

CIRIEC-France, activities 2014-2016

Introduction

In a context of radical change in society in the wake of economic globalisation and various transitions (societal, environmental, digital, ...), facing crises and their consequences in the increase of inequalities and the risks to democracy in a palpable absence of prospects of a better world, CIRIEC-France has centred its activity on research and information on the effectiveness of public policies to guide trends and developments the primary objective of which must be the satisfaction of the needs of individuals rather than of markets.

The economic upheavals experienced these last years have affected all sectors of economic activity, whether commercial or non-profit; and the economic crisis had its strong impact on collective or general-interest structures. However, among these latter, the enterprises of the social economy demonstrated their resilience to the crisis. They created jobs while classical enterprises destroyed them.

CIRIEC, whose mission is to conduct research and organise information on these sectors, is directly concerned by these developments.

The French branch of CIRIEC International, CIRIEC-France, regularly organised researches, study days and debate dinners with its scientific commissions on themes chosen for their topical interest and importance.

Convinced of the necessity of close cooperation at international level, representatives of CIRIEC-France have soldiered on in the works of the two scientific commissions of CIRIEC International and in the governance of the latter, the President of CIRIEC-France having occupied the position of President of CIRIEC International during the period 2014-2016.

1. Research activities

1.1 The working group on Social Economy

The research activity formerly conducted by the commission Social Economy is now continued under a programme co-organised with the Conseil National des Chambres Régionales de l'Economie Sociale (CNCRES), the Réseau Inter-Universitaire de l'Economie Sociale et Solidaire (RIUESS) and Rencontres Sociales, respectively represented by Jean-Louis Cabrespines, President, Professor Michel Abhervé and Jean-Philippe Milésy, General Delegate.

Current research concerns **transversality between the social economy and the social and solidarity economy in the service of the general interest**. It enjoys the financial support of the Directorate-General for Social Cohesion, attached to the Ministry of the Economy. It is conducted in the form of bibliographical research, inquiries through questionnaires and talks with

enterprises and organisations in the public economy and the SSE. It finds expression in a work brought out by Les Presses Universitaires de Rouen et du Havre.

A steering group has been created made up of members from the scientific commission Public Economy, led by Professor Philippe Bance, and from the scientific commission Social Economy, led by Marcel Caballero. The programme is run under the coordination of Jean-Philippe Milésy. Marcel Caballero liaises with the Bureau of the Board. A probationer has been recruited for the duration of the programme.

1.2 The working group on Public Economy

The working group on public economy was set up under the leadership of Professor Philippe Bance, with Jacques Fournier, honorary President liaising between the group, the Bureau and the Board of CIRIEC-France.

Throughout 2014, the group was engaged in the publication of a work on "The Internalisation of General-Interest Missions by Public Organisations". This work was published and distributed during the international conference on the future of public enterprises held in Paris on 25 February 2015.

The scientific commission was busy from May 2015 with the production of a new work, in preparation for the 31st International Congress CIRIEC, in Reims 21-23 September 2016. This work, published under the general editorship of Philippe Bance at the PURH in September 2016, is entitled ***Quel modèle d'État stratège en France?*** It discusses a notion of State strategy, now a reference broadly mobilised in discourses of various horizons, to kick-start the reform of the State, to position it so as to take effective and even efficient action, to deploy its resources in such a way as to pave the way for the future. However, after three decades of debate and introduction of reform, we have to admit that serious misgivings remain unresolved as regards the capacity of the French model of a strategy for its State.

The questions concern quite particularly the real capacity of action of the State against a backdrop of europeanisation and globalisation reducing its room for manoeuvre, the necessity of rethinking its system of organisation with a view to effectiveness and, also, its aptitude for reform.

The work draws conclusion from the French experience on the basis of a shared diagnosis and pulling no punches, mobilising the knowledge of experts, practitioners and pundits from various fields of competence to culminate in recommendations for the future, seeking to make good the shortfall in the French model.

The contributions in the work are structured in 4 sections and twenty chapters giving different yet convergent explanations. They are penned by economists, policy-makers, senior civil servants or directors of major organisations drawn together by the wealth of the CIRIEC network to cross-pollinate discussion on the current situation and to map out what could be a new concept of the State strategy to tackle the many changes in our societies.

1.3 International CIRIEC Conference in Paris

This conference was held on 25 February 2015 at the Ministry of Economy and Finance Centre de conférences Pierre Mendès-France.

Theme: "The Future of the Public Enterprise: place, role and governance of the public enterprise in the roll-out of strategic innovation and economic development policies".

Some 250 participants from 15 countries attended this conference.

The government was represented by Michel SAPIN, Minister of Finance and Public Accounts, and by Carole DELGA, Secretary of State responsible for Trade and Artisan Activities, Consumption and Social and Solidarity Economy. Mention may also be made of the presence of leaders of public enterprises, among whom Louis GALLOIS, invited in the capacity of *grand témoin*.

All speakers greeted the rehabilitation of the public enterprise and stressed the relevance and modernity of its response to citizens' needs.

Two publications of results of international and French scientific works were distributed:

Public Enterprises Today: Missions, Performance and Governance - Learning from Fifteen Cases / Les entreprises publiques aujourd'hui : missions, performances, gouvernance - Leçons de quinze études de cas led by professor Luc BERNIER (CIRIEC-Canada)

L'internationalisation des missions d'intérêt général par les organisations publiques - Réalités d'aujourd'hui et perspectives led by professor Philippe BANCE (CIRIEC-France).

1.4 Symposium "Let's grow old together! Issues and places"

This symposium, organised by CIRIEC-France, Galilée.sp and AD-PA, with the support of BPCE, MGEN, Groupe OFI, MASFIP and MUTLOG, was held on 23 October 2015.

Placed under the high patronage of Laurence ROSSIGNOL, Secretary of State responsible for the Family, Children, the Elderly and Autonomy, this event was a big success, attracting more than 150 guests.

Two round tables were held on the themes:

- The greying of the French: what adjustment of society?
- What accommodation for the elderly?

Attention was drawn to the worsening of the material and financial conditions in which the more elderly are living and the inadequacies of the law now in the process of preparation.

The end of this event was marked by the conferment of three CIGAL Prizes for the best dissertations of students in the health and medical-social sectors.

1.5 The monthly e-journal

The monthly e-journal of CIRIEC-France, " Brèves ", was designed to give an account of the activities of the French section and of those of CIRIEC International, to offer information on CIRIEC events and publications and to forge links with other organisations and to stimulate exchange of views.

The " Brèves " are distributed monthly to over 2 000 email addresses.

To keep in line with the calling and approaches of CIRIEC in favour of all forms of economy serving the general interest, the publication, very much social-economy, will be rebalanced to the public economy side.

2. Perspectives 2016-2017

The present context does not bode well and even gives cause for concern: a protracted economic and social crisis, a more worrying geopolitical situation, a probable political instability in Europe. At the same time we are witnessing a radical change of economic models with the coming of digital and, amid the battering ram blows of the digital giants, the famous GAFAM.

Such is the context that now has to be taken into account in order to develop the work programme of CIRIEC-France, thus fitting in with the strategic plan of CIRIEC International. Now more than ever, the recurrent theme of CIRIEC-France must be that of economic models that serve the general interest and that are capable of facing today's societal, environmental challenges, not to mention that of sustainable development.

- On the public economy side we must take account of the considerable development of the local public economy after decentralisation. The development of public-private partnerships has created a context of mix of species between public action in favour of the general interest and private action in favour of the shareholder, with all the potential risks of conflict of interest that this involves. In parallel, there is always the matter of reappropriation of public services and the governance of common assets after many years of privatisation and deregulation.
- On the social economy side numerous researches are available, from CIRIEC and many other organisations also engaged with the subject. It will be necessary, in particular, to consider additional any action that might be taken: observatory of practices, measures of distinctive characters, comparison of notes, etc. There is a general consensus that, the challenges to be faced by enterprises claiming membership of the social economy to stand apart of the pursuit-of-profit economy include those of democratic governance and functioning, local and regional rootedness and proximity to the beneficiaries, ethics and management

practices, allocation of profit and loss, ... We must also be especially circumspect as regards the development of the social entrepreneurship now recognised by the law on the SSE. Among the challenges facing the SSE, there are also the new economy forms called 'sharing' or 'collaborative'. The social and solidarity economy will no doubt be concerned soon enough by this structuring development.

- Besides the works of the scientific commissions it seems necessary:
 - one, to measure the results of university research off against local realities and to see how that research may be usefully incorporated in public policy and in forms of operation of the denizen enterprises of the public economy and the social economy;
 - two, setting out from the research requirements collected from bodies and sectors or assigned by public authorities, to put out calls for projects on the themes thus defined.
- It will thus be necessary to position CIRIEC-France as a specific actor in research on the general economic interest and the management of the common good without opposing the social economy, public action and public policies in their national and territorial aspects but, rather, by working on the 'fit' and synergies between these areas for the greater benefit of the general interest.

This would seem to argue the case for:

- one, expanding the circle of researchers. It is necessary to build bridges with the universities in which the chairs in social economy or public action are created. Joining the Réseau Inter-universitaire de l'Economie Sociale et Solidaire (RIUESS) is a good opportunity to forge new links.
- two, looking for partnerships, without spreading ourselves too thin, with the public authority by promoting, where possible, the idea of another form of public-private partnership favouring the non-commercial side, and with the structures sharing the same objectives and values in the areas of public action and the social economy. The partnership with the association GALILEE.SP is running smoothly and allows us to combine our respective actions. It will be pursued, among other things by the joint organisation of a new symposium in early 2017 around "*Bien vieillir avec le numérique*". CIRIEC-France also has a close partner in the Institut de Coopération Internationale (ICOSI), with which certain complementarities might be turned to better account, each with its own responsibility and close environment. At international level cooperation is in the process of construction between CIRIEC International, the Rencontres du Mont-Blanc (RMB) and Social Economy Europe (SEE), which should also benefit CIRIEC-France. Other partnerships are also possible, not to mention the inter-section joint operations within CIRIEC International.
- Finally, increasing the wherewithal of CIRIEC-France to render the more effective actions for development, coordination of activities, lobbying and communication, at national, European and international level. To

that end it will be necessary to somehow raise the necessary resources and deploy sufficient logistics. However, if we are to hope to obtain the corresponding support, it might be useful to work on the value-added that CIRIEC might bring to the public bodies and to those of the social economy likely to contribute to the financing of research actions and to the support of the functioning of the association. The formalisation of a "college" of reference members is still of topical interest. CIRIEC-France has thus far signed two conventions: one with MGEN and the other with BFM. The first is running to plan, the other has broken down due to a question of change of strategy of its leaders. Contacts being made with the Caisse des Dépôts et Consignation and with the Groupe Banque Populaire. However, after some prospect of concretisation, the MACIF did not respond as hoped to the proposed partnership.

3. Conclusion

The experience of these last years and the context of radical change, led us to expect some adaptations, partially realised in the orientation and implementation of activities:

- Organisation of partnerships with those members who so wish in a contractual setting,
- Search for partnerships with organisations with which we can score complementarities and synergies,
- Policy of presence in national public events of a kind likely to give us forums,
- Cooperation with other national sections of CIRIEC, in particular in French-speaking countries,
- Reinforcement of the means of distribution of information, by updating the website and exploiting the potential of social networks,
- Increase of the number of members and, consequently, of human and financial resources,
- Helping to create new national sections in French-speaking countries, on behalf of CIRIEC international.