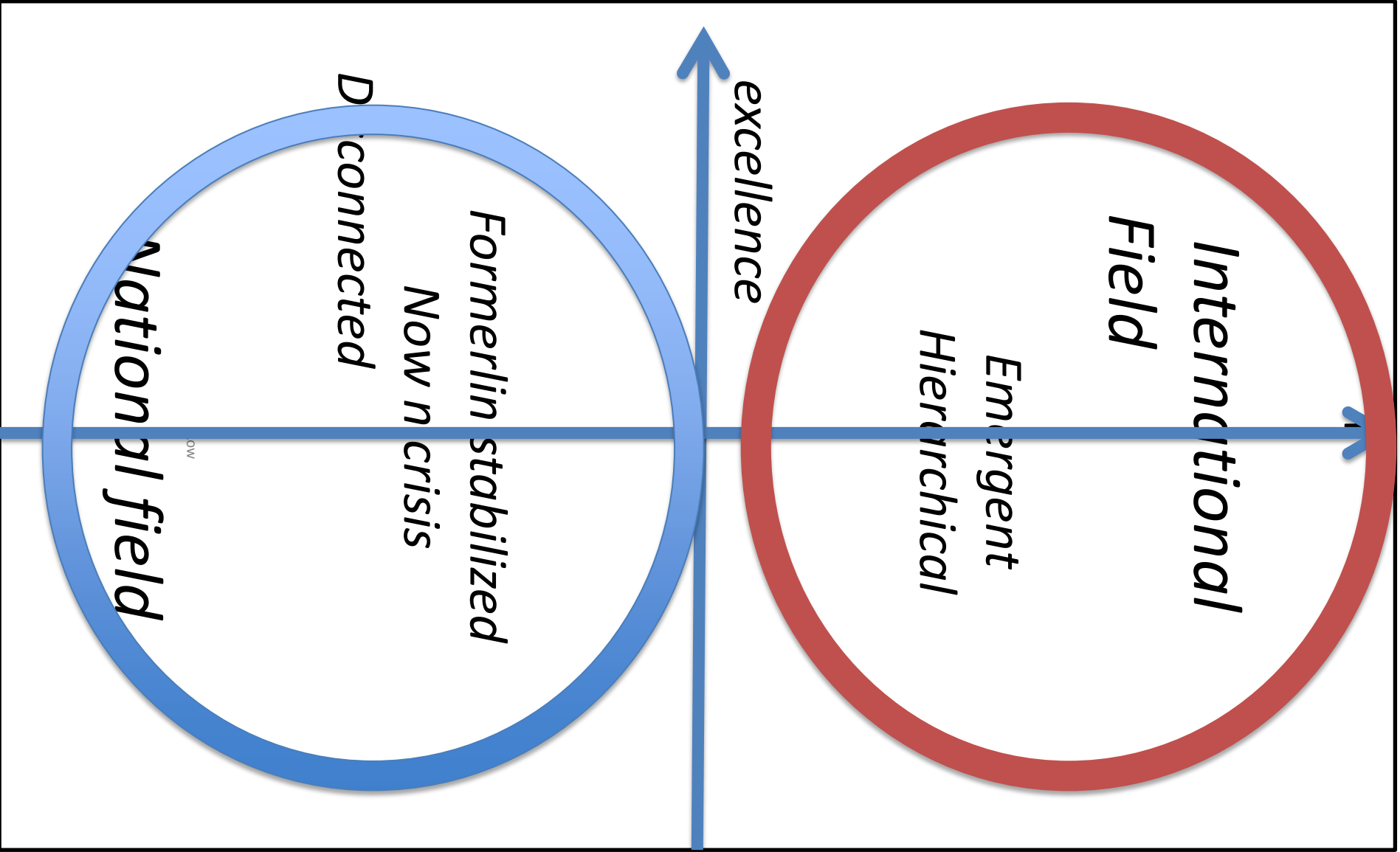
# Strategic action fields: a definition

- Meso-social order which actors are treated as active institutional entrepreneurs (DiMaggio 1988)
- Belongingness is subjective. It includes actors that interact and adjust to each other (Fligstein and McAdam 2012), with a shared vision of :
  - What is at stake in the field
  - Which are the actors and what is their relative power
  - What are the rules of the game (which behaviors are legitimate and make sense in the field)
- Various strategic fields may co-exist in a given country.
  - They may be disconnected
  - Or have reciprocal or hierarchical relationships

# Strategic action fields of universities

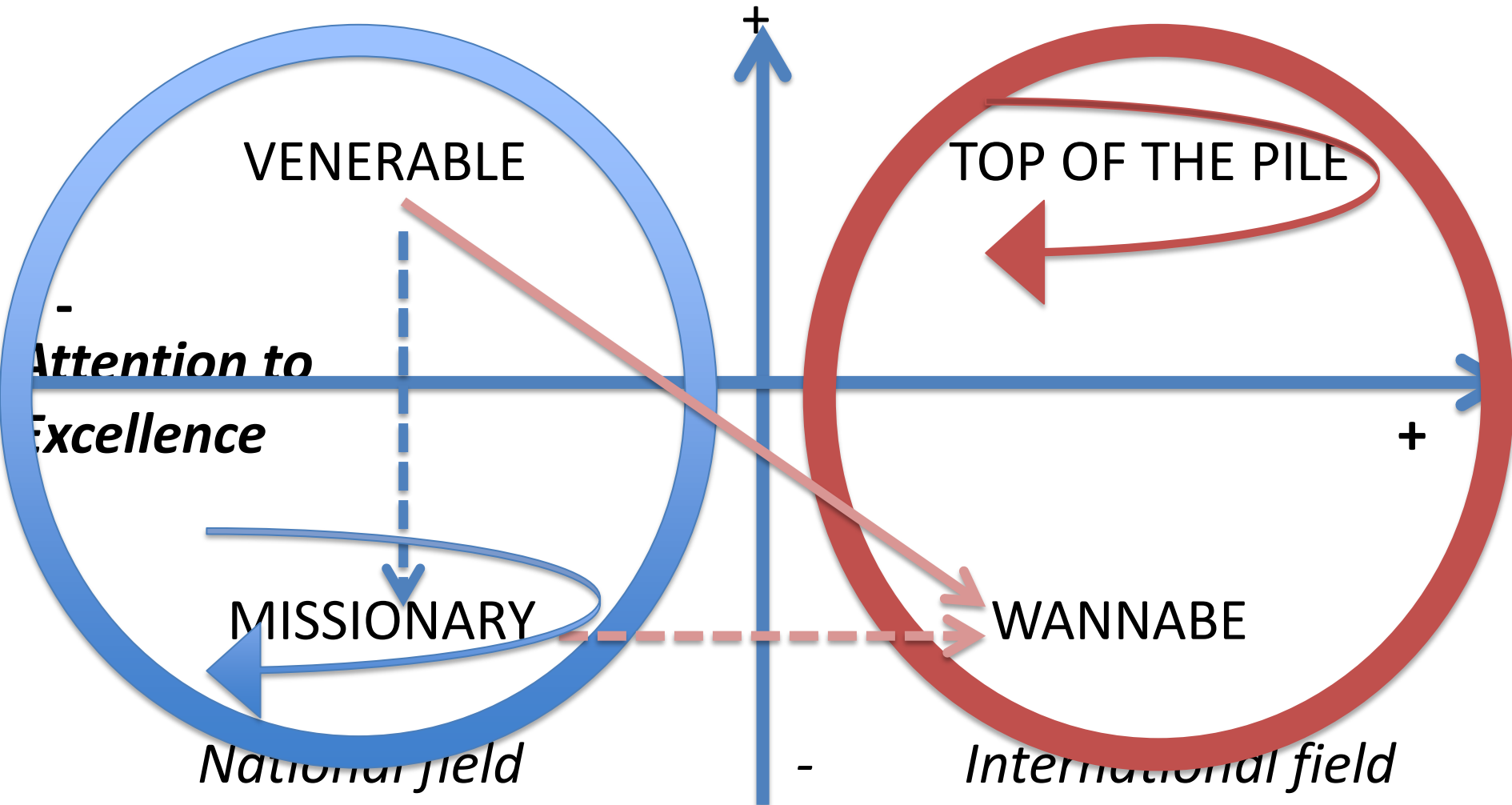
- Two action fields
    - The national field based on reputation
    - The international field based on excellence
  - Some universities overlap the two categories:
    - some are incumbents in both fields: ToP
    - Some belong to the national field but try to upgrade internationally as challengers
  - Other universities remain strongly embedded in their national field (venerables and missionaries). They are unable or unwilling to enter the international field.
- > Four ideal types, two sets of action fields

# Regimes, types and fields



# Dynamics of types

*Attention to Reputation*



# Publications

- On the model and organizational properties of each type : OS 2013
- On « WCUs » as incumbents which define the norms of the international strategic field :  
Minerva 2014

The heuristic value of the typology

# **LOCAL ORDERS FACING CHANGES OF QUALITY REGIMES**



# Characterizing types

- Systematic similarities within types and variations between types, in:
    - Organization and governance
    - Missions most valued
    - Internal informal patterns of:
      - Evaluation
      - Norms and values shared by individual and collective members
      - Integration of diversity
  - Missionaries are characterized by heterogeneity of these informal patterns: each subunit may behave as a specific type
  - Strategic capacity
- > Ways to deal with public policies incentives

# Academic performance evaluation (1)

	Top	Wanabees	Venerables	Missionaries
Importance of evaluation	++	++	+	+/-
Attention given to institutional contribution	+	-	-	+/-
Hierarchy of activities	<b>R &gt; T</b>	<b>R &gt; T</b>	<b>R &gt; T</b>	<b>T &gt; R</b> in most cases
Who defines performance criteria in use	Local academic community	Top hierarchy based on normal science	Local academic community	Local academic community
Who manages evaluation	All levels + all departments	Department + top hierarchy	Department	Department+ top hierarchy

# Performance evaluation (2)

	ToP	Wanabees	Venerables	Missionaries
Criteria of quality	Disciplinary originality as defined by the department	Conformity as defined by rankings	Disciplinary originality as defined by the department	Contribution valued by the department
Internal vision of quality	Stable and shared	Stable and shared	Stable and shared	Rather unstable (across departments etc)
Relationships between disciplines	Heterarchy Rather stable	Hierarchy Stable	Collegiality Rather stable	Anarchy Unstable

# Academic quality evaluation (3)

	ToP	Wanabees	Venerables	Missionnaires
Norms of quality	Decentralized Discipline and department	Centralized	Decentralized Discipline and department	Decentralized Discipline or department
Institutionalization of norms	Strong	Strong	Weak	Weak
Value given to Individuals	+	+	+	+/-
Value given to departments	+	-	-	+/-

# Social norms and values

	ToP	Wanabees	Venerables	Missionaries
Local norms and values	+	++	+	++
Disciplinary norms	+	+	+	+ or -
Socialization of members	Disciplinary = local	Disciplinary > local	Local > disciplinary	Local or disciplinary
Loyalty towards the university	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak or strong
Relation patterns between academics	Cooperation	Competition	Peers in an aristocracy	Peers in an equalitarian world

# Organization and governance

	<b>ToP</b>	<b>Wanabees</b>	<b>Venerables</b>	<b>Missionaries</b>
Organizational model	Organic bureaucracy	Mechanical bureaucracy	Professional bureaucracy	Fragmented bureaucracy
Major mission of academics	<b>++</b> Professional researchers and teachers	<b>-</b> Knowledge workers	<b>++</b> Professional researchers and teachers	<b>-</b> Teachers
Role of management	<b>++</b>	<b>++</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
Relationships btw managers and academics	Power balance Institutional Strong	Managers > Professionals	Professionals > Managers	Management // professionals Political Fragile
Academic regulation	Consociation	Utilitarian opportunism	Collegiality	Equalitarianism

# Strategic capacity

	ToP	Wanabees	Venerables	Missionaries
<i>Time horizon: duration and and operational components (competition dynamics; national and international academic context; necessary resources; operational application of the strategy)</i>				
reference	Mid-and long-terms	Short-and mid-term	Short-term	Short-term
Realism of this time horizon (1)	High	High	Low	Low
<i>Role of actors in building and scheduling a strategy</i>				
Heads of the institution	Strong	Very strong	Weak	Rather strong
The academic community	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak
<i>Strategic framework for the academic community</i>				
Perceived importance	Priority	Priority	Secondary	Secondary
interpretation of its status	Commitment endorsed by the whole community	Ambition of the management	Speech by the management A procedure	Speech by the management A procedure
<b>Strategic capacity</b>	<b>strong</b>	<b>strong</b>	<b>weak</b>	<b>weak</b>

# Strategic capacity

	ToP	Wanabees	Venerables	Missionaries
<i>Time horizon: duration and and operational components (competition dynamics; national and international academic context; necessary resources; operational application of the strategy)</i>				
reference	Mid-and long-terms	Short-and mid-term	Short-term	Short-term
Realism of this time horizon (1)	High	High	Low	Low
<i>Role of actors in building and scheduling astrategy</i>				
Heads of the institution	Strong	Very strong	Weak	Rather strong
The academic community	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak
<i>Strategic framework for the academic community</i>				
Perceived importance	Priority	Priority	Secondary	Secondary
interpretation of its status	Commitment endorsed by the whole community	Ambition of the management	Speech by the management A procedure	Speech by the management A procedure
<b>Strategic capacity</b>	<b>strong</b>	<b>strong</b>	<b>weak</b>	<b>weak</b>



# **CONCLUSIONS**

# The advantages of the model

It allows to link

- The macro-level of policies developed by national reforms of HE with “World class universities” as a benchmark
- The meso-Level of universities characterized by their type
- The micro-level of behaviors of academics within their university

# To follow up

- Helping decision-making?
  - In universities : strategic capacities (Thoenig and Paradeise 2016)
  - In public policies : is it reasonable to frame policy incentives on top of the pile performances?
- Anticipating possible futures for universities
  - Concentration of resources and academic leadership at the national and world levels (Paradeise and Thoenig 2015)
  - ToPs that concentrate resources and remain first movers may keep their leadership (an issue for public universities?)
  - Venerables et missionaries may find specific niches. If not, they are likely to turn « sick industries » and become teaching subcontractors of the world leaders.
  - Can wannabes resist in the middle term to the loss of their *affectio societatis*?

# Some references by the authors

- Thoenig J.C. and C. Paradeise « The strategic capacity of Universities » (forthcoming 2016)
- Berman E. and C. Paradeise eds. **University under Pressure**, RSO series, Emerald (forthcoming 2016)
- Paradeise C. and J.C. Thoenig (2015) **In Search of Academic Quality**. Londres, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Thoenig J.C. and C. Paradeise (2014) «Organizational Governance and the Production of Academic Quality: Lessons from Two Top U.S. Research Universities ». **Minerva**, 52 (4) : 381-417
- Paradeise C. and J.C. Thoenig (2013) « Academic Institutions in Search of Quality: Local Orders and Global Standards ». **Organization Studies**, 34 (2): 195-224.