

Call for papers for the international conference

Actualizing Robert Castel's Legacy: The International Circulation and Reception of his Work

April 3 and 4, 2023, Campus Condorcet, Aubervilliers-Paris, France

Sponsored by:

**Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales
Université Paris 8
Institut des Hautes Etudes d'Amérique Latine**

Argument

Robert Castel, Professor at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) from 1990 until his death, in 2013, founded the Department of Sociology at the University of Vincennes (Paris) (now the University of Paris 8), where he taught until moving to the EHESS. He left behind him an impressive body of work, widely acclaimed by sociologists, as well as historians and legal scholars. And today? How widely can his influence be traced in contemporary reflections on social protection, wage society, the precariat, social supports, and the politics of the individual? Do sociological analyses of psychiatry still mobilise his critiques of psychological knowledge and practices, in order to observe the current upheavals related to the ambiguities of mental health policies, crisis of its institutions and renewal of its scientific paradigms? *From Manual Workers to Wage Laborers: Transformation of the Social Question*, (Routledge, 2002), originally published in 1995, remains an essential reference. Yet a second key work, *La gestion des risques* [The Management of Risk] (Ed.de Minuit, 1981), launched at the turning point between the two moments of his intellectual trajectory, from psychiatry to the salaried society, remains far less visible internationally despite the great lucidity with which the book anticipated today's actuarial logic of regulation policies. Nevertheless, Castel's analysis of the extension of the 'psy' fields and the rise of a society supported by 'therapists for normals' has fueled a number of analyses and studies of the proliferation of practices related to the psychologisation of social relations, including personal development.

As Castel's work prefigures and critically analyzes a politics of the individual that unfolds in a singular way in each political, social and cultural space, revisiting his legacy would allow us to better understand current developments in contemporary societies and the contrasts among their ways of realizing the commons. This international conference will take stock of Castel's contributions and provide an opportunity to question the intellectual logics on which their pertinence in the contemporary world rests, in particular the national contexts of the reception of his work which allow us to understand its international circulation.

Examining the decade since his death will allow us to begin to take stock of the reception of his work, especially how it has been transmitted and mobilised in academic and political spaces beyond France. Framing this at the international level allows us to shift focus and fill a gap. If Latin America, where he was regularly invited, was undoubtedly the continent most attentive to his work during his lifetime, what about elsewhere? Above all, what about today? Where are his works still read? And for what purpose? How has his work contributed to generating innovative work?

Topics

The present Call for participation in this international conference on the status of Robert Castel's work today is intended for researchers and scholars from outside France, who could propose several types of contributions.

- 1) Contributions to the study of the **international reception of Robert Castel's work**. These contributions should review the logics of intellectual circulation starting from local situations which help researchers understand the political and social logics underlying the differences in how Castel's thought has travelled. International colleagues might present the regional or local specificities that favour or hinder exchanges around his work. Analyses of the situations and specificities of local reception would be of interest, as well as testimonies of researchers who have played a role in the dissemination of his work.

Other contributions to the colloquium topics might include: a) work and social welfare, b) social work, c) the psychologisation of social relations, d) sociability and the family in informal supports (*protection rapprochée*).

- 2) How might Castel's writings on **work and social protection** shed light on research in areas relevant to a specific country? The aim is to contribute to a general reflection on the disintegration of wage societies by enrolling more local or national studies so as to assess the current relevance of this concept, and more broadly of the foundations of Castel's thinking on the centrality of how structures individuals. Is his thinking on the wage-earning system still relevant, given the upheavals in the world of work today, such as the development of the gig economy?
- 3) Are Castel's thoughts on **social interventions** still relevant in view of the profound transformations of social work? Taking into account national contexts allows us to analyse the wide spectrum in types of social interventions that rebalance market logics, help the poor or accompany people in difficulty. Contributions from different social work cultures (faith-based, community organization traditions, market logics, other participative and citizen types...) will allow further development of these proposals.
- 4) Castel's works on psychiatry and psychoanalysis have been strongly associated with the context of the institutional critique of the 1970s, including Deleuze and Guattari's anti-psychiatry in France, the democratic psychiatry movement in Italy, and the

Foucauldian critique of knowledge-power relations. It is in fact this these allowed him envision **the extension of the 'psy' domains and the psychologisation of social relations**, and his work continues to be mobilised around these questions. The spread of the 'psy' phenomenon is today visible everywhere, and research on the areas it penetrates, such as personal development and well-being, have contributed to the renewal of the sociology of the individual and social supports. How might Castel allow us to think about the ways in which individuals are led to govern their behavior today? International research on how they create injunctions as to the individual, which feed illusions like self-sufficiency and the entrepreneurial self, will allow us to compare and contrast perspectives of this knowledgeable area of the social sciences.

- 5) Castel deployed a research programme on the different areas of disaffiliation, particularly on the **importance of sociabilities and the family**, which contribute to **kin welfare and supports** (*“protection rapprochée”*); i.e. those provided by close relatives. He undoubtedly encountered less visible and more fragile solidarities, choosing to dedicate his work and interventions to the defense of rights and status, ignoring the importance of gender issues. Research on the more informal forms of social support has developed considerably in recent years, particularly with the growth of studies on care. In this area, international proposals could revisit the relevance of Castel's work to empirical research on the family dynamics of concrete support for individuals, and how they are deployed in very contrasting worlds. Intersections and connections too often eluded in the French context, might be proposed, including gender studies and care studies, as well as intersectional issues.

Modalities

Paper proposals submitted by international colleagues in different intellectual contexts are due by **April 30, 2022**. They should be in French or English, no more than 750 words and sent to colloquecastel.2023@gmail.com. In addition to presenting argument and clearly emphasizing which of the above topics it falls under, the proposals should include a presentation of the authors and context (academic, disciplinary, research field, method...) in which they use Castel's work.

In order to be able to translate completed papers into French and English before the conference, the papers (4,500 words with a 450 words abstract) must be received by **February 28, 2023**. Papers and discussions of the conference can be followed with translation (French/English).

Meals will be provided. We are hoping to be able to provide at least some accommodation. Participants or their institutes, however, must provide be responsible for transportation.

Publications will be developed from the conference.

For questions or information, please contact: colloquecastel.2023@gmail.com

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- Bénédicte Zimmermann, EHESS, CGS Paris, Wissenschaftskolleg (Institute of Advanced Studies), Berlin, Germany

Timetable

- ⇒ February 2022: Circulation of the Call for papers
- ⇒ 31 May 2022: Deadline for receiving proposals (750 words)
- ⇒ 30 June 2022: Response to proposals
- ⇒ 28 February 2023: submission of papers (4,500 words + abstract 450 words)
- ⇒ 20 March 2023: availability of the conference file, with the abstracts translated into French and English
- ⇒ 3-4 April 2023: Conference