

Individuals and organizations in modern societies rely on numbers to convey all kinds of information about themselves and about the world. (Porter 1995) We continuously measure, classify, rank, calculate, compare, value, price—in other words (as Michel Foucault argued long ago) group individuals into populations, divide up the world through the definition of thresholds and categories, and turn qualities into quantities, all of which can then be acted upon as “objective realities.” (Zelizer 1983; Espeland and Stevens 1998; Bowker and Star 2000) And we have indeed a sizeable technological arsenal at our disposal to do so, much of which was developed by organizations (courts, corporations, public agencies) seeking to rationalize their procedures.

Statistics and the social sciences have provided much of the technical apparatus for these activities of commensuration. We may pay little attention to them, yet they are far from neutral. They are not neutral in their *causes*: they reflect certain cultural assumptions about the way we look at the world and society, the instruments we believe are legitimate to regulate them, and the forms of expertise, which we allow to manipulate these instruments. Nor are these technologies, and the vocabularies associated with them, neutral in their *consequences*: it is through them that we “make up” people, groups and categories, or analytical procedures. (Hacking 1986; Callon 1998) It is through their power of consecration and institutionalization that we build and legitimate particular representational matrices in the broader society. (Bourdieu 2005)

While commensuration processes are fairly well conceptualized at a theoretical level, a serious reflection on how they connect to *particular* cultural and social environments is generally missing. We certainly have an experiential sense that activities of classification, ranking and valuation are carried out differently across social contexts—for different purposes, or by different agents and institutions—but we do not have good sociological accounts about where these differences come from, and how and why they matter. *We need, in short, to bring together the philosophical and historical literature on measurement to the abundant literature in the social sciences that deals with cross-national variations in institutional systems and cultural representations.*

The purpose of my next book is to do just that—to investigate the relationship between measurement activities and the “moral order” of societies. Why do certain measurement, ranking or valuation technologies emerge and gain social authority and efficacy in certain social contexts—but not others? What substantive shape do these technologies take across countries? How should we conceptualize these differences—in other words, how do they relate to (and also shape) the cultural and institutional make-up of societies? How do local ways of

classifying, ranking and valuing evolve when confronted with rival measures in the context of global economic competition and a general internationalization of standards? In *Measure for Measure: Representation, Order and Money across Cultures*, I investigate these questions through a series of empirical case studies that compare how two different social systems (France and the United States) produce order through three types of measurement activities: ranking, representation, and monetary valuation. While the objects of the case studies are somewhat heterogeneous (wine, digital technologies, and environmental damage –see below), they were chosen for their unique capacity to illustrate –and indeed illuminate– the broader social logics at work across them.

The first case study (“*Ranking: Old Bottles, New Wines*”) analyzes the genesis and century-long endurance of the 1855 Bordeaux Wine Official Classification until it suffered a major challenge from the meteoric rise of U.S.-based wine critics and the “scientization” of wine tasting, in the context of the globalization of the wine market and massive worldwide industrialization of wine production. A narrative about status and the legitimacy of history against democracy and individual gift, inalienable “*terroir*” against transferable technique, this chapter investigates how ranking systems end up acting on the very world they seek to describe and evaluate (Espeland and Sauder 2007) –and in the process profoundly transform its nature and self-understanding (in this case, wine making itself). The second case study (“*Indexing: Democratic Library, Republican Library*”) investigates the controversy over Google Book Search in France, which erupted when the American company announced its plan to digitize 13 million English-language books and make them freely available on the web. I contrast Google’s broad-based digital indexation system, and its ranking of pages by popularity, with the much more selective approach of its French counterpart (called Gallica), where works are chosen and “organized” by the French National Library staff, under the direction of an expert panel. This chapter analyzes what the politics of digitization reveals about the production of, and access to, knowledge in each country –and, ultimately, about different underlying conceptions of a legitimate social order. The final case study (“*Valuing: Price and Prejudice*”) deals with the use of money in valuation processes. Its empirical basis is a comparative analysis of the compensation for ecological damage in two oil spills (the Amoco Cadiz (France, 1978) and Exxon Valdez (United States, 1989)), that were conveniently both tried in the United States. I show that the very large difference in compensation outcomes may be explained by differences in the economic valuation technologies used by the French vs. American parties, which I trace back to the less comfortable institutionalization of economics in France.

In true Tocquevillian fashion, much of the book's argument revolves around the contrast between status-based and state-centered measurement technologies with "democratic" and market-based ones. The significance of economic tools and arguments is particularly striking, and offers a vindication of the argument I advance in my first book, *Economists and Societies*, about the much different social authority and legitimacy of economics in France versus the United States. *Measure for Measure*, however, is not only a comparative book: it also investigates the *competitive* dynamics between different social ontologies of measurement in our era of global economic and technological exchange. These ontologies, I show, are not created equal: rather, arguments based on economic freedom and political equality seem to inevitably gain the upper hand. I seek to explain why in the conclusion, going beyond the three cases at hand to show the relevance of these themes to processes taking place in other countries and in different domains. This last part feeds particularly well into two new research projects, on "global metrics" (with [_____] and [_____]) and on "categories and claims in neo-liberal society", with [_____].

I plan to devote the next academic year (2007-2008) to researching further the Google and particularly the wine industry chapters. So I hope to use the following academic year (2008-2009) to write up a large portion of the book (the final chapter, on valuation, is already complete). After spending five exciting weeks at the 2006 Summer Institute, I am convinced that the Center for Advanced Study in the Social and Behavioral Sciences would be the best place for me to focus on this research. Practically, the Center's location –at the heart of the Silicon Valley and close to some of the California vineyards– is supremely convenient for me to maintain my acquaintance with some key research sites. More importantly, the topics I am dealing with are eminently interdisciplinary. As this statement suggests, the questions I am asking are of interest well beyond sociology, and I am relying on the work of sociologists, economists, anthropologists, historians, science studies and legal scholars, philosophers, cross-cultural psychologists and political scientists to pose them. In the uniquely stimulating environment of the Center, I would benefit immensely from others' fresh insights into the curious ways in which measurement, values and money do (and do not) intersect in different social contexts, and ultimately transform society by allowing new categories and claims to be made and performed.