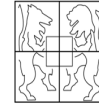




Centre de Sociologie  
des Organisations



SCIENCES PO

# What do we mean by success and productivity in higher education?

Christine Musselin

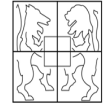
Centre de Sociologie des Organisations

[c.musselin@cso.cnrs.fr](mailto:c.musselin@cso.cnrs.fr)





Centre de Sociologie  
des Organisations

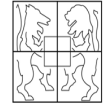


**SCIENCES PO**

- **No single answer because of the increasing heterogeneity of the academic world**



Centre de Sociologie  
des Organisations



SCIENCES PO

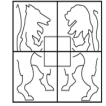
## ➤ Increasing diversity/differentiation among the academic profession

- Increasing discrepancies between a primary and a secondary labour market

- In some countries, the second one is no more a temporary step towards the first one
- The content of work and work conditions are increasingly different on the two markets



Centre de Sociologie  
des Organisations

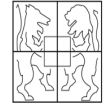


SCIENCES PO

- **Increasing differentiation among permanent staff**
  - In many countries, the activities achieved by permanent academics vary a lot from one faculty member to another
  - The gap between the highest and the lowest salaries has often increased (as in the society as a whole)
  - Moreover this differentiation is more and more visible (rankings, evaluation, etc.)



Centre de Sociologie  
des Organisations

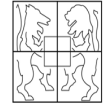


SCIENCES PO

- **An illustration: challenging result of a study led on hiring committees in research universities**
  - **Everyone wants the “best candidate”**
  - **The “best candidate” does not mean the same thing everywhere**
  - **From the “top scientist” to the “best citizen”**
  - **Success and productivity will not mean the same on the two sides of the continuum**



Centre de Sociologie  
des Organisations

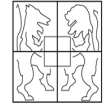


**SCIENCES PO**

- **Nevertheless, a single “optimal” model is predominant**



Centre de Sociologie  
des Organisations



SCIENCES PO

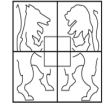
- **Many discourses about the virtue of diversity and diversification**

**But**

- **Strong influence of a single and research-based definition**
  - **Promoted by international rankings**
  - **As well as by national evaluation procedures (the strength of the RAE)**



Centre de Sociologie  
des Organisations

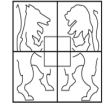


**SCIENCES PO**

- How to develop/recognize more definitions of success and productivity?



Centre de Sociologie  
des Organisations



SCIENCES PO

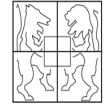
➤ **A difficult issue, because of our implicit (incorporated) judgment and values**

**The case of two French biologists who never became professors**

**(as an example for the contradictions between objective and subjective careers)**



Centre de Sociologie  
des Organisations



SCIENCES PO

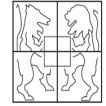
➤ **A difficult issue, because productivity and success are not easy to assess**

- **Research**

- productivity can be quantitatively measured, but qualitatively?
- What is a research success?



Centre de Sociologie  
des Organisations



SCIENCES PO

- **Teaching**
  - What is teaching productivity?
  - What to deduce from a successful teaching?
  
- **Implications: temptation to go for the easiest indicators rather than to construct varying definitions**