

Training students to do research: a diversity of learning situations

*Jean-Francois Perret
Department of Psychology & Education
University of Neuchâtel
Switzerland*

The transition from secondary school to the university

- How do students learn the **new rules and norms** of the academic life ? (de Coulon 1997; Alava 2001),
- On which basis they give **meaning** to this new environment ? (Iannacone, Ghodbane and Rosciano, 2005);
- What are their **representations** of the education they receive at university ? (Trinquier and Clanet, 2001);
- How do they **relate** to the academic knowledge ? (Rey, 1999)

The perception of the academic context

- A survey was addressed in 2010 and 2011 to 800 first year students of the University of Neuchâtel, with this particular question:
What was the most surprising for you in the first months at the university?

The answers show that the main aspects of the environment which surprise students concern the organisation of teaching:

- number of students in the classroom,
- diversity of the students,
- amount of reading required,
- conception of the exams, etc

A surprise for us

No student talks about research!

The activity of research is however a fundamental aspect of the academic environment and contributes to enrich teaching.

Training students to do research is also an important objective valorised by our university.

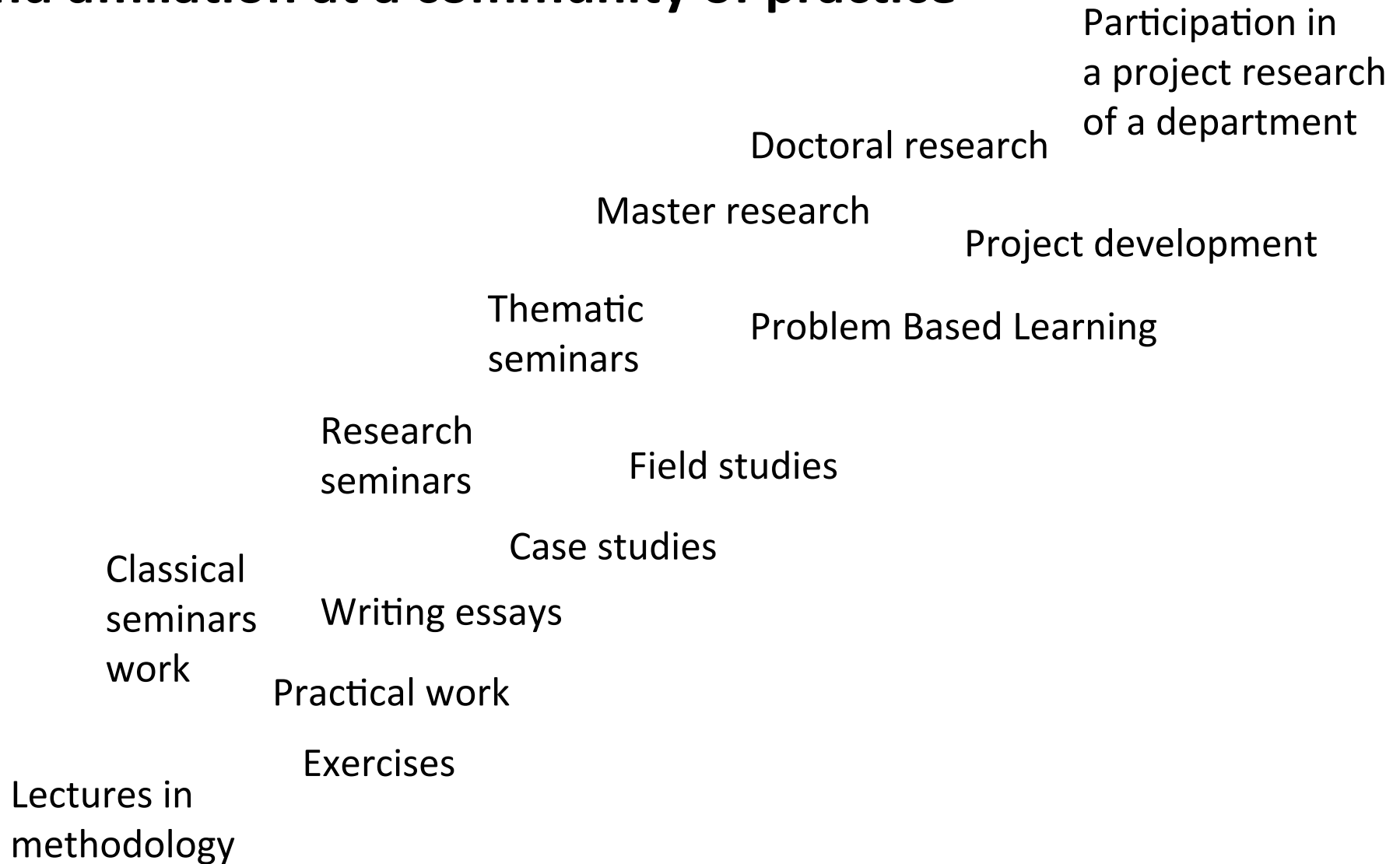
A diversity of practices and conceptions

- In fact, the key role of the research and how research activities relate to teaching activities are approached in various way in each discipline, according also to the culture of departments.

We can observe a diversity of :

- Objectives (training researchers / learning through research)
- Pedagogical options (implicite or explicite)
- Teaching strategies
- Cursus conceptions (relation between research and teaching / when research activities are planned)

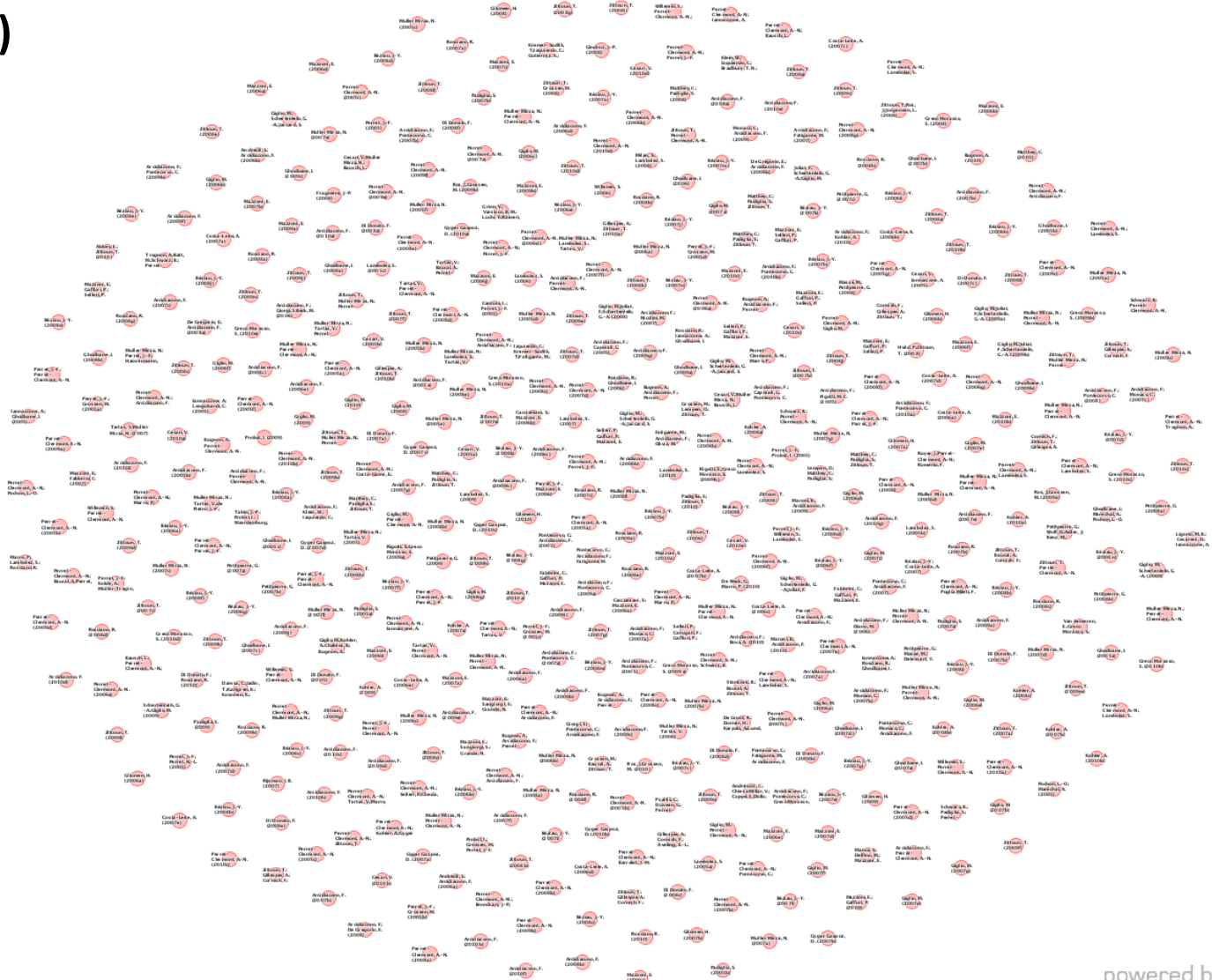
From « exercices of research » to participation and affiliation at a community of practice



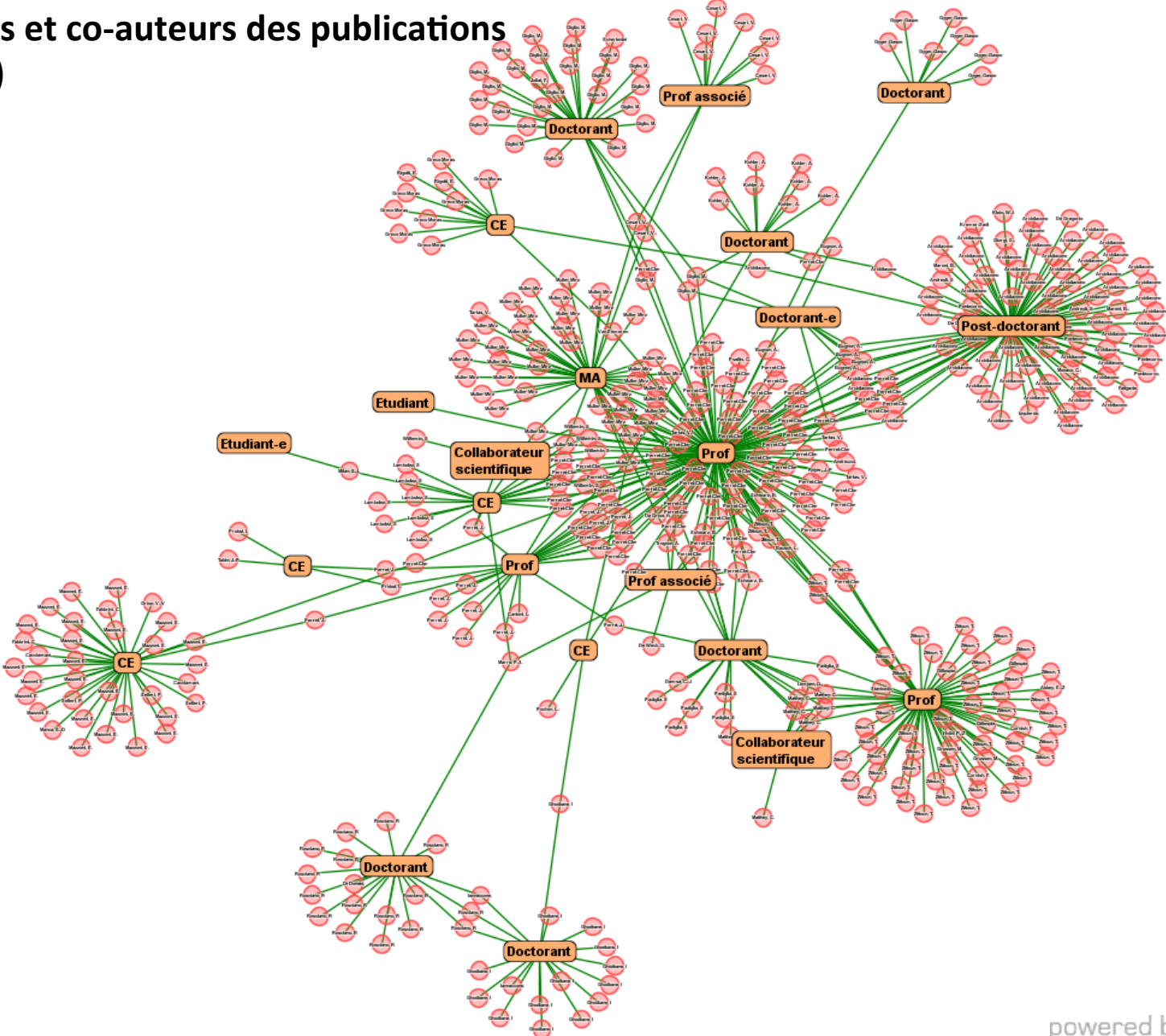
A tool to support the understanding of « research in action » within a department

- Becoming participant in authentic practices of research takes time. During the first years, students have often a partial view on the research of their professors.
- To help students to better understand the nature of « research in action » in their department, we used a tool originally designed for describing some aspects of a research productivity by means of graphs.
- The presentation and discussion of the graphs aroused interest and curiosity among the students, but appeared to them still abstract.

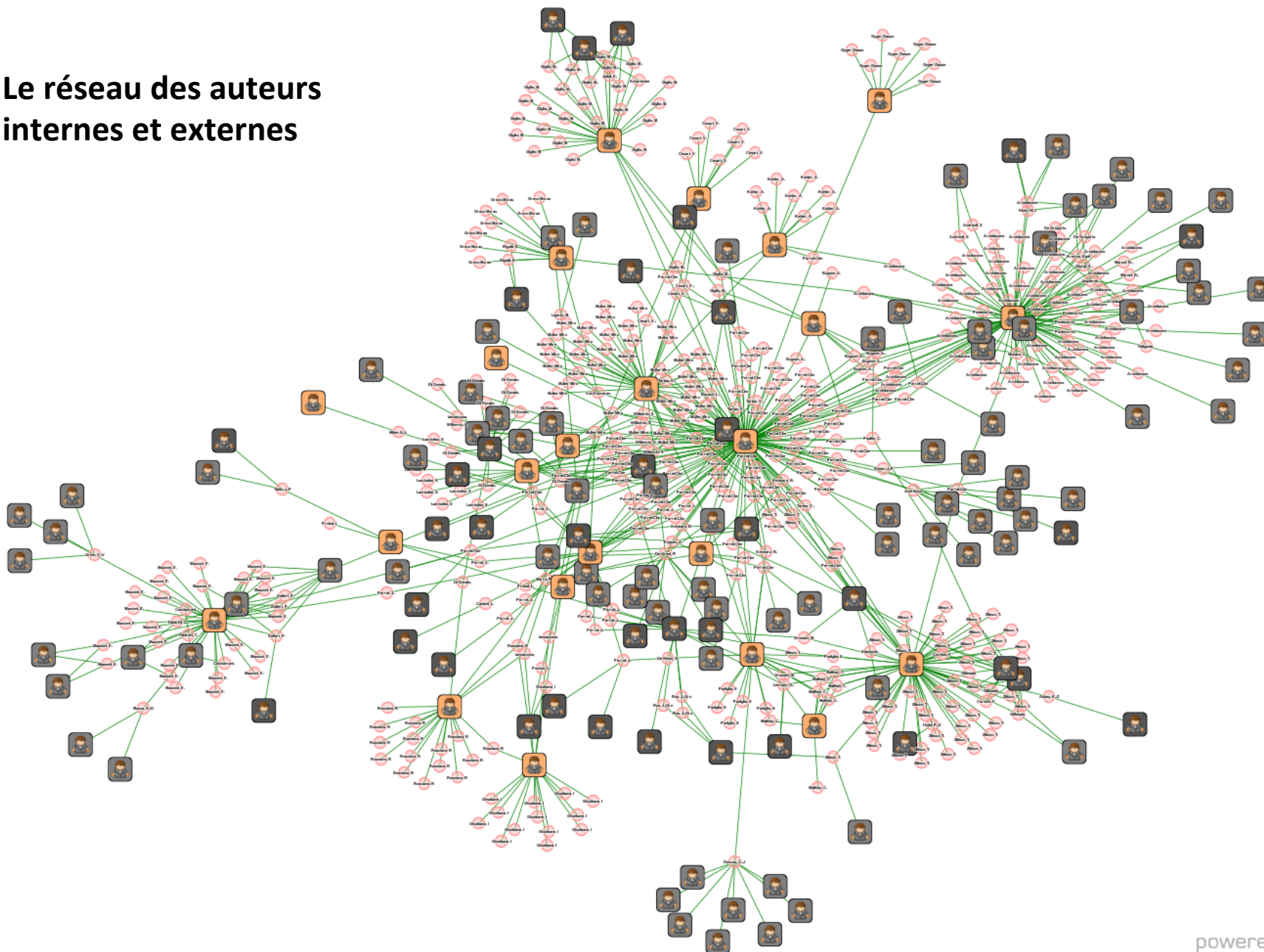
Publications et communications d'un institut (A) 2005-2010



Les auteurs et co-auteurs des publications (institut A)



Le réseau des auteurs internes et externes



Les thèmes des publications (institut A)

