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# Has RT always been a meso theory?

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This text is the result of research within the framework of the Regulationist Residential Seminar.  
It has been produced with the collaboration of Jean-Pierre Chanteau, Agnès Labrousse, Sandrine Michel and Julien Vercueil,  
and pays tribute to Martino Nieddu, a generous colleague and friend who suddenly died on June 11th 2018

# Topic of the presentation

- RT is defined as a holistic theory dealing with the dynamics of capitalism and its crises through the observation, **on a macroeconomic scale**, of the "hidden" institutions that ensure for a time the stability of the regime of wealth accumulation (institutional forms).
- The purpose of this proposal is to propose another perspective of the work of RT, in order to show that RT is also, **and since its origin**, a theory based on a meso approach to the analysis of the dynamics of capitalism
  - ⇒ The meso approach does not free itself from the macro loop and the institutional forms. And does not reduce Fordism to the automotive industry!

# The origin of a regulationnist meso approach

- A **debate on the “functionality”** concept emerged, especially at the sectorial level, because of a dispute about the mechanic or determinist dimension of the sectorial space.
    - A debate about the persistence of variety despite strong stylized fact showing this variety.
  - The **sector-based analyses** questioned the macro economic role of the sectors.
    - Building and public works, petrochemical sector (du Tertre, 1989), wine sector (Bartoli et Boulet, 1990) etc.
    - Wide variety of the dynamics linked to their own history (Boyer 1990).
    - Dialectical relation between **the role or “function”** of the sector at the macro level and **its own dynamic** in the meso arena. See papers on the historical or national differentiation of the régulation of Hall, Soskice, Amable (the varieties of capitalisms) and Jessop, Sum (variegation concept)
- ⇒ The sector can, in return, affect the macroeconomic dynamic which depends on the cumulative regime/system (Laurent et du Tertre, 2008)
- ⇒ Sectorial evolutions are causal in the structural instability of the accumulation regime.

# Towards a generalization

- In the regulationnism approaches, the concept of “meso” is not really used during a long time (Lamarche,2011)
- the generalization of a meso approach (Lamarche et al 2021, Montalban & Klebaner 2020), propose beyond the characterization of institutional forms, a dynamic reading of accumulation and its crises by considering the way in which meso arenas could be at the origin of specific regulations that can transform institutions.
  - Eg. The characterization of finance **as a sector** that builds its own model of growth and transform the regime that are became financialized made it possible to propose a meso-economic foundation for macroeconomic dynamics

# The meso approach focuses on...

- ...the **mesoeconomic régulations**
    - Reflecting the existence of the **variety of regulations** (*inside* an economic regime).
    - Reflecting the existence of the **variety of regulation arenas** and the **variety of institutional arrangements**.
  - ... the need **to get out the macro - meso determinisms** and to label:
    - The **dominance of a régulation arena** on other régulations (automotive industry, finance, digital...)
    - The **autonomy of some meso-régulation arenas** resulting from institutional compromises
  - ... the relation between multiple decisions which are sequential, circular or recursive
    - Cause-effect-cause loop
    - Régulation in the **sense of dialectic nexus between meso and macro arenas**.
- ⇒ **A methodological implication** of a mesoeconomic approach: an **abductive process** to build the subject
- Innovation is produced endogenously by the way of historical processes
  - Building stylized facts is a core task for the researcher
  - Defining ‘what is studied’ is in the same time a “method” and a “result” of the research process.

# Meso: some particular arena of regulation

- On the necessity of defining each situation
  - **What** is really regulated
  - **How** the regulation works
  - In **which** economic or social arena the regulation takes place
- The regulation as
  - The **reproduction** of instituted nexus among players
  - The interorganizational **coordination** process at the meso-level
  - An arena of **breaks** / crisis / impossibility of reproduction

⇒ Such coordinations **assume** the existence of social compromises

⇒ Such coordinations **create** social compromises

⇒ **Confrontation** of political intentionalities (Keynesian state / Schumpeterian state, Jessop)... but meso-regime which are un-intentional

# The mesolevel, an unfinished regulation, with no determinist relation to the macro regime

- Regulations, which
  - are not **intermediary between** the macro regime and the players
  - are not **located at another level** but are rather of **a different nature**.

⇒Plurality of looping

⇒Understanding the dominant regulation in each studied field

⇒Identify how the macro institutional devices are binding but non deterministic

# Various tensions with the macro regime

- Conditioning, structuring **of the** dominant regime,
  - By sustaining a *crucial* activity on which the regime is focused
    - Automotive, then finance
  - By fulfilling a *support* function which, without imposing a general rule, fulfi function, through an **autonomous regulation**
    - Building and public works, agriculture
- Conditioning **meso arenas** to one anothers
  - Through the nature of the compromises, through the form taken by the meso balance of power
  - Through the creation of efficient or powerful institutional devices
- Conditioned **by the** dominant regime
  - Through the forms of competition / the norms of the wage-labour nexus
    - Professional football, care



# Framework

- A meso-arena is produced by the confrontation of heterogeneous player-strategies which are enacted by 4 building blocks
    - **Competitive** strategies & **Products** and Qualities
    - **Labor** and **working** processes
    - **Futurity** (representation of future)
    - **Human-nature** relation
  - The emergence of meso-arena of regulation is characterised by a relative autonomy of some actors within the accumulation regime
    - Scholars have to establish **stylized facts** in order to qualify the institutional process of differentiation
    - Scholars have to identify the social and economic forces acting by 4 building blocs
- ⇒ Characterisation of the tensions and the dialectical nexus among meso-arenas and macro regime determinism.

# Meso-regulations on various arenas

- **Territorial arenas ; sectoral arenas ; professional arenas, Value chains** : where identities are built, and from which collective development dynamics are undertaken
  - Territory : From *Third Italy* to the variety in Asia (especially in China), in Latin America etc. see *Régulation review issues*: stabilized form of consistent relations
  - Sector : Generalization of e-economics (digital platform, Montalban)
  - Value chain : A "key player" situated downstream or upstream the chain wields a preponderant power (buyer-dominated or producer-dominated)(Grouiez),
  - Profession : Professional football (Bastien), education (Michel & Lamarche)...

# Meso and variety of scales

- The diffusion of meso approaches calls into question what Klebaner and Montalban (2020) refer to as "methodological nationalism".
    - Discussion about the meso-macro dialectic have to deal with an implicit assumption that macro and national levels coincide or sometimes confuse.
  - The meso methodology must identify what is at stake at the meso scale, which goes **far beyond the sub-national** question.
  - Other meso-arenas **go far beyond the national** framework, then this meso areas are able to free themselves from national rules, they structures themselves beyond the Nation-States
    - There is a strong implicit link of meso to Variety of capitalisms in the vein of Amable's work (2005). This proximity has, in a way, certainly reinforced the body of work attesting to national, sectoral, sub-national variety, but has also reinforced the national bias.
  - In order to avoid this problem, let us clearly identify that certain meso arenas are indeed sub-national, crossing sectors and territories, resisting certain dynamics,
    - Eg. Resisting at the main forms of competition (cf. Mountain Milk, Dervillé, Vandenbroucke & Bazin, 2012, or the Bodet & Lamarche cooperatives, 2020)
- ⇒ The compromises and bargaining relations (rules which stabilize the relation) are defined within these meso arenas

# Thanks !

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- [Thomas.lamarche@u-paris.fr](mailto:Thomas.lamarche@u-paris.fr)
- Our recent publications on this topic :



Saisir les processus méso  
Une approche régulationniste

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**Résumé:** L'article rend compte d'un fait théorique que les débats à propos du régime capitaliste ont négligé, la théorie de la régulation (TR) propose une grille d'analyse permettant de saisir la dynamique d'espaces spécifiques et les processus de différenciation qui les structurent. S'appuyant sur les travaux ayant exploré les variétés sectorielles et territoriales, nous montrons que les concepts de la TR permettent de fonder une analyse méso-économique, pour laquelle nous proposons une grille de lecture qui identifie trois canaux de différenciation et situe les espaces méso dans une variété de relations avec les dynamiques macroéconomiques.

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Research Article

**Beyond oil: the international integration of the Russian economy between macroeconomic constraints and sectoral dynamics**

Pascal Grouiez, Julien Vercueil & Dmitry D. Volkov  
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### 3. Case study (have not been presented)

# Russian agri-food sector

Understanding the conditions for sectoral regulation of the Russian agri-food sector in a context of Dutch disease.

The growth of the agri-food sector can be observed even if the macro context is unfavorable.

- Ability of the Russian agri-food sector to adapt to the Dutch disease context in order to become an exporter (especially of cereal products) while increasing its production for the national market and limiting the use of imports (import substitution strategy).
- The meso-regulatory grid makes it possible to
- Report on the international integration process of the Russian agri-food sector
- While studying the contribution of Russian agri-food industry to the macro closure of a regime that can be described as **extrovert and rentier** (Vercueil, 2018 ; Grouiez et al., 2021) = Meaning a macro accumulation regime that is over dependent on the oil and gas sector while the price of these products is largely determined at the international market level. (see Vercueil in this Congres)

# Since 2000 : a rentier and extroverted regulation of the agri-food sector in Russia

*Rate exchange of the ruble affect the price of the agri-food product => difficulty for this sector to access to capital (low competitiveness at the international level)*

- **Centrality of the oligarchical model:** emergence of the agro-holding model based on the integration of Russian agriculture into the Russian agri-food sector, which limits the inflationary effect of agricultural prices for the agri-food processing sector and transfers the problem to consumers themselves.
- **Product:** based on a logic of quality and increased labor productivity. Strategy of protection of the national market through tariff barrier and non tariff barrier.
- **Futurity.** An increasingly guided vision towards a macro-level food security logic, which encourages the sector's actors to seek greater national production capacity in order to guarantee Russia's food autonomy from the outside; reversely, sector's desire to export a greater proportion of their products internationally in order to find the capital for the sector's development. In a first step, the oligarchs used the national protectionism policy to make possible the consolidation of the sector in order to export in a second step after modernization of its production process.

# Conclusion regarding a meso analysis of the Russian agri-food sector transformation.

- The agri-food sector has partially succeeded in integrating itself into international trade thanks to the emergence of the agroholding model.
- This result is in contradiction with the existence of a Dutch disease issue at the macro-economic level.
- The sector is emerging in a contradiction between its logic of autonomy (willingness to participate in international trade) and its role in food security, which the macro scale wants it to play in order to guarantee the development of other key sectors (weapon industry and oil and gas sectors).
  - Integration process (agroholding model) led by private actors (oligarchs) to enable international integration;
  - Public management of the food security role to limit this insertion.