

Proposed panel title: Identification, definition and evaluation of the Social and solidarity economy

Panel Coordinator:

Marie J. BOUCHARD
Chaire de recherche du Canada en économie sociale
Université du Québec à Montréal
C.P. 8888, succ. Centre-Ville
Montréal (Québec)
Canada H3C 3P8
Tel: +1.514.987.3000-4474
Fax: +1.514.987.6913
bouchard.marie@uqam.ca

Panel Members:

Marie J. BOUCHARD, Ciriec and Université du Québec à Montréal
Rafael CHAVES, Ciriec and University of Valencia;
Roger SPEAR, Ciriec and Open University
Nadine RICHEZ-BATTESTI, Ciriec et LEST-Université de la Méditerranée

Major theme: Social economy and solidarity-based economy

Panel theme:

Over the recent twenty years, the social and solidarity-based economy (SSE) has increasingly become a topic interest in all parts of the world. Given its organizational characteristics, its institutional rules, and its particular relationships with the State and the market, the SSE constitutes a specific sector which should be recognized and distinguished from others (Defourny and Monzón Campos, 1992; Defourny, 2001; Evers and Laville, 2004). Nevertheless it remains a difficult sector to delineate, covering an extremely wide range of views and practices (Lévesque and Mendell, 2004). The criteria for including or excluding certain types of organizations or activities differ from one study to another. The definitions and what is covered vary from one country or region to another. The evaluation methods are not constant from one institutional context to another. It can be said that the methodologies and indicators specific to the SSE are not yet well recognized, whether from a political or a scientific standpoint (Bouchard, 2004). This panel looks at the identification, the definition and the evaluation of the social and solidarity economy from an international perspective.

1st Paper:

Authors

Marie J. BOUCHARD, Ciriec and Université du Québec à Montréal
Cyrille FERRATON, Institut des sciences de l'homme CNRS
Valérie MICHAUD, Université du Québec à Montréal
Damien ROUSSELIÈRE, Université de Grenoble 2

Address

Marie J. BOUCHARD
Chaire de recherche du Canada en économie sociale
Université du Québec à Montréal

C.P. 8888, succ. Centre-Ville
Montréal (Québec)
Canada H3C 3P8
Tel: +1.514.987.3000-4474
Fax: +1.514.987.6913
bouchard.marie@uqam.ca

Title : Are Third Sector Organizations more Sustainable? A Longitudinal and Comparative Approach to Measuring the Social and Solidarity Economy

Abstract:

Because of the various definitions of the social and solidarity based economy (SSE), it is difficult to follow the evolution of the SSE for statistical purposes. Rather than arguing that one definition is better than another or suggesting yet again another definition, we argue that the SSE can be looked at through a wide lens, offering different depths of fields depending on which portion of the picture interests most the observer. So far, studies that portray the SSE only capture parts of it. The voluntary non-profit sector has been captured by the Johns Hopkins projects (Hall et al., 2005). Two satellite accounts manuals have been developed, one for the non-profit institutions (United Nations, 2003), and another for the market social economy – mutuals and co-operatives (Barea and Monzón, 2006). Studies were recently conducted on social enterprises (Nyssens, 2006; Spear and Bidet, 2005). Definitions and methodologies vary from one initiative to another, showing for the specific needs or choices made. None, however, has beforehand defined for statistical purposes an inclusive population of SSE organizations, covering both the market and the non-market SSE. Our database project aims to collect and analyse data on the SSE organisations in Quebec and follow their evolution over time. Two principal ideas are brought forth by this approach. 1) The first is that the SSE organizations can be distinguished from non-SSE organizations by empirical criteria. 2) The second is that the economic activities of the SSE organizations can be classified in a unique classification system. Each of these ideas offers, when brought together, a new tool for portraying the SSE. The Information System on the Social Economy Organizations (ISSEO) of the Canada Research Chair on the Social Economy is based on two conceptual pillars, a qualification system of organizations and a classification system of economic activities. The ISSEO is formatted in a way to be scalable to other regions and to undertake longitudinal follow ups. In the first part we expose the methodology of the ISSEO. In the second, we present empirical results of a recent research conducted in the Montreal Region over a population of some 4000 SSE establishments. The results suggest that some types of data are more appropriate than others to undergo a longitudinal study of the relative sustainability of the SSE.

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2nd Paper:

Authors: **Rafael CHAVES**, Ciriec and University of Valencia; José Luis MONZON, Ciriec and University of Valencia

Address:

Rafael CHAVES
IUDESCOOP – Research Institute for Social Economy
University of Valencia
Campus dels Tarongers, s/n
46.022 Valencia (Spain)

Tel : +34 963828437

Fax : + 34 963828492

Email : Rafael.Chaves@uv.es

Title: Economía Social: La auto identificación del tercer sector europeo con un concepto

Keywords: Economía Social, Third sector, Europe, concepts, national accounts, mapping

Language: French, Spanish

Abstract:

En un contexto de multiplicación de políticas dirigidas al tercer sector (economía social) y de creciente atención por parte de la sociedad civil y del mundo académico hacia esta realidad social y económica, el Comité Económico y Social Europeo encargó hace dos años la elaboración de un estudio.

Los objetos principales de este estudio eran, en primer lugar, poner en perspectiva con otras concepciones afines o alternativas el concepto de economía social dominante en Europa, en segundo lugar, aprehender su grado de aceptación en los 25 países miembros de la Unión, valorando especialmente el grado de autoidentificación del propio sector con el concepto, y en

tercer lugar conocer las dimensiones cuantitativa, jurídica y de tratamiento en las políticas públicas de esta realidad.

La presente contribución pretende ofrecer una síntesis de los resultados de este estudio

3rd Paper

Author: **Roger SPEAR**, Ciriec and Open University

Address:

Roger SPEAR
Open University
Faculty of Technology/ Cooperative Research Unit
Walton Hall UK
Milton Keynes Mk& 6AA
United Kingdom
Tél: +44.1908.65054
Fax: +44.1908.652175
Email: r.g.spear@open.ac.uk

Title: Resource dependency: The evaluation of the SSE in the UK

There are many different types of evaluation. But evaluative frameworks are becoming increasingly elaborated: accountancy frameworks to include social/environmental accounting; public sector priorities now objectified and measurable with advent of NPM. Thus social economy organisations are increasingly required to play this game. But the way they need to play it is conditioned by the sector they operate within and the governance systems that operate therein; and taking a resource dependency view, by the resources that they are most concerned with acquiring.

The structure of paper is as follows: in the next section it reviews the changing and encroaching nature of evaluative frameworks. It then goes onto examine some different contexts and the governance systems operating therein; in Section 4 it examines how different social economy evaluative frameworks can best be utilised by social economy organisations. The paper concludes in Section 5.

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4th Paper:

Authors: **Nadine RICHEZ-BATTESTI**, Ciriec et LEST-Université de la Méditerranée, Bernard EME, CLERSE-IFRESI-Lille1; Laurent FRAISSE, LISE-Paris; François ROUSSEAU, CRG-École Polytechnique; Hélène TROUVÉ, Matisse-Paris 1

Address:

Nadine RICHEZ-BATTESTI
LEST
Université de la Méditerranée
11, rue Rodolphe Pollack
13001 Marseille
France
nrichezbattesti@wanadoo.fr

Title: Évaluer l'ESS en France : bilan sociétal-utilité sociale et épreuve identitaire
Evaluating the social and solidarity-based economy in France: societal balance sheet-social utility and identity trial

Abstract:

Les questions d'évaluation émergent tardivement en France et *a fortiori* en direction de l'Economie Sociale et Solidaire (ESS). L'intérêt pour l'évaluation se développe dans un contexte particulier, caractérisé par un changement progressif dans le mode de régulation et dans le mode de gouvernance des politiques publiques et des entreprises, selon des configurations qui apparaissent encore non stabilisées. L'accélération du processus de décentralisation, les transformations des politiques publiques et l'extension des procédures marchandes dans une conception étroite de la concurrence, l'inscription de la Responsabilité sociale des entreprises (RSE) dans la loi, sont autant de facteurs qui viennent percuter la question de l'évaluation de l'ESS. Elle s'est principalement déployée dans les 15 dernières années autour des questions d'utilité sociale et de bilan sociétal.

Nous nous proposons d'apporter un éclairage analytique, en lien avec la théorie des conventions, sur les usages sémantiques des notions de bilan sociétal et d'utilité sociale et sur leur opérationnalisation au cours de ces quinze dernières années. L'objectif de l'évaluation consiste-t-

il à construire un instrument de signalisation visant la légitimation des pratiques d'ESS ou un instrument de régulation publique des activités présageant la normalisation des pratiques ?

Abstract :

In France, the interest for evaluation develops in a context which is characterized by a progressive change of the mode of regulation and the mode of governance of public policies and enterprises, according to configurations which appear as not stabilized yet. The acceleration of the decentralization process, transformations of public policies and extension of market procedures in a narrow conception of competition, and the fact that elements of corporate social responsibility (CSR) were enacted as law all concur to raise the question of the evaluation of the social and solidarity-based economy (*économie sociale et solidaire*, or ESS). We have focused on societal balance sheet and social utility. Our goal is thus to shed an analytical light on the operationalization of the notions of social utility and societal balance sheet and on their semantic and strategic use. Is the goal of such evaluations to design a "signalization tool" aiming at the legitimization of SSE practices, or a tool of public regulation of activities, foreboding the normalization of practices?

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