

The French National Funding Agency (ANR) as a trading zone between governmental politics and scientific communities

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Our goal for this communication

Walk you through the complicated history of the first French National Funding Agency for Academic Research

- Evolving organization
- Largely commented
- > Appears both familiar and strange

Some context

- **Division** of the French system : CNRS / university (Larédo and Mustar, 2001 ; Musselin, 2021)
- **2004** : crisis of the French research funding
- Creation of the first National Funding Agency for Academic Research (ANR)
 - A reform pro-Universities ; “against” the centrality of the CNRS
 - Creation in a hurry - small group of founders
- **A paradoxal novelty** :
 - Competitive project funding have a long history (Aust and Picard, 2014 ; Chatriot et Duclert, 2006)
 - France never experienced a centralized “national funding agency”
- **Apparently** : a research council similar to others
 - Demand from the profession, but...



Rapport des Etats Généraux de la recherche



novembre 2004

Le CoFiPS reçoit un financement qui lui est propre, qui n'est pas prélevé sur les budgets de recherche des Etablissements, et qui regroupe les financements actuellement dévolus aux appels d'offre thématiques en provenance de tous les ministères (FNS, FRT, ANRS, autres GIP existants le cas échéant...). Le budget du CoFiPS doit lui permettre d'assurer sa mission propre et **non d'alimenter le capital de fondations**. Le coût inhérent à la mise en place et au fonctionnement administratif du CoFiPS devrait être minimum grâce à la mise à disposition de personnels des Etablissements partenaires et à la délégation de gestion des crédits accordés aux établissements (avec accréditation des pratiques).

Le CoFiPS devra donc assurer une mission complémentaire de celles des organismes et non pas se substituer aux opérateurs de recherche existants, ni devenir un nouvel établissement, ni prendre une place démesurée dans le système de financement de la recherche. Compte tenu de ses missions et de sa structure, le CoFiPS se distingue et a vocation à se substituer immédiatement à l'Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR). En effet, l'ANR annoncée dans le projet de loi de finances 2005 est dotée d'un financement non budgétisé, peut abonder en capital des fondations et ne dispose pas de structures d'évaluation définies, contrairement au CoFiPS.

An evolving organization

- From a light structure to more than 300 employees
- Multiple changes in its organization

How it started

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- BIOLOGIE SANTÉ
- MATIÈRE ET INFORMATION
- « NON THÉMATIQUE »
- PARTENARIATS ET COMPÉTITIVITÉ

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LOI DE PROGRAMMATION DE LA RECHERCHE 2021-2030

Loi de programmation de la recherche : un accroissement significatif du budget de l'ANR dès 2021



Jeudi 19 novembre 2020, le Conseil d'administration de l'Agence nationale de la recherche (A.N.R.) a adopté le budget 2021 qui prévoit des dépenses d'intervention pour le financement des projets de recherche pour 1,19 Md€, un niveau inédit depuis la création de l'agence en 2006. Ce budget initial 2021 augmente de 444 M€ par rapport à 2020 et concrétise les engagements pris par le ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche et de l'Innovation dans le cadre de la loi de programmation de la recherche pour que l'A.N.R. devienne au plus vite une agence de financement de la recherche de niveau mondial. Le plan de relance accélère encore cette dynamique et permet d'atteindre dès 2021 un montant des appels à

historique permettra de changer la donne au sein des laboratoires et

How its going

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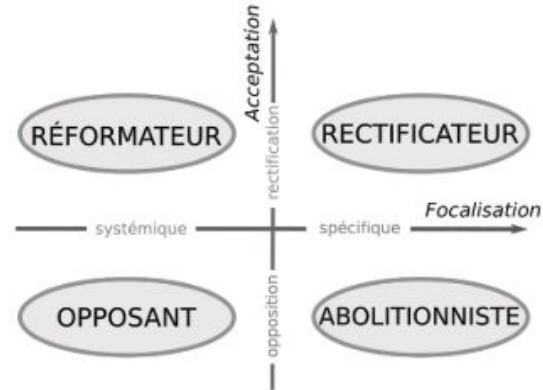
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Nevertheless, a constant : criticisms

The main result of the literature : a criticized body (Giry and Schultz, 2017 ; Aust and Gozlan, 2018)



Persistent beliefs

- Recurring claims within scientific communities (sociology included)
 - Before 2004, **project funding research hardly existed** in the French Research System + it was mainly recurrent funding
 - Policy action from government equals authoritative interventions (**instrumentalization** of the scientific community)
 - “**Blue Sky**” project funding from autonomous agencies is the international norm
 - **ANR creation is a neoliberal** transformation of the French research system (Giry and Schultz, 2021)
- Fuel criticisms against the agency + contradictory discourses
 - Side effect : obfuscates investigation on ANR’s action and consequences

D’après l’association *Sauvons la recherche*, l’ANR « *une conception profondément réductrice et idéologique de la recherche qui n’aurait de valeur que par ses applications et ses retombées économiques* » (<http://sauvonslarecherche.fr/spip.php?article2028>)

In a article published during the recent academic mobilization : ANR as an instrument of the government without any autonomy

« l’instrument de la direction de la technologie du ministère et, depuis la fusion avec la direction de la recherche, de la direction générale de la recherche et de l’innovation. » ; « En ce sens, l’ANR n’est en rien « autonome » : elle porte la vision de la science de celles et ceux qui ont été placés aux commandes » [Noûs, 2020]

How to understand/investigate ANR's evolution ?

- Agencies are **semi-autonomous organizations** (Pollitt and al., 2005)
- **Dual interface** of a research council
 - scientific communities
 - political administration and politic representative (government)
- A (usually) **false dichotomy**
 - political capture (Noûs, 2020) or a scientific capture (Rip, 1994)
- Need to delineate the **conditions of co-management**
- Figuring out the French specificity : in other countries
 - Research councils are old and embedded in the scientific profession (still there are governmental science policies)
 - But the interface between government/agency is stabilized

Hypothese : due to criticism, the co-determination of the ANR is unstable and fragile, leading to reforms, adjustments, which fuel criticisms

Agency as a “trading zone”

- Borrowing a concept to focus on this interface
- ANR as a **negotiated public action device**
- Methodology:
 - Two PhD (Schultz, 2016 ; Giry, almost completed)
 - Interviews with the direction of the agency, representants of the ministry, of the administration, but also researchers (candidates, evaluators, programmers, but also union representatives, spokespersons of professional associations) (n=160)
 - Observations of public meetings, at the ANR, at the Ministry, in the Universities; participation in training courses for the setting up of scientific projects.
 - Grey literature (reports, press articles, etc.)

Trading Zone

Coordinating Action and Belief

PETER GALISON

PART I: INTERCALATION

INTRODUCTION: THE MANY CULTURES OF PHYSICS

I will argue this: science is disunified, and—against our first intuitions—it is precisely the *disunification* of science that underpins its strength and stability. This argument stands in oppo-

A trading zone since its creation

A political choice

“It is important to understand... When I was an advisor to the Prime Minister, at the time of setting up the ANR, not everyone agreed on its function. And it didn't become clearer afterwards. Nicolas Sarkozy and his advisors had a very... [hesitation] They wanted something very operational, on priority themes. **Not an agency like the American NSF or the German DFG.**” (former adviser to the Prime Minister, 2004-2007, career scientist)

Partially compatible with professional demands

“**The ANR is a political creation. We weren't involved in that after the social movement.** So inevitably, we were very suspicious. Some people didn't want to hear about project-based funding. Others, especially in my discipline [mathematics], but especially in biology, were more open. **But they wanted an agency like what they see abroad, a granting council, managed by and for scientists.** That is to say, non-directed programs, or thematic ones, but thematic ones that come from the scientific community.” (Head of Sauvons la recherche, 2004-2008)

Contradictory constraints

“It's always the same with politicians. **They tell you that it is good to create an autonomous agency, and then they try to control it,** they expect it to be at the service of the government, to put researchers to work on the objects that interest the ministries. There is always this ambiguity” (ANR Department Director, 2006-2011)

Since 2005, contradictory determinants of the trading zone and evolutive political context led to **three main configurations** for the agency

Period (2004-2009) : a **double distancing** during a right-wing government

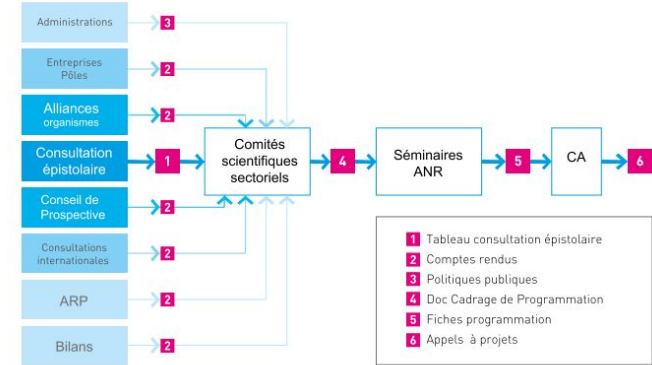
- **Global** political contexte : *make the universities “great again”*
 - Inspiration from foreign models, deeply rooted in the scientific communities (NSF, DFG, British Councils, etc.) - (Henriques and Larédo, 2013)
 - Benchmarking, international exchanges, etc.
- ANR's direction will to **avoid instrumentalization**
 - by politicians but also by dominant scientific organizations by installing safeguards
 - organizational rules, ISO certification, centrality of scientists in management positions
- Government supported **the stabilization** of the agency
 - Expectation of the development of researchers' good practices
- **Researchers applied** for funding and participate to scientific committees
 - in return it legitimated the agency in the French Research System

-> Consequences in the trading zone

A constant negotiation :

- Global budget division :
 - thematic programs with strategic and applied aims
 - “blue sky” programs
- Call for proposals responsibility :
 - delegated to appointed individuals from the research community
 - but upstream consultation with a variety of partners (scientific institutions, companies, ministries).
- Evaluation :
 - peer-review by legitimate scientists to evaluate the projects
 - but steering committees with extra-academic individuals with a final regard

Un schéma simplifié du processus de programmation peut être proposé :



An ambiguous integration into professional practices

- Explicit aim to build and implement science policies with scientific communities

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Vie de la recherche – Research news

Le programme ANR Agrobiosphère : l'importance d'une programmation thématique pour l'émergence de nouveaux concepts

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- Persistence of the political capture belief
 - both in the sociological literature and in public statements. But many institutional representatives of the scientific field
 - calls for the abolition of the ANR (Trade unions, professional associations, but also of leaders of the main organizations (CNRS))

Period 2 (2009-2013) : The return of tensions in the trading zone

- Government (still right-wing) starts to scheme a **National Strategy Plan** where the ANR needs to be team player
 - 2007: University Reform Law
 - 2008: creation of the CNRS institutes
- Government started to reproach the **excessive autonomy** of the ANR
- Research organisations voiced their need to better control the ANR's resources
- ANR officials **are reluctant to increase collaboration**


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News & Comment > The French presidential frontrunners discuss science

The French presidential frontrunners discuss science

In the run-up to the French presidential election, *Nature* discussed science with the two leading candidates: Nicolas Sarkozy of the UMP party and the Socialist Party's François Hollande.



NICOLAS SARKOZY
What have been the main accomplishments of your presidency?
Without hesitation, the 2007 law giving universities autonomy from centralized state control. It has given universities greater freedom to set their own strategies, allows them to own their land and buildings, manage their budgets and borrow capital to make major investments. The universities can now recruit scientists without any

Many leading scientists complain that lab funding by the national research organizations is falling. How would you rectify this situation?

In 2011, research spending as a percentage of gross domestic product reached 2.3%, close to its historical high [of 2.36%] in the early 1990s. The budgets of the main public research agencies — the CNRS, INSERM, CEA, INRA — have increased every year since 2007. The National Research Agency's budget has stagnated, but the agency is also responsible for allocating €22 billion for higher education and research under the Investments for the Future programme.

The best French research teams have enjoyed an unprecedented increase in funding, but these funds have not necessarily passed through the main research agencies such as the CNRS, INSERM, INRA, CEA, which sometimes causes criticism by the researchers working for these agencies.

-> Consequences in the trading zone

- Direction **defended its core activity** : the competitive project funding
- Government launched a **parallel program**
 - dedicated science policy : the “Investissements d'avenir” (Gally, 2018)
 - ANR only a “technical support”

“"You know that ... Lecourtier had a very... she didn't want to discuss with us. But politics has to play a role. There is no point in having a national strategy if the agency does not take it into account. And the president, Sarkozy, it was complicated. Because he was on a more operational line. The PIA came from there. We needed a more direct funding channel and without the opposition of the ANR, to fund laboratories, in universities especially, on priority themes.” (Deputy Director of the Budget in the Minister's Office)”

- Creation of **new thematic research alliances** to improve the weight of research organisms in the crafting of science policies but in coordination with universities
 - Government enforced that ANR's direction take better into account the alliances proposal

Period 3 (2013-2017): An institutional takeover of the ANR

- New **political majority**, election of François Holland (socialist)
 - Promise to reform the ANR in response to radical criticisms
 - Professional consultation (Assises de la recherche, 2012)
 - Inscription in the general framework of “societal challenges” adopted by the European Union
 - ANR-State contract and a new decree
- With specific consequences on the ANR :
 - Budget cuts in favor of the recurrent funds of scientific organizations
 - Transfer of scientific planning jurisdiction to the Thematic Alliances and the Ministry.
 - New categories of “societal challenges” to define the funding devices

Présidentielle 2012 : François Hollande souhaite une « évaluation » de l'ANR et de l'Aeres permettant d'en « redéfinir les missions »

François Hollande, candidat à la primaire socialiste, souhaite « mener, en liaison avec l'OPECST, une évaluation transparente et débattue politiquement de l'ANR, de l'Aeres, permettant de redéfinir les missions de ces deux instances et de redonner des initiatives aux organismes et au Parlement dans l'orientation des grands programmes

Dépêche n° 231708

🕒 3 MIN DE LECTURE

Par **ANNE MASCRET**

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-> Consequences in the trading zone

- Internal changes :

- Reform of the organigram increasing the division between science policy tasks and their operationalization
- Changes in the budget distribution between funding tools to balance success rates and private/public collaborations
- Change in the process with a two step proposal (first a short project, then an expanded version)
- Use of the categories relating to “societal challenges”

- But

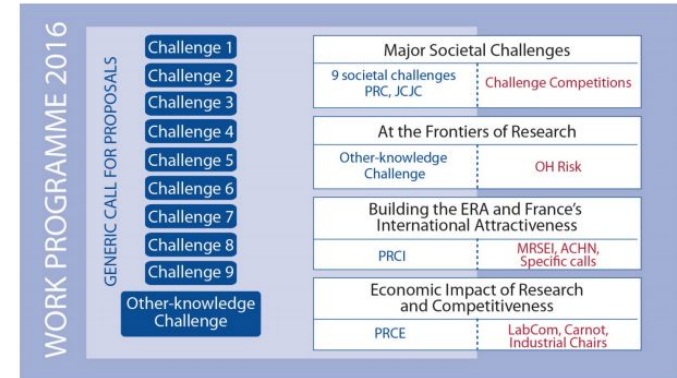
- Broad and **not very binding categories**
- Continuity of the sovereignty of peer-review for the projects scientific quality over strategic control

1. “Major Societal Challenges” component

The French Research Ministry has requested that the French National Research Agency organise a significant portion of its Work Programme 2016 around **nine major societal challenges** spelled out in the “France-Europe 2020” Strategic Agenda (except for the space sector, under the authority of CNES), described in paragraphs D-1 to D-9:

1. Efficient resource management and adaptation to climate change
2. Clean, secure and efficient energy
3. Industrial renewal
4. Life, health and well-being
5. Food security and demographic challenges
6. Sustainable mobility and urban systems
7. Information and communication society
8. Innovative, inclusive and adaptive societies
9. Freedom and security of Europe, its citizens and its residents

The “Major societal challenges” component groups basic knowledge acquisition and targeted, often applied research under one heading. This component is subject to the generic call for proposals and uses all available instruments (see section B for details) enabling funding of collaborative research projects in a national or international context (**PRC** and **PRCI** respectively) and possibly involving the business world (**PRCE**) or individual research projects coordinated by young researchers (**JCIC**).



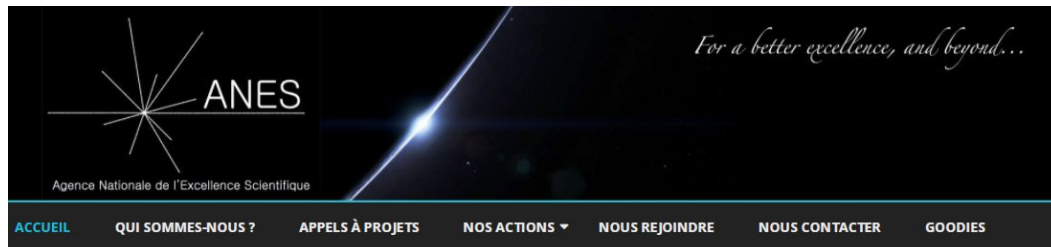
Overview of Work Programme 2016 and its four components

PRC: Collaborative Research Projects; JCJC: Young Researchers;
PRCI: International Collaborative Research Projects; PRCE: Collaborative Research Projects Involving Enterprises;
MRSEI: Setting up European or International Scientific Networks; ACHN: Hosting High-Level Researchers

Different configurations but a chronic instability

- 10 years after the creation, the ambivalence still exists
- The "societal challenges" are a disappointment for the scientific communities, which are paradoxically confirmed in the belief that the ANR is a political instrument against their autonomy.
- Government acknowledge the limits of the agency to enforce the national scientific strategy.

2017



Accueil

Bienvenue sur le site de l'Agence Nationale de l'Excellence Scientifique (ANES). L'agence a été fondée en 2005 avec pour objectif de revigorer le secteur de la recherche. Afin de mener à bien ce projet ambitieux, l'ANES reçoit chaque année un financement de 2,8 Milliards d'euros, dégagé grâce à la redistribution de [la partie détournée du Crédit Impôt Recherche](#).



2016

After 2017 ?

- Election of Emmanuel Macron (2017)
 - inexperience in government, particularly in the area of science, stood out during the campaign.
 - Continuity of the main advisers
- The ANR :
 - embedded in professional practices
 - marginal for French Research governance
- The trading zone persists with its ambivalent promises

LOI DE PROGRAMMATION DE LA RECHERCHE 2021-2030

Loi de programmation de la recherche : un accroissement significatif du budget de l'ANR dès 2021



Jeudi 19 novembre 2020, le Conseil d'administration de l'Agence nationale de la recherche (A.N.R.) a adopté le budget 2021 qui prévoit des dépenses d'intervention pour le financement des projets de recherche pour 1,19 Md€, un niveau inédit depuis la création de l'agence en 2006. Ce budget initial 2021 augmente de 444 M€ par rapport à 2020 et concrétise les engagements pris par le ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche et de l'Innovation dans le cadre de la loi de programmation de la recherche pour que l'A.N.R. devienne au plus vite une agence de financement de la recherche de niveau mondial. Le plan de relance accélère encore cette dynamique et permet d'atteindre dès 2021 un montant des appels à projets de 1 Md€. Cette augmentation historique permettra de changer la donne au sein des laboratoires de recherche dès 2021.

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Conclusion : a moving trading zone

- Between 2005 and 2017 (2021?), ANR was a trading zone between the government and scientific communities in the crafting of science policy
 - Changes occurred with consequences in the technical organization of research funding
 - But with no complete capture either political or professional
- Because it was an uncomfortable situation, it :
 - fueled constant criticisms
 - limited its stability as an organisation
 - Obfuscate sociological analysis
- Never became the central tool for science policies that the government dreamt for
- Nor was a pure political tool to dominate scientific activity

Futur research

- More work is needed
 - Complete the fieldwork with the 2017-2021 period
 - Create a more fine-grained chronology of changes
- Difficulty to compare “research councils” across countries
- Still little empirical work on the consequences of those politics (Gläser and Laudel, 2016)
 - On the production of knowledge
 - On the work condition of researchers

