

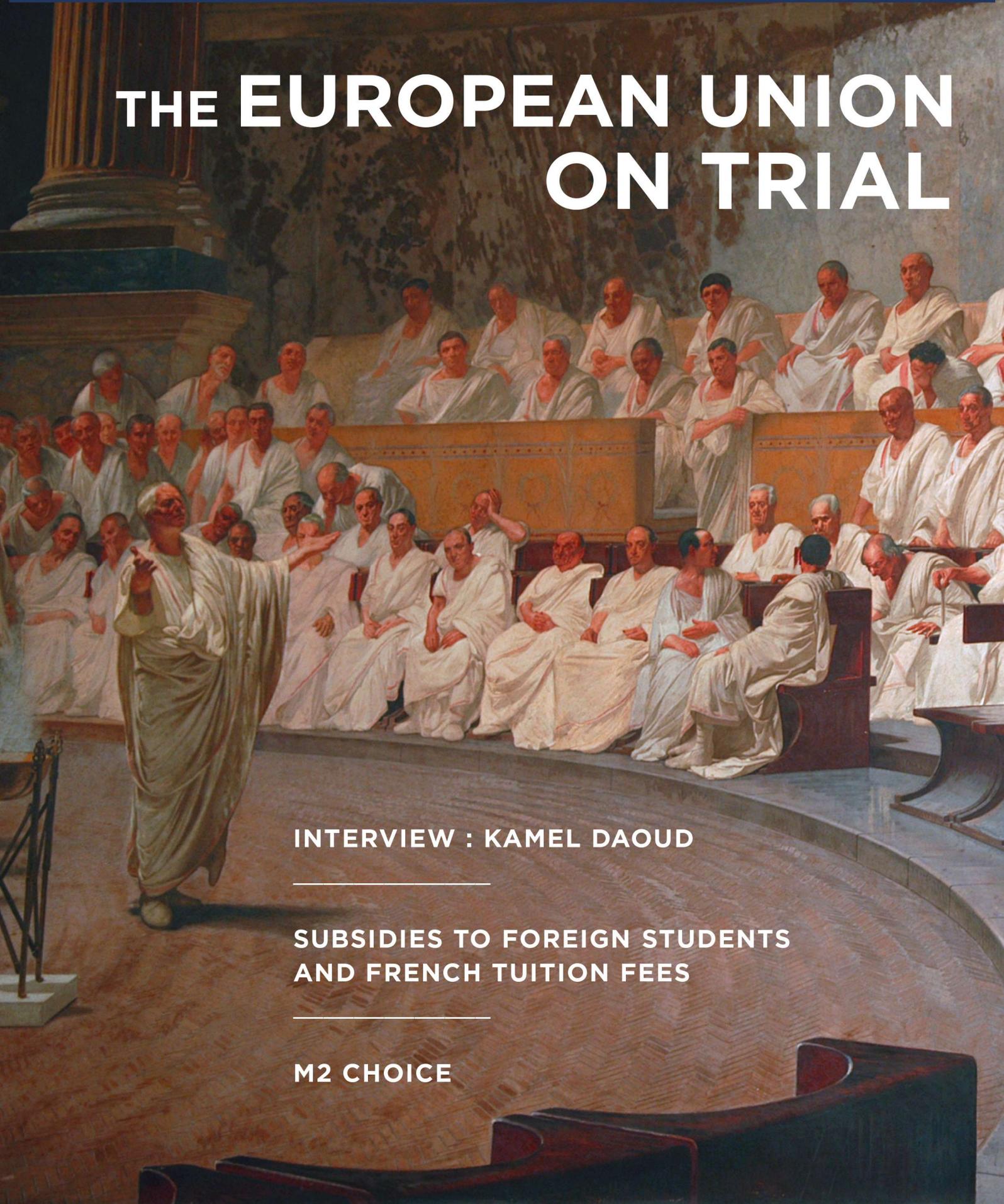
The TSEconomist

Student Magazine

Issue # 21

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THE EUROPEAN UNION ON TRIAL



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SUBSIDIES TO FOREIGN STUDENTS
AND FRENCH TUITION FEES

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The TSEconomist is a magazine by the students and for the students. It is thus open to all, and every contribution is highly appreciated!

Send us your thoughts and feedback, attend one of our weekly meetings, volunteer to cover a Business Talk and interview a speaker, write to us or join the team as a board member, proofreader or designer!

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Time to say goodbye...

Dear readers,

Welcome to the 21st issue of the TSEconomist! On behalf of the whole team, I hope you enjoy this interesting and controversial issue.

Controversial is an appropriate term for the range of our articles. First up, we have professor Isis Durrmeyer explaining her current research in estimating the effect of taxes on carbon emissions. With the “gilets jaunes” movement being active since October 2018, it is important to have a better understanding of the economic impact of an environmental public policy.

This issue’s Spotlight articles center around the European Union, with a particular focus on populism. Our four articles target diverse but interconnected topics. The first article covers the way populism works today with an “always online” world, before moving on to a side of Brexit that is rarely discussed: the EU’s official language if the United Kingdom leaves the union. Our third article delves into the measures the EU will need to take on in order to address the issue of plastic use, before our final article on the Euro Zone: is it an optimal monetary zone? Check out the Spotlight section and I assure you that you will have interesting opinions to share with your friends.

As in every end-of-year issue, our On Campus section focuses on current and former M2 students and their experience of each of the different masters TSE has to offer. You can find the answer to questions you may be asking yourself: “What was the most challenging aspect of your chosen master”, “What were your favourite classes?” or “What are you up to now?” and “Which skills, acquired from studying at the TSE, have you found useful?” for the alumni. If you are in M1 and still undecided about what M2 to apply for next year, this section is a must-read.

This is the last issue for some of the members, including the board. I personally want to thank Gökçe, Joël, Valérie, and Veera for being the best board partners I could have wished for. I also want to thank all of the M2 members who are starting their professional life in April, and wish them the best in their new adventures. For the new board, good luck – there is an important responsibility of keeping up the high quality of the magazine, and I don’t doubt that you will do a great job.



José Alfonso Muñoz Alvarado
Editor-in-Chief

... but not like Brexit

The last seven years have seen the development of a magazine that is always eager to contribute to campus life. The magazine now reaches TSE’s alumni across Europe; the teaching awards and the public lectures have become characteristic events of each year at TSE. We are eager to keep on the hard work and, in particular, to keep the commitment and good will that has always characterised the magazine and its members.

As the current editorial board finishes their time at TSE, I want to thank them for all of their work and the enthusiasm they have brought to the magazine. For all our members that are either going to enter a professional life or go into an exchange program, I wish you all the best. The magazine is very thankful to you for your work. You will always be part of the wonderful TSEconomist family.

Coming in as the new executive board of the TSEconomist is a challenging role that Rose, Thomas, Arthur, and myself are eager and excited to take on. The energy and ideas coming from new members have always been one of the main drivers of the magazine. I highly encourage anyone with new ideas or topics they would like to see discussed in the magazine to contact us and become part of the team. I look forward to the next year and everything we will accomplish together.



Nicolás Martínez
Future Editor-in-Chief

The winners and losers of the French 2008 feebate policy

by Isis Durrmeyer

In 2008, the French government introduced a policy taxing cars with high carbon emissions and rebating low carbon emission cars, better known as a feebate policy or bonus-malus écologique. This type of policy is appealing for two reasons: first, because it provides incentives to purchase less polluting cars, and secondly, because it can be designed to be revenue neutral since the revenue collected through the taxes subsidises the rebates.

“It can be designed to be revenue neutral since the revenue collected through the taxes subsidises the rebates.”

In a recent paper, I conduct a quantitative evaluation of this policy, with a particular focus on its distributional effects: it is particularly relevant in this case to identify the winners and losers of the policy. I also analyse the effect of this policy, which is based on carbon emissions, on other local pollutants like particulate matter or nitrogen oxide. By nature, a policy that targets carbon emissions favours diesel cars, which consume higher levels of emissions of nitrogen oxide and particulate matter than petrol cars. Particulate matter and nitrogen oxide are known to have a direct impact on air quality and hazardous effects on health. While carbon emissions have a global impact, these local pollutants' emissions raise the question of distributional impacts of the feebate policy in terms of health effects.

To measure these effects, I build a structural model of market equilibrium for the automobile industry. This implies estimating the supply and demand for the different car models using data on car characteristics and sales, which can then be used to simulate what the market would have looked like had there been no feebate policy in 2008. Comparing the observed market equilibrium with the counterfactual one, I can thus deduce the policy's causal effect. Relying on a structural model is especially useful because some outcomes of interest cannot be observed directly, but can be expressed in terms of the model parameters. This is the case for car manufacturers' profits and consumer surplus.

A notable challenge in modeling this market and being able to distinguish the winners and losers of this policy is to incorporate a large dimension of heterogeneity in individuals' preferences for cars and their attributes. I make the assumption that individual heterogeneity in preferences is related to observable demographic characteristics, and leverage the correlation between composition of car sales and demographic characteristics at the municipality level. For instance, observing that the cars purchased in rural areas tend to be more fuel efficient than in urban areas reveals that individuals in rural areas tend to drive more, and are thus likely to be more sensitive to fuel costs than those living in urban areas. I also find a positive correlation between horsepower and income, which can be observed from the sales in wealthier municipalities.

“By nature, a policy that targets carbon emissions favours diesel cars.”

On the supply side, I model the competition between car manufacturers and their pricing strategies, with and without the feebate policy. I do not model the choice of car characteristics and consider they are identical regardless of the regulatory environment. The marginal cost of each car model is estimated under the assumption that the car prices in 2008 are the optimal prices under the feebate policy. In the simulation of the market equilibrium absent the feebate policy, I predict prices and sales for each car model since both are jointly determined by demand and supply.

What is important here is that when setting its prices, the firm anticipates that consumers get a rebate or pay a tax and take up a part of the rebate or the tax. How much is left to the consumer depends on the competition of the market and the market power of car manufacturers.

In the end, the feebate policy improved consumer surplus and firms' profits, surpassing the 223 million euros it cost in 2008. I find that the feebate caused a decrease in average carbon

“The feebate policy improved consumer surplus and firms’ profits, surpassing the 223 million euros it cost in 2008”

emissions of 1.56%, while average emissions of local pollutants – carbon monoxide, hydrocarbon, NO_x, and PM – all increased. Emissions of local pollutants and carbon dioxide, however, increased once converted into annual tons. The increase in annual carbon emissions can be explained not only by the higher share of diesel cars, which implies more kilometers are driven, but also by the increase in the number of cars purchased. Indeed, the cars with low carbon emissions, which are already cheap cars, become even cheaper because of the rebates. This means that individuals who were not initially buying a car do buy a car, at least in my model. Nonetheless, including the cost of carbon and local pollutant emissions using standard levels still implies that the policy is globally welfare improving, with an estimated net benefit of 124 million euros.

“The feebate could have been made redistributive if it were to be compensated by a proportional to income tax.”

Shifting the focus to the impact on income distribution, the main insight is that the feebate favoured the middle income category at the expense of low and high income classes. Moreover, given that the policy was not revenue neutral and contributed to a net deficit, the feebate could have been made redistributive if it were to be compensated by a proportional to income tax.

Clear winners and losers also appear among the car manufacturers. Car manufacturers are typically very specialised in different car segments: French manufacturers specialise in small, fuel-efficient cars, whereas bigger cars are the mainstay of the German car manufacturers. It comes as no surprise that the model points towards PSA and Renault, the two French manufacturers, as the winners of the feebate policy. The feebate policy increased their profits by 3.4% and 4% respectively, a considerably higher gain compared to increase in profits of the total industry (2.1%).

Fiat group, the Italian manufacturer, increased its profits by 6.2% while Volkswagen, a German manufacturer very active on the compact car segment, only increased its profits by 0.3%. The other German manufacturers such as Porsche, BMW, and Mercedes-Daimler, were all severely hurt by this policy.

“The model points towards PSA and Renault, the two French manufacturers, as the winners of the feebate policy.”

Finally, looking at the heterogeneity of the policy effects in terms of emissions of local pollutants, I find that average emissions increased the most in low emission municipalities. The policy generated a decrease in average emissions of local pollutant in some areas, but a high degree of heterogeneity can be observed across the country.

The analysis is concluded by an evaluation of the feebate in terms of redistribution and limitation of local pollutant emissions. The idea is to ask whether it would have been possible to improve consumer surplus, achieve more distribution across individuals, or limit the increase in emissions of local pollutants with the same budget and the same effect on average carbon emissions. In this exercise, I restrict the set of alternative policies to be simple linear feebates with different slopes for rebates and taxes. Interestingly, I find that average consumer surplus cannot be further improved, while there are large potential gains in terms of profits. Alternative feebate schemes could limit the rise in emissions of local pollutants, but the gains are not very large, and the best outcomes for the different pollutants cannot be achieved with a single feebate scheme: this reveals that there is an arbitrage to be made between the various pollutants. ■

“The policy generated a decrease in average emissions of local pollutant in some areas, but a high degree of heterogeneity can be observed across the country.”



From “Dark Continent” to “Sun Continent”:

a story of power

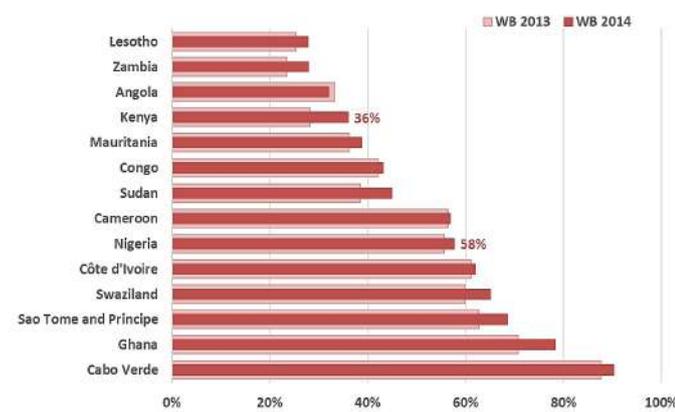
by Rose Mba Mébiame

Africa: a continent full of colours and great potential, yet suffering from being poorly developed. One way to see it is to have a look on the state of the electricity market in Sub-Saharan Africa. While 87% of the world population have access to electricity in 2016, only 42% of Africans have this privilege, thus ranking the continent at the lowest rate in the world, according to the World Bank. Sub-Saharan Africa is particularly affected. This translates into reduced business hours, or ineffective health systems that hardly meet the needs of the population.

reserves of oil. Some of the biggest reserves of coal are to be found in South Africa. Morocco and Algeria have natural gaz. These resources are precious: fossil fuel-based power is the main source of electricity in Africa. Nevertheless, electricity needs are currently not covered. Indeed, most Sub-Saharan countries export those resources. In the case of Nigeria, the biggest African oil producer and Africa’s leading economy, black gold represents 95% of its export revenues, with Asia and Europe as the main recipients. As a consequence, a lack of infrastructure hinders the processing of oil, and the country even has to import its fuel from Europe. In 2016, 40% of Nigerians did not have an access to electricity at all. The rest of the population sometimes had a limited access to it, only for small time slots.

“The lack of refineries, as well as corruption, and bad business schemes for managing those resources explain the actual state of the energy sector.”

Lower Middle Income Countries Electrification Status (World Bank)



Notwithstanding these problems, Africa has great potential in the energy sector because it is abounding with natural resources. The continent may become a leader in sustainable energies in a near future, with the potential to drive tremendous change in Africa’s growth trend, and lead it on a wide development path.

How has Africa’s energy sector come to be in such a crisis? Are sustainable energies a pragmatic strategy or a nourished temporary utopia? What are the challenges Africa needs to face in order to get out of its energy trap? We explore a few ideas in this article.

The Dark Continent has assets that many could be jealous of. Northern, Western and Eastern African countries possess huge

Nigeria is not the only country to struggle to provide an efficient electricity grid. The lack of refineries, as well as corruption, and bad business schemes for managing those resources explain the actual state of the energy sector. Fossil-fuel energy is the costliest source energy to produce. Moreover, lack of investments in the energy sector prevents firms from efficiently exploiting and transporting electricity in the territory. Since 2007, a global average of US\$ 12 billion investment has been made in the sector, which represents only 36% of the estimated need to have an optimal electricity system. Today, governments still remain the main investors in the energy sector. Unfortunately, massive corruption

in some countries has led to a reduction of effective allocated funds. In the 1990s, many countries privatised the energy sector in order to attract private investments. It worked for some countries like Namibia, which was able to lower energy tariffs and to improve efficiency. But for others, high costs of production and transformation led to high prices, creating a gap between the rich and the poor. The latter are not able to afford the installation cost of a basic phase circuit in their home. This ascertainment made by the Forum of Energy Ministers of Africa in 2000 still remains true for most people in rural areas today, who made up 60% of Sub-Saharan Africa's population in 2016. Moreover, providing electricity in isolated areas is seldom profitable, offering firms little incentive to expand their production networks towards people who will not be able to pay.

“Should we encourage investments for a better exploitation of coal, natural gas, and oil, which, in many cases, seem to be more profitable if exported?”

Should we encourage investments for a better exploitation of coal, natural gas, and oil, which, in many cases, seem to be more profitable if exported? There is a double problem. First, those resources are infamous for their gas emissions. Second, there are in finite supply. In addition, some catastrophes like the Probo Koala case in 2006, when a Greek-owned petroleum ship offloaded toxic waste in the port of Abidjan and intoxicated thousands of people, have shown the limits of poorly managed resources.

Sustainable energies are becoming an increasingly important part of the conversation. For some, the idea represents an utopia. For others, a fleeting trend. In spite of diverging opinions, it seems to be a reasonable hope for many, and the only possible escape from the energy crisis. Do we have reasons to believe them?

One could say oil and coal are being dethroned by sun and water. Sometimes called the sun continent, Africa has the highest solar irradiance on earth, with the Sahara desert breaking records in daily sunshine periods. Countries like Morocco have already begun to exploit this major asset. Near the city of Ouarzazate, a giant solar farm has emerged, covering 1.4 million square metres of yellow sand in 2016. The aim of the Northern kingdom is to fulfil 52% of its electricity needs through solar power by 2030.

“One could say oil and coal are being dethroned by sun and water.”

Africa is also home to the most powerful rivers in the world. One of them, the Congo River, is the second largest river in the world by its volume discharge after the Amazon. Its Inga Falls, situated in the Democratic Republic of Congo, currently hosts several projects that are all part of the Grand Inga project. The dam aims at providing cheaper energy to a large part of Africa, allowing industries to take off. For instance, a significant part of the produced energy is destined to be sent to South Africa. Initiated in

the early 2010s, the project has received a joint bid from a Chinese and a Spanish company in 2018 to cover the estimated cost of US\$13 billion for the recent project expansion.

Less covered by the media, the wind power market is also expanding. Mainly produced in South Africa thanks to the REIPPPP project launched in 2011, this source of energy promises to be increasingly exploited in the future, as there are important coastal winds in Eastern Africa.

“Potential is not enough.”

There are many other examples of this kind, such as the geothermal energy in the East African Rift. According to the World Bank, renewable energies represent 70% of total final energy consumption in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2015, mainly because of improvised mini-grids in rural areas, which is still not sufficient to cover a 24-hours-a-day access to electricity.

Potential is not enough. Business schemes have to be improved for Africa to get out of poverty. Public-private partnerships, as recommended by a World Bank report in 2017, have to be implemented to better regulate the sector, incentivise firms, serve the public interest, and encourage private investments. If oil-producing countries need oil for their trade balance to avoid sinking into deficit, governments have to favour alternative energies to provide electricity to their population. Regional cooperation can also be a viable option: an example is the West African Power Pool (WAPP), which was founded in 2000 and gathers 14 countries with the common goal of building a common market for electricity. This creates a bigger and thus more attractive market for investors. The Central Africa Power Pool, Eastern Africa Power Pool, Southern Africa Power Pool and COMELEC – in Northern Africa – have also been implemented, thus dividing Africa into five main markets.

Investments in both non-renewable and renewable energies are already increasing, in particular because of the recent Chinese foreign policy concerning Africa. Electrification is on an upward trend since public policies are more directed towards the common good. Having said that, there remain many efforts to be made. The Dark Continent could become greener, more active, and healthier – the “Sun Continent” could one day be a more fitting name. ■



SPOTLIGHT



**THE
EUROPEAN
UNION
ON TRIAL**

Populism

in the internet age

by Arthur Dinhof

After decades of promise, the internet is finally starting to transform politics, just not in the way that we would have expected. In the '90s, digital prophets were riding a wave of optimism for our online future. The internet presented the chance to bring people together and to create e-citizens, who are more informed and open-minded. However, now, the internet is an overwhelming mess of contradictory facts and claims, misinformation, and propaganda. So, the main question becomes, who benefits from this, and in particular what role does populist politics have to play in the current chaos of the internet world.



In the internet world, Twitter is a news agency where populists can claim their hostile chants of “fake news”. In fact, there are no longer dominant information suppliers, with e-citizens not even paying attention to those that are propagating the message anymore. The consequence is that all sources now compete equally, regardless of their reputation or their factual basis. In her essay, “The weakness of truth”, the French philosopher Myriam Revault d'Allonnes touches on a structural change between truth and lies, saying that we are in a ‘post-truth era’. In this era, facts become a matter of opinion and the ground-truth narrative that allowed a discussion of the world common to all of us is threatened. Populist politicians who play with duelling narratives and public opinion are the primary beneficiaries of this new era where the truth becomes secondary.

In the internet world, 40% of the population has a Facebook account, and this is a tool for populists’ opinions to appear as having a consensus. The societal impact of information is based on how many users are receptive to it. Research shows that by repeating ideas enough, listeners start to believe it. In 2016, Donald Trump’s digital campaigners understood this new structure of information was spreading. They bought domain names en masse, added pro-Trump articles on them, and used ‘bots’ - an automated account that is programmed to look like people - to leverage information. The goal of this operation was to make Trump and his ideas appear as having consensus on social media. Then, the internet became a strong instrument in a political campaign, as the one of Trump, to legitimise artificially populist opinions.

In the internet world, social media seem to be linked with populist’s aims, which are to destroy our collective institutions. In his book “The Revolt of the Public”, Martin Gurri proposes that the ultimate effect of social media is undermining collective credibility around public institutions, such as the government or the press. Populist politicians benefit and exacerbate this undermining. In France, for example, Marine Le Pen, the leader of the French far-right party, continues to stir up the idea that France’s leaders govern against citizens’ interests, and against the country itself. When Emmanuel Macron signed the Aix-la-Chapelle treaty, Le Pen claimed that the president was looking to cede Alsace to Germany. In reality, the treaty’s aim was to reinforce transnational cooperation. This situation shows that successful politicians may be now those who stir up various forms of hysteria and populist rhetoric, rather than the ones who promote a collective project to improve our society.

However, in the internet world, political power grows out of the screen of a smartphone and populists could not be the only ones who can benefit from it. We can still hope that this world would give us a new generation of political talent, a new way of political commitment, or even new forms of exercising politics. ■



English after Brexit

By Robert Lindner

As the reality of Brexit approaches at a fast pace (at least, it seemed so by the time this article was written), the European Union faces many troubling issues to be solved. One of the less known – and arguably less important as well – is of linguistic nature: the EU’s most commonly used language will lose almost all of its native speakers. English will then be spoken as a first language only by most of the country’s 4.5 million Irishmen and around half a million Maltese. That is roughly one percent of the entire EU population.

With the EU having a colourful history of bitter disputes over its use of languages, this is a fact looking for trouble. Within days of the Brexit vote, politicians from continental Europe proposed to knock English out from the list of official languages. Theresa May, the current British Prime Minister even had to dismiss reports claiming that Brexit negotiations would be held entirely in French. Nonetheless, are these suggestions realistic motions or mere cravings for long lost power?

Today the European Union has 24 official languages, which can be used in parliament and for official correspondence. Three of them, English, French, and German, are used for work at the commission. In its day-to-day reality, however, they are not equal. German is barely spoken whereas English dominates being used in most meetings and for most reports.

“Two thirds of EU-citizens deem English to be a useful language compared to only one sixth for German or French.”

That has not always been the case. Before the entrance of the UK to the European Economic Community, the EU’s predecessor, in 1973, only French and German had been the club’s official languages. Nonetheless, becoming an official language did not help much to stop the domination of French. Only in the 1990s, English started to become important with the admission of the Scandinavian countries. They have always been much closer culturally and linguistically to Great Britain than France, and there-

fore have a greater inclination to discuss in the corresponding language. The eastern enlargement of the EU in 2004 and 2007, as well as the growing global dominance of English, finally put it in the place it holds today in the union.

Is the exit of the UK likely to change this? Among the EU’s citizens, English is much more commonly used than the other contenders are. According to Eurobarometer, 51% of EU-citizens were able to converse in English in 2012. French, although frequently used by bureaucrats and diplomats, was spoken by only 26% of the EU total population, even below German’s 32%.

Anyway, the future seems to belong to English. Two thirds of EU-citizens deem English to be a useful language compared to only one sixth who hold this belief for German or French. Additionally, over 80% of primary school children are taught English whereas other languages are usually brought in much later, if at all. Part of the rise of English can be explained by the relatively few grammatical hurdles learners face in early stages.



Setting up simple conversations is easier than in most other ‘natural’ languages with plenty of conjugations and declinations. The more difficult parts come up only later, for example, the often seemingly arbitrary pronunciation. Nevertheless, if someone has already made it to that point she is unlikely to give up.

This, of course, does not have to imply that the Union’s parliament and administration follow these trends, especially because the Union has, from time to time, struggled to be seen as down-to-earth and close to its citizens. Still, the power balance in the EU has shifted in the last 30 years. The traditional Franco-German alliance has lost its clout due to the massive enlargement of the EU and the internal rifts. For example, during the Euro crisis when France ‘led’ the southern alliance of Mediterranean countries, pushing for more spending and a devaluation of the Euro. On the opposite side, Germany represented the northern countries advocating for austerity measures. It is unlikely that other countries just let these two have their cake and eat it. Ireland and Malta want to protect ‘their’ English and other large countries could seize the opportunity to advertise their national languages as well.

“With the rise of global English, the need for an artificial international language has strongly deteriorated.”

In fact, even within Germany and France, not everyone promotes their own language with absolute vigour. Although a supporter of the French language, Emmanuel Macron likes to spice it up with English terms such as ‘bottom-up’. Among the first ones to refute suggestions of using less English was the German commissioner Günther Oettinger. Ironically, when he was initially sent to Europe in 2010, his poor command of English was largely ridiculed by the German media.

Furthermore, the biggest advantage of English is not even internal but external. It is the language of a globalised world. It is the mostly spoken language worldwide, over half of all websites on the internet are in English, all aviation communication is conducted in English and all major economics journals are published in English. Even here at TSE most courses are taught in

English. Considering this power, it is doubtful whether the EU can afford to rely on a rather inward looking language like German when the rest of the world uses one global language.

Finally, the loss of most of its native speakers does not have to be a bad thing for the significance of the English language in the EU. Instead, it could benefit from posing as a ‘neutral’ language. If an Austrian and a Latvian speak German, the former is more likely to feel comfortable while doing so. If they instead speak English, no one can build on a natural advantage.

It could pose as a modern-day Esperanto. This language was designed in Eastern Europe at the end of the 19th century to promote understanding between different groups of the population by using a neutral language. It borrows from Romanic, Germanic, as well as Slavic languages, and uses straightforward declinations and conjugations without many irregularities. Estimates of speakers range from half a million to two millions. It is tough business to create a new language from scratch and compete against existing and deep-rooted contenders, so these figures should not necessarily be seen as failure.

Why did Esperanto never really take off? Like many international projects, it flourished before the first-world war and had a revival in the interwar period. Many 20th century regimes, however, did not like its cosmopolite spirit and therefore tried to suppress it. After the wars, it lacked the political and intellectual support required to reach the critical mass a language demands. Later, with the rise of global English, the need for an artificial international language has strongly deteriorated. At the beginning of the 21st century, Europe seems close to reach the goal of having a neutral language for international communication set by the Esperanto’s creator L.L. Zamenhof. Only that it is not Esperanto but English.

Being a neutral language also offers other opportunities. No longer under the watchful eyes of British language puritans, English could flourish and create its own style: Euro-English. Whereas a cynic might decry the downfall of culture and civilisation, one could also embrace these new developments. In reality, the first steps towards this new language have already been made. The term ‘handy’, for example, is recognised by eurocrats more often as the slightly bizarre German word for ‘mobile phone’ rather than the original English meaning of ‘easy to use’.

Overall, we do not have to worry about the position of the English language in the EU after Brexit. It is likely to dominate further even though it might develop its own style, as it is no longer being under the protection of the United Kingdom. ■



Europe's response to plastic issues

By Noémie Martin

Over the past fifty years, global production of plastic has multiplied by twenty, and so has its waste. Since you began to read these words, between one and a half and four kilogrammes of plastic waste has ended up in the oceans, representing approximately between five and thirteen million tonnes of plastic leakage every year. At this speed, scientists say that by 2050 there could be more plastic than fish in the oceans. In addition to obvious environmental issues, this could also have an impact on human health. For example, microplastics, tiny pieces of plastic smaller than five millimetres, have been found in the air, drinking water, fish, salt, and honey. By 2030, environmental damages could be valued at twenty-two billion euros.

European citizens generate around twenty-six million tonnes of plastic waste every year. An average of thirty percent of this amount is recycled (this number varies a lot across European countries); the rest is either incinerated or landfilled. A substantial share is sent to third countries to be treated, where different standards apply. Most of this share is shipped to China, a situation that may soon end as China has now banned certain types of foreign plastic waste. Although incineration can be a tempting alternative to landfill, it produces a high amount of CO₂ and destroys raw materials after a very short lifespan. On top of the dependence on fuel extraction for production, plastic's environmental footprint is significant and growing; in fact, its production is expected to double over the next twenty years. What happens with traditional plastic also applies to plastic labelled as biodegradable. The latter actually degrades under very specific conditions that may not be easily met in natural environments and therefore still causes degradations. If other alternatives are available, the share they occupy in the market remains modest. For example, bio-based plastic, plastic made out of carbon dioxide or methane have a lower impact on the environment. Even though they have the same features as traditional plastic, they struggle to expand and to replace it.

Europe is now responding to this plastic crisis by taking several measures, particularly by banning the ten single-use plastics products most frequently found on European beaches and in lost fishing gears, which together account for seventy percent of marine litter. Single-use plastic products such as cigarette butts, balloon sticks, plastic bags, straws, cutlery, and so on, are often used away from home and are thus very difficult to recycle. The Members of the European Commission (MECs) have announced that by 2021, all these products will have to be replaced by non-plastic alternatives. Some of them will be banned immediately since al-

ternatives are already available. MECs also introduced the so-called producer responsibility strategy: producers of cigarette filters, wrappers, and other plastic products will have the obligation to support the waste management cost of these items.

As sixty percent of plastic waste comes from packaging, the European Commission published a report on the "Strategy for plastic in a circular economy". Recyclable or reusable plastic is currently meeting six percent of the total plastic demand; the objective for 2030 set in the report is a hundred percent of plastic packaging composed of this particular type of plastic. That way, a significant amount of waste could be avoided as the raw material could be reused. However, this policy implies a proper waste collection and investment in recycling capacities. Lately, product brands and manufacturers have been reluctant to use recycled plastic because they fear that it could not meet their needs of constant quality, high-volume, and reliable plastic. Therefore, this sector has suffered from uncertain outlets and low profitability. Moreover, the success of such a measure rests upon the goodwill of all the actors of the plastic chain, as mostly non-coercive actions have been announced.

The creation of a virtuous circle for plastic is one solution that Europe chose to implement. In order to limit plastic pollution, would it not be easier to eliminate the problem at the root by directly banning any plastic packaging, which is the main source of plastic waste? However, consumers and brands might not be ready yet for such a drastic step, as this implies making an effort or giving up on a considerable marketing tool. ■



A plastic-throwing dragon was set up in front of the European Commission by the NGO Rethink Plastic.

La Zone Euro est-elle une zone monétaire optimale?

By Sébastien Montpetit

Au sein du continent européen, l'existence de la Zone Euro offre la possibilité d'effectuer des transactions à l'aide d'une devise commune à 19 pays. Avec les récents problèmes des crises de la dette de certains États membres, le scepticisme autour de l'union monétaire s'est accru cette dernière décennie. Cela alimente le débat économique autour des régimes de taux de change.

Les deux options s'offrant à un État, le taux de change fixe ou le taux flottant, présentent chacune leurs avantages et leurs inconvénients. Dans le cas d'un régime de change fixe, les coûts des transactions commerciales ou des investissements sont réduits. Pour des pays qui échangent beaucoup entre eux cela peut être d'une importance considérable. Un second avantage est la facilité pour les agents économiques de faire des prévisions sur les cours de change. Au contraire, l'incertitude autour des fluctuations d'une devise flottante peut s'avérer problématique (réduction des investissements directs et des échanges).

En contrepartie, un État qui adopte un taux de change fixe se voit dans l'obligation d'accumuler des réserves de devises étrangères, en particulier si des forces poussent la monnaie nationale à se déprécier. L'autre problème important est la perte d'indépendance de la politique monétaire, laquelle devient conditionnée au maintien de la stabilité du taux de change.

Dès lors, il semble légitime de se demander si, dans le cas européen, les dix-neuf pays qui ont décidé de passer à l'étape ultime qu'est l'union monétaire tirent vraiment parti de cette intégration monétaire.

Une théorie influente

La théorie économique des zones monétaires optimales (optimum currency areas) a été développée par Robert Mundell, Robert McKinnon et Peter Kenen dans les années 1960. Elle apporte un éclairage intéressant sur les raisons justifiant l'adoption d'une monnaie commune. Essentiellement, cette théorie établit qu'une zone monétaire considérée comme optimale (ZMO) est telle que les coûts des chocs asymétriques sur l'économie y sont minimisés. Par choc asymétrique, on entend ici un facteur externe qui vient affecter différemment deux régions, soit l'une positivement et l'autre négativement. Six critères, trois de nature économique et trois d'ordre politique, permettent d'établir ce qui fait d'une union monétaire une ZMO.

Le premier critère fait référence à la mobilité des travailleurs. Il est développé par Robert Mundell, premier auteur à formuler la notion de ZMO. Au sein des États membres d'une telle union, la facilité de déplacer les facteurs de production permettrait de contrer plus efficacement les chocs asymétriques. Par exemple, la réallocation des facteurs d'un pays où sévit le chômage vers un autre où l'inflation est forte aurait un effet positif pour les deux membres.

“Les membres doivent être en mesure d'accepter les coûts générés par les fluctuations économiques au nom d'une «destinée commune».”

Pour sa part, Robert McKinnon considère que des États très ouverts au commerce et effectuant beaucoup d'échanges entre eux forment une ZMO. Le raisonnement tient au fait que, lorsque deux pays échangent beaucoup, les prix des biens, qu'ils soient domestiques ou étrangers, finissent par devenir équivalents. En d'autres termes, les prix sont plus flexibles de sorte qu'un changement de taux de change n'a presque aucun effet sur la compétitivité. Dans ce cas, l'adoption d'une monnaie commune ne restreint pas vraiment l'indépendance de la politique monétaire.

Le critère établi par Kenen touche quant à lui à la diversification de la production. Son idée peut se résumer assez simplement : une économie qui repose essentiellement sur un unique secteur d'activité serait plus susceptible de souffrir d'un choc asymétrique. L'exemple des pays africains riches en ressources naturelles, au sein desquels l'essentiel de la production repose sur l'extraction de ces ressources, semble être une bonne illustration de ce propos. Une chute du prix du pétrole, affecterait par exemple négativement les membres de l'OPEP alors que les autres pays verraient leurs coûts de transport réduits, créant ainsi un choc asymétrique. Ce choc sera de faible importance dans des États pour lesquels la production s'étend sur un plus large éventail de domaines et dans lesquels l'économie est d'une structure similaire.



Les trois autres critères pour définir une ZMO sont de nature politique et sont proposés par Richard Baldwin et Charles Wiplosz. En premier lieu, les membres de l'union monétaire se doivent de compenser financièrement leurs partenaires lorsqu'ils sont dans le besoin. Autrement dit, les membres connaissant un boom économique inflationniste peuvent transférer des fonds aux pays en récession, fonds qui contribueront à redresser l'économie de ces derniers.

Par ailleurs, il n'existe pas vraiment de manière unique de réagir aux variations soudaines de l'économie. Certains pays vont préférer favoriser les exportateurs en optant pour un taux de change faible alors que d'autres viendront en aide aux consommateurs en haussant leur pouvoir d'achat. Il est donc nécessaire, au sein d'une union monétaire, de faire en sorte que les différents membres s'entendent sur la politique monétaire à adopter.



Enfin, le dernier critère concerne l'intégration politique entre les membres. Si il est normal que les conséquences des chocs économiques (même s'ils sont symétriques) créent des tensions politiques entre les membres, ces derniers doivent toutefois être en mesure d'accepter les coûts générés par les fluctuations économiques au nom d'une « destinée commune ».

La Zone Euro, remplit bien deux de ces six critères (diversification et ouverture) mais semble particulièrement échouer sur le critère relatif à la mobilité des travailleurs. En effet, dans presque tous les pays de l'UE (la Belgique faisant ici cas d'exception), la proportion d'immigrants en provenance d'autres pays membres est faible par rapport au nombre total d'immigrants. C'est donc dire que peu d'Européens profitent de l'opportunité que leur offre le marché commun de se déplacer librement entre les frontières. L'union monétaire ne remplit pas non plus les conditions nécessaires à un système de transfert fiscal adéquat.

Par ailleurs, les critères politiques, moins faciles à évaluer, ne permettent pas de tirer de conclusion tranchée quant aux bénéfices de l'intégration monétaire. C'est justement ce manque de potentiel analytique qui explique pourquoi cette théorie a perdu en popularité dès la fin des années 1980. En particulier, les auteurs du rapport « One Money, One Market » (1990) estiment que les bénéfices de l'intégration monétaire sont fortement sous-estimés par les critères de la théorie des ZMO.

Vers une « nouvelle » théorie des ZMO

Bien que la « vieille » théorie de Mundell, McKinnon et Kenen soit difficile à évaluer, leurs critères restent encore étudiés aujourd'hui. Avec les progrès de l'économétrie et de l'accessibilité des données, certains critères ont pu être testés empiriquement. Une seconde vague d'intérêt pour l'étude de l'union monétaire européenne dans les années 1970 a redirigé le consensus vers les avantages visibles de l'intégration économique du continent.

Tel qu'espéré, l'adoption de la monnaie commune a effectivement conduit à une intensification des échanges commerciaux entre les États membres. Les études sur le sujet tendent à confirmer que les échanges bilatéraux ont crû de 5 à 10% de plus parmi les membres de la Zone Euro que parmi les pays qui n'en font pas partie dans la décennie suivant l'adoption de la devise. Par ailleurs, l'Euro a également stimulé le commerce avec des États

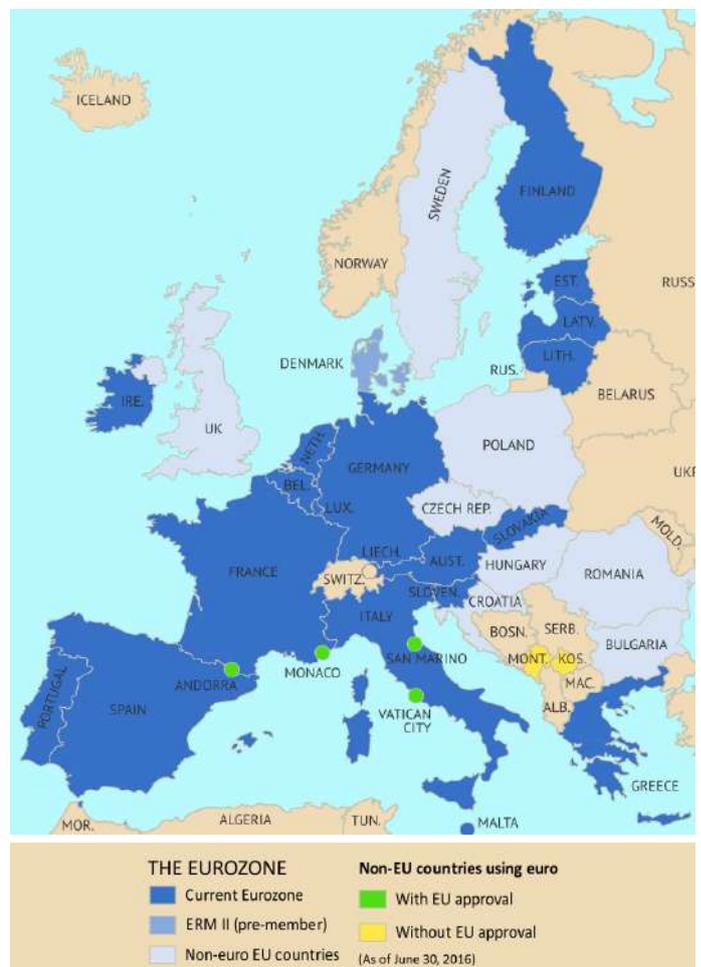
en dehors de la zone.

En termes d'intégration économique, les évidences empiriques démontrent que la hausse des investissements directs étrangers (IDE) et celle du nombre de fusions et d'acquisitions d'entreprises dans la Zone sont attribuables à l'adoption de la monnaie commune. En outre, l'intégration monétaire aurait entraîné une hausse d'environ 50% des IDE dans le secteur manufacturier.

L'un des avantages indéniables de l'existence de l'euro demeure son statut de seconde devise de référence dans le monde. Grâce à l'intérêt de plusieurs pays pour la devise, l'euro a des cours relativement stables et subit donc peu de fluctuations importantes qui pourraient avoir des effets néfastes sur l'investissement. La Banque Centrale Européenne jouit par ailleurs d'une grande crédibilité à l'international et parvient à stabiliser l'inflation dans une région où les situations nationales sont pourtant hétérogènes.



Ainsi, bien que la Zone Euro ne satisfasse pas tous les critères de la théorie des ZMO, elle demeure une union monétaire qui fonctionne et qui a su bénéficier des avantages d'une plus grande intégration économique. Faire partie d'une union monétaire peut donc être bénéfique pour chacun des États Européens. Par ailleurs, ces bénéfices s'observent ailleurs. Prenons l'exemple de la Californie : ce sont probablement les avantages de l'intégration dans la zone monétaire du dollar américain qui expliquent que, malgré une croissance économique différente de celle du reste des États-Unis dans son histoire récente, l'État n'ait jamais vraiment pensé à adopter sa propre devise. Face à la montée des partis « séparatistes » en Europe, il semble ainsi important de rappeler que l'intégration monétaire présente certains avantages auxquels le retour aux monnaies nationales mettrait un terme. ■





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An assessment of the economic costs of organised crime

by Camille Quideau



In 2012, Paolo Pinotti, Professor of Economics in the University of Bocconi, published a paper titled “The economic costs of organized crime: evidence from southern Italy”. He reports on the economic consequences of organised crime, focusing on two regions of southern Italy where the presence of criminal organisations is a relatively recent phenomenon.

Are the econometrics tools used by Paolo Pinotti relevant to assess the

Figure 1: Presence of mafia-type criminal organisations across Italian regions, average over the period 1983-2007



Note: The map shows the presence of organised crime across Italian regions, as measured by the number of cases ex Article 416-bis of the Penal Code (mafia-type criminal organisation) reported by the police to the judiciary authority, every 100,000 inhabitants. The variable is averaged over the period 1983-2007.

impact of Mafia on the economy? Can law enforcement weaken Mafia’s influence?

Through this article, I wish to comment on and discuss the findings presented by Paolo Pinotti.

An assessment of the causal effect of organised crime on the local economy

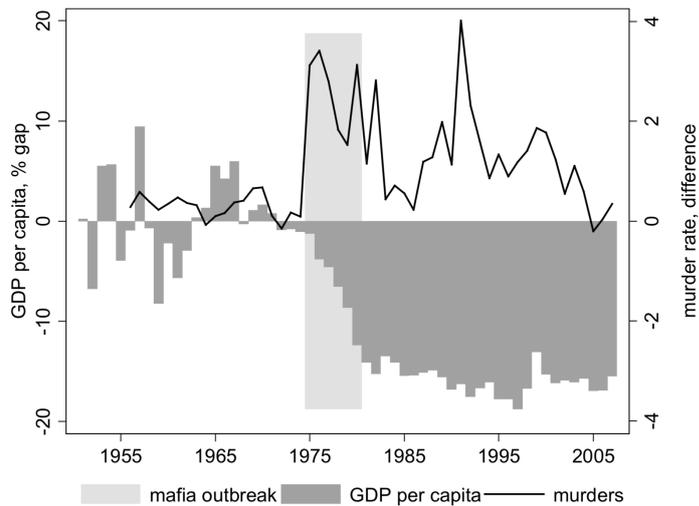
To analyse the effects of organised crime on the economy, Paolo Pinotti uses synthetic control methods to estimate the potential economic performance of no organised crime. In that respect, he succeeds in showing that the advent of organised crime leads to a strong, negative and significant causal effect on GDP per capita in those regions. Although the findings were to be expected, the use of GDP per capita to assess the economy of the concerned regions can still be questioned. One cannot argue that GDP per capita is a strong representative of the overall economic performance of a country since, by definition, the Gross Domestic Product refers to the monetary value of all final goods and services produced within the borders of a country, in a given period of time. If GDP per capita is a little bit more precise than GDP, by offering an average measure of one citizen’s living standards, this indicator remains at a mean value, an average, that can therefore not be trusted. In Italy, organised crime is the Mafia, a peculiar and complex industry which, more than being involved in economic activities, is

also a governance institution. As any other organised crime, the Mafia engages both in legal and illegal operations, from construction and restaurant services to drugs, gambling and prostitution — activities which cannot be included in GDP per capita.

“The advent of organised crime leads to a strong, negative and significant causal effect on GDP per capita.”

In the paper, to take into account this “shadow” economy, Pinotti uses electricity consumption as an alternative measure of aggregate economic activity. The idea is for him to make sure that the sudden sluggish growth in GDP per capita taking place in the wake of the introduction of the mafia in the market is not just representative of a reallocation of resources outside the scope of official statistics. Doing so, Pinotti finds that the electricity consumption in the treated regions — the regions where the mafia advent occurred — is greater than in the synthetic ones, slowing down only a decade after the arrival of the Mafia. This suggests that if at some point the mafia affected sectors using energy more intensively, there is no proof that it has been the source of the expansion of a so called “shadow” economy.

Figure 2: GDP per capita and murder rate in the treated region and in the synthetic control, estimated gap, years 1951-2007



This study of one channel through which the Mafia might effectively influence the economy is an insightful thought. However, it is not enough to represent a country by its “economic” or “monetary” value — especially when assessing the costs of the presence of organised crime. In the second paragraph of his introduction, Pinotti stresses the fact that organised crime has “obvious social and psychological costs” which add to the economic consequences through violence and predatory activities. If those are obvious, then should they not be taken into account as well?

“A decline in Mafia organised crimes is mainly due to the intensification of law enforcement.”

A perhaps more global way to assess the economic and social costs of organised crime could have been to use the Human Development Index computed by the United Nations that, besides GDP per capita, also factors in indicators such as life expectancy or school enrolment. Other indicators try to look out for the weaknesses of GDP per capita such as the Genuine Progress Indicator and the Gross National Happiness Index. Even if those too have their shortcomings, performing the same analysis with some of them could be revealing of

more than just the official economy of the two regions.

The impact of law enforcement on the Mafia’s power

When defining the legal framework of organised crime in Italy, Pinotti interestingly mentions Article 416-bis of the Italian Penal Code, “associazione a delinquere di stampo mafioso”, introduced in 1982 with Law 646/82. The introduction of this article has been a real breakthrough in the Italian judicial system, acknowledging effectively mafia organisations’ specificities in a text of law and recognising notably the use of any power of intimidation to commit criminal offences, limit freedom or control directly or indirectly economic activities, services or even public contracts. This article makes us wonder about the role law has to play in order to address the issue of organised crime.

In a paper titled *The Decline of the Italian Mafia*, published in 2008, Letizia Paoli, a famous criminologist and professor of the Law Faculty at Leuven University, indicates that a decline in Mafia organised crimes is mainly due to the intensification of law enforcement repression since early 1990’s. If we look back on the origin of the creation of organised crime, it is important to recall that the Mafia originated from a market failure of the state’s governance with

the most important issues at stake being security of property rights and enforcement of contracts. Moreover, if we can imagine good ways to overcome those typical government’s failures, the remaining concern then would be to answer the question on how to tackle fear. As stated in article 416-bis, the inherent and key tool of organised crime is intimidation, and they are pretty good and inventive in that area, with very few boundaries.

To not give in to fear is not an easy road and can even be life-endangering. Famous Judge Giovanni Falcone, who was a fervent believer of his country’s institutions, devoted a major part of his work to the anti-mafia fight. His determination and thoroughness allowed for a profound reshaping of the investigation methods used at that time. He believed that only a deep understanding of the actions and peculiarities of the mafia could lead to a win. However, by flying too close to the sun, Judge Falcone was assassinated by the Corleonesi Mafia in 1992.

In his paper *Governance Institutions and Economic Activity*, 2009, Avinash Dixit outlines, once again, that in order to perform a good transition of any economy, the most important principle is to gain a complete understanding of the institutional equilibrium and structure, saying that a “successful reformer will combine respect for the past and thoughtful innovation”. All in all, the transition from a mafia organised governance to a regular one is a long and difficult process that can have important costs and requires great awareness and carefulness.

To stand against organised crime is not a straightforward fight where knowledge is key. Only recently, on 19th November 2017, Italy adopted a new legislation amending, among others, the Code of Anti-Mafia Legislation and Protection Measures Under Legislative Decree and Penal Code, which proves that they have not yet had their last word. But, as Letizia Paoli reminds us in her book, the ability for mafia groups to “survive” should not be forgotten. ■

Subsidies to foreign students and French tuition fees

by Sébastien Montpetit

Higher education is more globalised than ever nowadays. Excellent universities emerge in developing countries and institutions thus face an increasing level of competition to attract the best students from all over the world. At TSE, about half of the students are foreigners. One of the obvious reasons why so many international students seek admission in Toulouse — apart from its reputation and academic motives — is that France is one of the cheapest places to study among developed countries (see, for instance, OECD data on tuition fees). Tuition fees are relatively low for foreign students, and the state offers many scholarships and grants. While such advantages increase the competitiveness of French universities, is it economically justified to offer foreigners so much public funding? In the same vein, why do most governments provide some funding opportunities to their home students who decide to study abroad?

“Is it economically justified to offer foreigners so much public funding?”

At first glance, the answer to such questions is not clear-cut. On the one hand, subsidising¹ foreign students attracts the best — future

¹ The term “subsidies” will refer to both low tuition fees and availability of scholarships, loans, and grants.

— researchers and foreign workers into the country, which increases the circulation of ideas. For instance, between 2008 and 2012, 45% of foreign graduates in the United States extended their visa in order to work in the metropolitan area where they studied (Ruiz, 2014). In the same spirit, financing home students who study abroad encourages them to apply to top universities, which is profitable for the country if they decide to come back to work in their country of origin. On the other hand, subsidised foreign students might choose to go back to their country of origin, and home students might decide to stay abroad after completing their studies. Hence, one could think that the money invested in such areas is somewhat wasted, and make foreigners pay for their education would be better. In the light of the recent announcement of the “Bienvenue en France” (“Choose France”) policy project, which aims to attract more international students, the rise of tuition fees for non-EU citizens could be based on such argument.

Are international students beneficial for an economy?

It is difficult to measure precisely if a country is a “net winner” of higher education globalisation, but one main topic in the literature is to determine whether admitting more international students leads to crowd-out domestic students. Universities having a limited budget admitting more

foreigners might reduce the number of spots available for home students. However, empirical evidence shows the opposite: admitting more international students — especially for graduate programs — has a strong crowd-in effect because universities can collect more tuition fees. In the United States and the United Kingdom, estimates of this effect lie around 0.8, meaning that admitting one more foreign graduate student leads to almost one more domestic student enrolled (Machin and Murphy, 2017; Shih, 2018). This fact may also reflect some intangible benefits of the rapid increase in foreign students’ enrollment in developed countries such as higher exposition to international peers and extension of the domestic students’ network (see Winkler, 1984).

“Admitting more international students (...) has a strong crowd-in effect.”

This argument is particularly interesting because it means that attracting more foreign students is a good national policy to favour post-secondary education among the domestic population. Also, as another form of externality, a country that offers substantial subsidies to foreigners might benefit from an easier access of its domestic students to foreign



education systems. As an example, most — if not all — countries of the European Union offer lower tuition fees and more scholarship opportunities to EU citizens. In a recent study, an Italian researcher also found a positive link between Latin American students' enrollment and trade between OECD countries and the students' country of origin (Murat, 2018).

On the cost side, there is no clear answer to whether the benefits of attracting foreigners offset the costs of financial support offered by the host country. There is only little evidence that subsidising education of foreign students leads to an increase in steady state economic growth (see Bergerhoof et al., 2013). Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to think that there exists somehow a net gain considering that subsidising foreigners is a widely spread practice.

Choose France, but pay more

On 19th November 2018, French Prime Minister Édouard Philippe announced the new national strategy to attract international students. The policy project aims at giving a boost to the growth of the number of international students, that is lower than in other developed countries who

adopted more “offensive policies” in this regard such as Germany, China, and Canada. The controversial policy mostly consists in raising tuition fees of non-EU international students in order to finance more generous scholarships. If the plan is adopted, the annual tuition will increase to 2,770€ at the Bachelor level. At the Master and PhD levels, international students will have to disburse 3,770€ per year. It seems quite counter-intuitive that the government expects to attract more students while also increasing tuition fees. Indeed, the low price of higher education is the comparative advantage of France over North American and some other European countries right now. With only one-quarter of the student population being eligible for some fundings from the government, this increase in tuition fees should crowd-out foreign students. Some African

“It seems quite counter-intuitive that the government expects to attract more students while also increasing tuition fees.”

students (who comprise about half of the foreign students population in France) already expressed concerns about whether they would be able to finance their studies if the new policy is implemented.

At TSE, admission committees are well aware of that; in order to keep the competitiveness of the School unchanged, the institution will need to compensate graduate students for this increase. In other words, the new policy will partly consist in simply taking money out of the universities given that at least some institutions will increase scholarships so that their students would not have to bear all the cost of the government's decision. Without such compensations, it is likely that many students will think twice before seeking admission in France. Therefore, this policy should have two perverse effects that are contrary to the idea behind it: international students' enrollment should not substantially increase — it might as well decrease — and some of the generated revenues from the government will be extracted from universities' budget. Apart from taking money from “those who can afford it” — which I doubt — I do not see how this policy does any good nor encourages students to choose France. ■

The power of fear

by Valentina Narvaez

On 17th January 2019, Colombia woke up with the news that a car bomb had exploded in Bogotá, its capital city. A car had entered the compound of the General Santander police academy, killed 21 people and left 68 injured.

The news were striking as many people thought that bomb attacks in urban areas had already become part of a painful, yet old, chapter in the history of the country due to the peace agreement signed in 2016 with the Revolutionary Armed Forces — the FARC — and the negotiation table established that same year with the left wing rebel group — the National Liberation Army, the ELN.

However, the attack leaves uncertainty and an open window for the government to justify going back to the “firm hand” policy; a policy used for eight years during the government of ex-president Alvaro Uribe Velez, political mentor of the current president Ivan Duque.

A divided society

On the last years, the different opinions in the Colombian society have caught the attention of the media around the world. The results of the peace referendum held by former president Juan Manuel Santos (2010 - 2018) in 2nd October 2016, portray the disagreement with the agreement signed between Santos and the FARC.

The referendum consisted on asking the approval of Colombians of the peace agreement between the government and the FARC, after almost four years of negotiations. Many felt that the agreement was too lenient towards the FARC, a guerrilla movement that protagonised the armed conflict with the Colombian government for more than 50 years. The agreement was rejected by 50,2% of the voters; however, a revised



“I come in order for you to give me the place.”

version of the accord was pushed through on 24th November 2016.

Unfortunately, the car bomb came to divide the Colombian society once more. On one side, there are those who condemn the attack perpetrated by the ELN, but defend the deal with the FARC. On the other side, there are those who claim that the ELN attack is the result of sealing an unfair accord with the FARC, and portray the agreement as a monument to impunity. Ex-president Alvaro Uribe Velez, today a national senator, has repeatedly claimed that the peace agreement signed with the FARC has set a bad example, by sending the message that the government does not punish persons who committed crimes against humanity.

Talks to end 52 years of war

After the four years of negotiations that culminated in an agreement with the

FARC, former president Santos began formal negotiations with the second biggest rebel group of the country in November 2016. The government and the National Liberation Army (ELN) began talks after three years of failed attempts, in the hope of clinching an agreement similar to the one sealed with the FARC.

“Ignoring the protocol harms the country’s reputation and credibility for future peace talks.”

On September 2017, a cease-fire agreement was reached; however that agreement has been tested by attacks from both sides.

President Ivan Duque, who took office on August 2018, said he would not resume the negotiations with the ELN, unless they freed the hostages they were keeping. The group responded in a statement posted on its website: “By not recognising the deals made with the state and adding, unilaterally, unacceptable conditions, this government is closing the negotiating table, ending the process of dialogue and the efforts made over several years by the ELN, society, the previous government and the international community”.

The “Firm Hand”

“Firm hand, big heart” was the slogan of Alvaro Uribe Velez when he ran for president in 2002. His promise was to do all in his power to restore the security in the country, build up the armed forces, seeking more US aid in the fight against rebels, whom he calls terrorists. At the beginning of his campaign, Uribe claimed that by using the firm hand, rebels would eventually come to the table and negotiate with the government. Paradoxically, Uribe has always been strongly opposed to negotiations with the FARC and to the resulting agreement.

The proclaimed “firm hand” used during Uribe’s government might have gone too far. During his time in office, particularly during his second term, his administration has been involved in a series of scandals regarding corruption and human right violations.

The first head of the DAS — the Colombian secret police — that was supposed to take orders only from the president is in jail, accused of supplying lists of suspected rebel sympathisers to right-wing paramilitary death squads. The organisation was also accused of phone hacking journalists, judges and politicians from the opposition.

Another scandal during Uribe’s presidency was the “false positives”. With the aim of improving statistics and gaining promotions, civilians were murdered by the army and then dressed in rebel clothing to be presented as insurgents killed during combat. Additionally, Uribe’s family, his close political circle, business partners and senator Uribe himself have been accused of paramilitary ties. Paramilitary groups in Colombia were created by landlords to protect themselves from left wing rebel groups such as the FARC. Later on, they became feared by their perpetrated crimes: rural massacres, sexual abuse and

drug trafficking. In fact, Santiago Uribe, Uribe’s brother, is currently awaiting trial for running the paramilitary group called “The Twelve Apostles”. Senator Uribe himself is now facing accusations related to paramilitarism. The Supreme Court is investigating him for allegedly having threatened witnesses that linked him to paramilitary groups.

After eight years in power, Alvaro Uribe’s left a safer country in fear. Fear from the FARC, the ELN, the army and the paramilitary.

A mentor

Today, Alvaro Uribe is a senator leading the dominant right wing bloc and the mentor of current president of Colombia, Ivan Duque. His government must cope with the reinsertion of former FARC rebels into society, the violence in the areas vacated by the FARC, the systematic killings of local leaders, the arrival of venezuelans, cutting both the fiscal deficit, which is 3.5% of GDP, and the corporate-tax rate (from 33% to a still-high 30%). Beset with challenges, Uribe is seen by many as the power behind the inexperienced Duque.

The power of fear

After the attack, many questions arose. Hours after it occurred, President Duque ended the negotiations with the left wing rebel group ELN. One day later, ELN posted a statement claiming responsibility for the attack.

President Duque has urged Colombians to “stand united”, and assured that “this despicable act will not go unpunished ... we shed tears for these heroes, but that we will honor their memory by building a stronger Colombia” — all of which brings into question whether president Duque is planning to follow the same principle as his mentor, showing a “firm hand” to former and current rebel forces.

Perhaps as a first act, Duque announced his refusal to honor the agreed protocols with the international community in case peace talks with the ELN guerrilla ended. Said protocols had been agreed at the beginning of the negotiations and stated that, in case of rupture, the leaders of the ELN group would be allowed to reunite their troops. Although Duque claims he is not bound to the commitment made by the preceding government, guarantor countries and the international community have strongly advised Duque

to remain committed to the protocol. Ignoring the protocol harms the country’s reputation and credibility for future peace talks.

In 2002, fear helped Alvaro Uribe to get elected as president, with his promise of taking a more aggressive stand against the rebels. Although Uribe was very successful in a number of fronts, presumably intimidation and threats in the regions controlled by the paramilitaries also played a role in his re-election in 2006. In 2010, Juan Manuel Santos, who was defense minister in the government of Uribe, won the elections. Political analysts explained his success as the product of the fear of Colombians that Uribe’s improvements in security could vanish if any other candidate was elected. Nevertheless, after the elections, Santos started to show his desire to govern by himself and differentiate from Uribe. In 2014, Santos was re-elected using the flag of peace against Uribe’s candidate Oscar Ivan Zuluaga, whose almost entire focus was the opposition to peace talks with the FARC. In 2018, the fear of “becoming another Venezuela” after the peace agreement with the FARC won many votes that got elected President Duque.

“The attack perpetrated by the ELN sealed the doom of the peace negotiations with Colombia’s last-remaining rebel group.”

Final words

The attack perpetrated by the ELN sealed the doom of the peace negotiations with Colombia’s last-remaining rebel group. Unless ELN shows clear willingness to negotiate, this leaves only the military solution on the table. Nevertheless, trying to defeat the guerrilla group, who has been present in Colombia since 1964, is far from been an ideal option.

In Colombia, fear produced by the armed conflict has served to do politics and encouraged the election of politicians with a certain profile. But if anything, war is long, painful, fought and most suffered by the poorest people. ■

Interview : Kamel Daoud

propos recueillis par Mehdi Berrada et Rémi Perrichon

Kamel Daoud est un écrivain et journaliste algérien. Après une carrière au Quotidien d'Oran ponctuée par la rédaction de nombreuses chroniques, il se voit décerner le prix Goncourt du premier roman en 2015 pour *Meursault, contre-enquête*. The TSEconomist est allé à la rencontre de cet écrivain et vous propose dans les lignes qui suivent une réflexion sur notre rapport à l'identité et à la littérature.

L'identité nationale se construit à partir d'imaginaire, de certains actes marquants, de l'interprétation que l'on en fait, ou du souvenir qu'il en reste. Pourquoi, d'après vous, ce sont les images et les récits plutôt que les idées qui contribuent le plus à la fabrique de l'identité nationale ? (Mehdi)

Je pense que l'imaginaire conditionne l'idée que l'on se fait de sa propre identité parce que c'est ce qui se transmet en premier dans le milieu familial. Les histoires qu'on nous raconte nous font rêver. La mémoire et l'identité sont d'abord transmises par le milieu familial, par les parents, les grands-parents, les gens autour de vous. Cela commence avec des récits, des histoires, des souvenirs, des images, avant d'arriver à l'âge où on peut conceptualiser, avoir des idées, à partir de vingt ans ou plus tard.

L'identité c'est d'abord des mémoires, des sculptures, de l'art, avant d'être des idées.

Vous avez dénoncé, lors de votre venue à Toulouse, le silence pesant qui avait fait suite à la guerre civile en Algérie. Vous avez encouragé les algériens à en parler, en reconnaissant que cela n'était pas chose facile. Pourquoi la littérature, qui semble la plus apte à briser ce silence - à travers la fiction notamment - a tant de mal à le faire, encore à ce jour ? (Rémi)

Je pense qu'il y a plusieurs raisons à ce silence-là. D'abord, cela peut être expliqué par la proximité. C'est une guerre qui vient de finir il y a à peu près dix ans et on en voit encore les séquelles. La deuxième raison, c'est que je pense que les imaginaires ne se commandent pas. On peut vouloir rêver mais on ne commande pas le menu de ses rêves. C'est lié à votre capacité à admettre les refoulements, à imaginer, à supporter la douleur de l'expression, dire les choses qui vous ont fait mal. La littérature c'est une façon de rêver et le rêve ne se commande pas.

C'est aussi dû au fait que c'est une guerre qui reste encore inexplicable. Dans une guerre classique, on sait qui est coupable, on sait qui est tueur, on identifie le mort. Dans les guerres civiles, il est très difficile de savoir qui est coupable même si schématiquement on peut dire que ce sont les premiers qui ont attaqué les deuxièmes ou que ce sont les deuxièmes qui ont déposé des bombes en premier etc. La vérité est alors très floue et la responsabilité l'est encore plus.

La troisième raison est qu'il faut que ce travail ne soit pas uniquement fait par la littérature mais aussi par les institutions - je parle de l'école, des médias, des historiens, des élites universitaires.

Je pense aussi que c'est lié à l'histoire immédiate de l'Algérie. Ce pays a été saigné de ses élites parce que c'est une guerre qui a pris en sandwich les élites qui étaient très peu autonomes. Beaucoup de gens sont partis, beaucoup de gens ne veulent plus revenir sur cette guerre car ils reviennent sur les raisons de leur départ, sur une douleur intime et personnelle.

“ Beaucoup de gens sont partis, beaucoup de gens ne veulent pas revenir sur cette guerre car ils reviennent sur les raisons de leur départ, sur une douleur intime et personnelle. ”

Il y a aussi une autre raison liée au système d'intérêt éditorial. On peut écrire sur la guerre d'Algérie, encore faut-il que cela intéresse le marché éditorial français.

Vous avez soutenu à maintes reprises que dans le monde dit arabe, on ne parlait pas l'arabe littéraire qui est réservé aux plus érudits. Pour parvenir à une démocratisation de la culture, est-ce que vous pensez qu'il faille passer par un enrichissement de l'arabe dialectal ou par une vulgarisation - au sens de simplification - de l'arabe littéraire ? (Mehdi)

Je n'aime pas certaines expressions, comme "arabe littéraire", car cela veut dire que l'autre est un arabe de rue, un arabe plébéien. Il n'y a pas d'arabe « littéraire ». Il y a la langue arabe et il y a les langues algériennes comme le tamazight, darija et autres. Je n'aime pas cette hiérarchie de caste qui consiste à dire qu'il y a une langue classique, une autre qui ne l'est pas. C'est comme si je disais "En France, vous parlez Latin, et vous parlez un latin de rue - à propos du Français". Ce n'est pas le cas. Dans le monde dit arabe, personne ne parle arabe. Chaque pays parle sa propre langue. Ce ne sont pas des langues institutionnalisées.

Il y a un grand linguiste en Occident qui disait qu'une langue est un dialecte avec une armée, ou un Etat, qui est derrière. Donc si ces langues-là avaient un pouvoir politique, si on avait un roi avec une académie des langues algériennes, nous aurions eu des langues algériennes et aussi la langue arabe. Je ne suis pas quelqu'un qui refuse la langue arabe, mais ce que je n'aime pas c'est l'usage idéologique, identitaire et de caste que l'on en fait.

Je n'aime pas qu'il y ait une sorte de hiérarchie des langues. Les expressions, qu'elles soient artistiques ou d'idées... il y a une loi de la nature : elles viendront. Elles se sont exprimées en arabe dit « littéraire » il y a quelques siècles, elles s'expriment en d'autres langues, maintenant en Français ou en Anglais ou en Chinois, et je pense que dans notre propre pays, avec la consolidation de l'Etat nation, avec la consolidation de l'identité, nous allons exprimer nos idées. Déjà, les chansons qui nous touchent le plus en Algérie, ce ne sont pas les chansons chantées en arabe mais celles chantées en tamazight, en algérien ou en oranais comme le raï. La chanson exprime d'ores et déjà ce que nous ressentons, cette chair et ce corps qui sont niés par un clergé. J'éclaircis mes positions : je ne suis pas contre la langue arabe. L'arabité m'appartient, et je ne lui appartiens pas. C'est ce que je répète souvent. Je suis contre l'usage idéologique, contre l'usage de caste et de domination de cette langue. Ce n'est pas nous qui excluons la langue arabe de notre patrimoine mais c'est elle qui nous exclut.

“Ce n'est pas nous qui excluons la langue arabe de notre patrimoine mais c'est elle qui nous exclut.”

Vous avez dit, et même écrit, que l'écriture était la seule ruse contre la mort. Est-ce que vous concevez l'écriture comme une ruse qui permet d'avoir le dessus sur la mort - grâce à la postérité par exemple - ou est-ce que la ruse c'est d'utiliser la mort comme un moteur de l'écriture ? (Rémi)

La littérature assure la postérité mais aussi l'antériorité. C'est à dire, la mémoire, et la mémoire transmise. On me pose souvent cette question sur cette expression sur ce roman-là, Zabor, où j'ai parlé de l'écriture comme étant une des rares ruses contre la mort. Effectivement, vous lisez les œuvres, vous parlez à quelqu'un qui est mort depuis mille ans. Parce que vous en lisez les œuvres et vous allez écrire peut-être un livre que des gens qui

ne sont pas encore nés vont lire. Je pense que dans notre pratique, l'art, la littérature, l'image, l'icône sont ce que nous avons trouvé comme moyens pour surmonter le temps et la distance. Je peux discuter avec vous alors que je n'ai jamais eu l'occasion de vous rencontrer parce que vous me lisez, ou bien le contraire. Je peux mourir, et continuer cette conversation et ainsi de suite. Donc c'est une forme d'éternité maîtrisée. C'est une forme de prière qui ne demande pas la soumission et ça, c'est quelque chose de très important.

“Je peux mourir, et continuer cette conversation et ainsi de suite. C'est [l'écriture] donc une forme d'éternité maîtrisée.”

Maintenant pour la mort, je pense que la mort est fondamentale pour toutes les cultures. La redéfinir, ne pas l'affronter, en parler, la mettre au centre de notre culture n'est pas quelque chose de pathologique. La mort est essentielle, la mort est là. On parle du mystère de la mort, mais ce qui est inexplicable c'est la vie, pourquoi nous sommes là. La mort c'est une fin en soi mais autour de ce vide on peut construire l'intensité de la vie, la précarité de la vie, l'inexplicable et l'absurde de la vie, la chance unique d'être vivant. Autant de choses qui peuvent être construites autour de ce puits sans fond qu'est la mort. C'est une réflexion essentielle pour la civilisation. On a commencé à être des êtres civilisés lorsqu'on a inventé la sépulture, c'est à dire lorsqu'on a plus ou moins donné corps au vide.

On vous a souvent demandé quelles étaient vos habitudes d'écritures, vos rituels, la vitesse à laquelle vous écrivez. Pourriez-vous nous parler de Kamel Daoud lecteur ? (Mehdi)

Je lisais énormément. Je suis d'abord un lecteur. J'aurais voulu être un lecteur toute ma vie. Maintenant je suis devenu écrivain



Rémi Perrichon, Kamel Daoud et Mehdi Berrada

parce que parfois j'ai envie de lire certains livres que je ne trouve pas donc je finis par les écrire ou par en rêver. Pour moi, le rare moment d'apesanteur c'est de choisir un livre et de le lire. Je n'aime pas, par exemple, lire sur commande. Je n'aime pas lire un livre car il vient d'être publié, et ensuite avoir un avis sur ce celui-ci. J'aime les digressions. J'aime beaucoup relire. Je relis Borjes souvent, Marguerite Yourcenar très souvent, Michel Tournier encore plus souvent. Je suis un grand relecteur. Je lis lentement les nouveautés. Rarement d'ailleurs les nouveautés. Mais je relis énormément les classiques. Ce que j'aime c'est cette liberté de choisir un livre que personne ne m'a commandé, dont personne n'attend de moi une fiche ou un avis. Et je lis parce que ça me permet de me libérer, de sentir de l'apesanteur, de sentir de la récréation, du divertissement, du ludique, de l'allègement, du plaisir. La lecture pour moi c'est un exercice, comme l'écriture d'ailleurs, un exercice fondamentalement ludique.

L'écriture est la victoire, ou l'illusion d'une victoire de l'ordre sur le désordre. Vous avez confié que l'addiction à l'écriture vous est dictée par une sorte de nécessité, de tension, de rythme. Le plaisir d'une mise en ordre. La lecture est-elle pour vous une expérience du temps, un moyen d'échapper à l'absurdité du monde, l'exercice d'une liberté ? Aussi, pouvez-vous préciser ce côté ludique de la lecture ? Lire, est-ce faire l'expérience de sa liberté, d'engager un dialogue avec les morts ? (Rémi)

C'est une sorte d'intimité partagée. Lire c'est partager l'intimité du monde, c'est à dire saisir l'intimité de quelqu'un que je n'ai jamais croisé, qu'il s'appelle Dostoïevski ou Nabokov. Que je n'ai jamais connu, que je n'aurai jamais l'occasion de connaître. Pourtant je suis dans une sorte de partage intime absolu. Ça c'est la première des choses.

La deuxième c'est que j'ai une sorte d'intolérance au temps qui passe et la lecture me permet justement d'avoir cette illusion d'échapper au temps, à cette mécanique du temps. Un des premiers romans qui m'avait fasciné c'était La machine à explorer le temps, bien entendu. Le paradoxe du temps est incroyable. La lecture permet cette illusion de suspendre le temps, de vivre une autre vie. Nous n'avons pas l'occasion de beaucoup voyager, comme vous le faites, pour des problèmes de visa, d'économie, d'argent, etc. Lire c'est être partout quand on le veut et c'est quelque chose de fondamental. C'est aussi ce côté ludique qui est intéressant, c'est d'être allongé, de se désincarner par l'alphabet, et de pouvoir voyager. Imaginez, j'habitais un petit village où on n'avait pas beaucoup l'occasion ni de bouger, ni d'aller plus loin que quinze kilomètres et d'un coup je lis sur les îles, je relis Jules Verne, les voyages vers l'espace. J'étais un amateur incroyable, inconditionnel de la science-fiction. Tout cela m'a apporté la désincarnation, l'apesanteur et le sentiment de vivre plusieurs vies. Peut-être que la réincarnation existe : il suffit d'ouvrir les livres.

“Peut-être que la réincarnation existe : il suffit d'ouvrir des livres.”

On peut constater dans votre oeuvre et dans vos interventions un certain optimisme quand vous évoquez le futur des sociétés du monde arabe. Quels sont les éléments qui vous laissent penser qu'une évolution des conditions de vie et des mentalités est possible malgré le verrouillage du système politique qui s'est déjà accaparé les médias, l'éducation, et la religion notamment ? (Mehdi)

Je fais plus confiance à l'Homme qu'à l'histoire. Je pense que d'un point de vue logique, nous avons toutes les raisons de désespérer. Nous avons des économies de rente, une population qui a été repoussée vers l'ignorance, vers la démission, vers la croyance plutôt que la citoyenneté. Nous avons des élites qui ne sont pas autonomes, donc qui n'ont pas les moyens d'agir sur le réel, qui ont perdu leur légitimité, qui sont parties, ou qui sont impuissantes en restant sur place. Donc il y a autant de raisons de désespérer. Mais d'un autre côté, je ne suis pas d'un naturel optimiste parraison, mais par colère, par sentiment de dignité.

“Je me dis, puisque je suis vivant, plutôt être vaincu à la fin qu'au début.”

Je me dis, puisque je suis vivant, plutôt être vaincu à la fin qu'au début. Si je suis vaincu au début, qu'est-ce que je vais faire des années qui me restent ? Autant continuer. J'ai des enfants, et j'espère mériter, dans leur mémoire, l'idée que je me suis un peu battu, que j'ai défendu l'idée de liberté et de dignité. Je ne dis pas qu'on va forcément réussir. Mais, vous savez, je suis un grand lecteur d'histoires. Et lorsque je lis des romans fabuleux comme L'oeuvre au noir de Yourcenar, je me dis que nous sommes dans ces époques médianes, qui sont douloureuses, mystérieuses, énigmatiques, injustes et inquisitoires, mais qui sont les prémices d'une société qui va venir, peut-être pas prochainement – à l'échelle d'une vie, on désespère –, mais dans un siècle ou deux. Il faut y croire, peut-être que c'est une manière de ne pas mourir absolument et bêtement.

Pour terminer, au-delà de votre statut d'écrivain, vous n'hésitez pas à intervenir régulièrement dans l'espace public. Est-ce que vous pensez aujourd'hui qu'il faut renouer avec la figure de l'intellectuel engagé ? (Rémi)

Est-ce qu'on peut se désengager ? Je ne crois pas. Moi j'aurais voulu avoir beaucoup de livres, vivre dans un pays stable, avoir des jardins à côté de moi, être riche pour ne pas penser à l'argent. Je ne me serais alors jamais engagé. Comme disait quelqu'un, il faut avoir un pays pour avoir une maison, donc j'aurais voulu avoir une maison avant, mais il faut un pays tout autour. On ne peut pas se désengager. Renouer avec la figure de l'intellectuel engagé... Il ne s'agit pas de renouer car cela nous est imposé. Si j'étais un écrivain russe à l'époque du bloc communiste, et que j'avais ma liberté, j'aurais écrit des livres. Mais quelqu'un comme Soljenitsyne ou d'autres sont attaqués dans leur liberté d'écrire et de lire, donc ils se retrouvent à défendre l'idée de liberté, et sont donc engagés malgré eux.

“On ne s'engage pas parce qu'on a envie. On s'engage car c'est inévitable.”

On ne s'engage pas parce qu'on en a envie. On s'engage car cela est inévitable. Qui parle de l'avenir maintenant ? Les populistes. Qui promet le salut et la réponse ? Les populistes. Qui se donnent le droit de discourir sur le statut de la femme, la procréation, l'avortement, la migration, le rapport à l'autre, l'altérité ? Les populistes. Nous avons peut-être besoin de récupérer ce droit à la parole que les populistes maintenant ont pu récupérer à leur avantage. ■

L'Homme-providentiel

Quand les Français en appellent au sauveur

par Clémentine Bouleau

Lors de la campagne présidentielle, certaines interventions publiques d'Emmanuel Macron ont marqué les esprits par leur caractère singulier. A titre d'exemple, sa spectaculaire traversée solitaire de la cour du Louvre au soir de son élection illustre le pouvoir d'une mise en scène au caractère fortement symbolique. Si certains ont dénoncé le ridicule de ce genre d'apparitions aux accents christiques et quelques peu désuets, d'autres y ont vu la réapparition d'un mythe récurrent dans l'histoire politique française : celui de l'Homme providentiel.

L'Homme providentiel, qui est-il ?

L'Homme providentiel est défini par l'historien politique Jean Guarrigues comme « un personnage qui apparaît dans les périodes de crises, et qui se présente comme le sauveur ultime chargé d'une sorte de mission historique ou divine, à savoir résoudre d'un coup de baguette magique tous les problèmes qui se posent à la société à un moment donné. » L'Homme providentiel incarne par essence l'espoir de rupture et de renouveau. Il surgit quand la suite de l'histoire semble compromise et que seule l'intervention d'un être spectaculaire permet d'entrevoir un futur apaisé.

Dans notre histoire, nombreuses sont les figures politiques qui ont endossé ce rôle de sauveur. Napoléon Bonaparte, grâce au caractère extraordinaire de sa personnalité et fort de ses exploits guerriers, incarne après les années noires qui suivent la révolution de 1789 cette figure providentielle. Plus tard, le Général Boulanger s'empare du rôle, alors que les années 1880 sont encore marquées par le souvenir de la défaite française contre l'Allemagne en 1871. Ministre de la guerre, il est l'archétype du sauveur et incarne l'image du héros populaire et militaire capable de redresser le pays. Il suscite rapidement la ferveur du peuple,

rassemblant une coalition éclectique de mécontents allant de l'extrême gauche à la droite bonapartiste, tous avides de vengeance face à une Allemagne diabolisée. Plus tard encore, le général De Gaulle incarne un rôle similaire. Bien plus que ses prédécesseurs, il a conscience de l'importance et de la signification de ce rôle providentiel.

“L'Homme providentiel : un personnage qui apparaît dans les périodes de crises, et qui se présente comme le sauveur ultime chargé d'une sorte de mission historique ou divine, à savoir résoudre [...] tous les problèmes qui se posent à la société.”

La pratique Gaullienne du pouvoir va alors contribuer à renforcer la permanence du mythe de l'homme providentiel dans la vie politique française. En effet, De Gaulle a fondé son action politique sur la dialectique d'un peuple enfant et d'un Etat paternel. Selon lui, la France ne peut être grande que lorsqu'elle est unifiée autour d'un chef qui la guide vers son destin de grandeur. Dès lors, la constitution qu'il donne à la Vème République en 1958, ainsi que sa pratique du pouvoir jusqu'en 1969 contribuent à renforcer l'image d'un président fort. Selon Garrigues, si le mythe



s'est perpétué, c'est en partie grâce à cette forte personnalisation des pouvoirs du Président.

Le paysage politique actuel, qui peine à mobiliser les français autour de personnalités politiques, laisse penser que les grandes figures providentielles appartiennent surtout au passé. Néanmoins, certains ont décelé dans la campagne présidentielle d'Emmanuel Macron quelques traits de ce mythe, notamment dans la manière dont ce dernier s'est présenté à son électorat, lors de certains discours dans lesquels il semble se transcender (pensons au fameux « Parce que c'est notre projet ! ») ou encore lors de sa traversée solennelle du Louvre. Durant ces apparitions, « le commandement héroïque est à la fois spectacle du héros défiant les dieux et mobilisation de l'enthousiasme des spectateurs par la présentation de l'exploit héroïque comme entreprise nationale » selon l'historien Stanley Hoffmann, rappelant ainsi l'imagerie propre au mythe de l'Homme providentiel.

Comment expliquer cette spécificité française à en appeler au "sauveur" en temps de crise ?

« Élu », « sauveur », « providence » : les références au religieux sont nombreuses lorsque l'on évoque l'Homme providentiel. Cela peut sembler paradoxal : comment justifier la référence à une figure à laquelle sont attribuées des qualités quasi-divines dans un pays qui défend depuis des décennies la laïcité de ses institutions ? Selon Jean Guarrigues, la persistance de ce mythe aux accents religieux viendrait d'une sorte de nostalgie du monarque de droit divin. Lorsque la France était une monarchie, les rois tenaient leur légitimité du pouvoir céleste et étaient perçus comme de véritables descendants de Dieu. Le passage à des institutions républicaines et laïques aurait alors opéré le transfert de ces figures d'autorité divine, capables de guider un peuple vers sa grandeur, vers des hommes politiques forts, auxquels on attribue les mêmes qualités de sauveur. Le « culte » de ces hommes politiques hors norme viendrait donc d'une volonté de confier le destin national à une figure que l'on espère capable d'exploits, figure souvent fantasmée.

“Bien souvent l’imaginaire collectif élève alors l’homme politique au rang de “sauveur”, pour répondre à son angoisse identitaire.”

Cela nous amène alors à souligner l'importance de l'imaginaire collectif dans l'existence du mythe du « sauveur ». Dans les moments de tourmente nationale, les identités sont souvent en crise. Selon l'historien Raoul Girardet, le mythe devient alors nécessaire. En effet, la société réagit à des changements brutaux en recherchant une figure de stabilité, autour de laquelle il est possible de reconstruire une identité sociale pour le groupe. Bien souvent l'imaginaire collectif élève alors l'homme politique au rang de « sauveur », pour répondre à son angoisse identitaire. Ainsi, les émotions collectives, ici l'angoisse que créent les bouleversements sociaux, économiques ou politiques, permettent de comprendre le recours à l'imaginaire et la création de ce mythe du sauveur, dont les qualités sont bien souvent exagérées. La figure providentielle fait donc appel à l'imaginaire collectif et à la recherche d'une identité commune bien plus qu'au religieux en soi.

De la mise en scène du pouvoir au danger pour la démocratie:

On l'a vu, l'attraction provoquée par l'homme providentiel repose sur sa capacité à incarner les fantasmes collectifs. Cet appel à l'imaginaire collectif repose en partie sur l'usage de l'image et de la représentation. Des images d'Epinal à la gloire de Napoléon au déferlement de mises en scène dans la presse lors de l'épisode boulangiste, on peut dégager des constantes dans l'imagerie du sauveur.

Le constat que le spectacle fait partie intégrante de la construction des figures providentielles peut néanmoins soulever des interrogations quant au danger que représentent ces figures pour la démocratie. En effet, si on a souligné l'existence d'une « spécificité française » à en appeler à la figure du sauveur en temps de crises, on a également vu que le pouvoir d'attraction de ces hommes providentiels reposait en grande partie sur leur charisme et sur un bon usage de l'image et de la mise en scène. Mais alors, n'est-il pas dangereux d'en appeler systématiquement à une figure dont le pouvoir découle de sa capacité à mobiliser les citoyens en ayant recours aux émotions collectives, plutôt qu'à la raison ?

“N'est-il pas dangereux d'en appeler systématiquement à une figure dont le pouvoir découle de sa capacité à mobiliser les citoyens en ayant recours aux émotions collectives, plutôt qu'à la raison ?”

De manière générale, lorsqu'un homme politique a recours aux passions et à la manipulation dans la conquête du pouvoir, on le range dans la catégorie des démagogues. Or, il y a dans la démarche de l'Homme providentiel, notamment dans la présentation de ses caractéristiques quasi-divines qui viennent calmer les craintes du peuple en sortant du champ du rationnel, quelque chose qui renvoie fondamentalement à cette démagogie.

De même, en se prétendant capable de rompre avec une société dépassée pour en construire une nouvelle il y a dans les promesses de l'Homme providentiel quelque chose de propre au populisme : un « cri de révolte » qui dénonce la souffrance du peuple et s'en prend aux élites en place, incapable de surmonter la crise. Selon Guarrigues, le populisme est d'ailleurs inhérent à l'attraction du sauveur.

Il faudrait donc se méfier de ces aventuriers politiques qui entendent « sauver » la Nation car la limite entre volonté réelle d'incarner les espoirs collectifs et possibilité d'accéder au pouvoir en profitant de la confusion générale est souvent floue. La question est bien de savoir si les intentions du prétendu sauveur sont de se faire le représentant de la multitude, ou, au contraire, d'imposer sa vision et son projet pour le futur, profitant de son pouvoir d'attraction. Selon Guarrigues « La réalité est toujours à mi-chemin entre ces deux pulsions qui délimitent l'espace de la rencontre dialectique entre un homme et un peuple ».

Quand un homme se présente comme sauveur de la Nation et que ses émules lui concèdent ce rôle, la frontière entre populisme, démagogie et réelle volonté citoyenne devient floue et n'est jamais imperméable. Nombres d'hommes politiques, avant de devenir des dictateurs, n'étaient d'ailleurs que symbole d'espoir et de renouveau... ■

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Internship report

by Valérie Furio



1. Where did you do your internship and what was your role?

I did my M1 internship at Efficacity, a research institute for energy efficiency in urban systems. The institute is located just east of Paris in the Descartes campus, which has been developed with the clear intention of becoming a hub for research on urbanism and sustainability. This means that you have engineering and architecture schools, and all sorts of research institutes – Efficacity, but also the CSTB, or IFFSTAR – operating from the cluster.

The uniting theme being energy efficiency in cities, the institute seeks to bring together expertise from various fields: my colleagues were mostly engineers but also architects, urban designers, economists, geographers, sociologists, and applied mathematicians. I joined the economics team as an intern in the socioeconomic valuation research pole. My main role was to identify best practice methodologies for ex-ante and ex-post valuation of these energy efficiency measures, and to determine whether it was socially desirable, for instance, for a municipality to adopt a specific policy.

2. How did your studies at TSE help you during the internship?

In general, the strength one gains from studying at TSE is a solid grounding in economic theory. The M1 courses in public economics and environmental economics both offered me at least an introduction to the principles of cost-benefit analysis, and to its strengths and limitations. The course in environmental economics, in particular, was helpful in getting accustomed to the various methods used to value non-monetary impacts, which was useful when I was asked to quantify, in monetary terms, the health impact resulting from an improvement in trains' braking system.

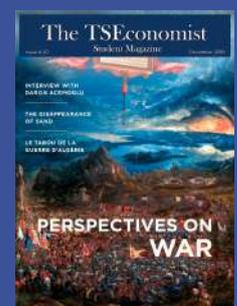
In addition to these courses, the Econometrics and Program Evaluation classes were both useful in reading and interpreting all the literature on environmental economics, which was an important first step in any of the analysis we conducted.

3. How did you get your internship? What would be your advice for students looking for a similar internship?

I found my internship at TSE's Business Networking Day: I knew I had an interest in environmental and energy economics, and went to chat with EDF to understand why they had come and what they were looking for. One of them worked with Efficacity (as EDF is a partner of the institute), and passed my CV on to them. After some time, I interviewed with him and two other members of Efficacity, and got the internship.

I would advise other students to focus on their studies but to not forget that it is important to get out there: go to the BND, use your network, and talk to those whose career inspires you. More often than not, people are happy to help! ■

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Gap year report

by Daniel Ostalé Valriberas

1. What did you do during your gap year?

My gap year was split into two: the first semester, from September to February, and the second semester, from February to June.

The first part of my gap year was very interesting but also totally unexpected. My first idea was to find an internship and work the first semester. Unfortunately, for several reasons – companies could not offer internships during those months, there were no great opportunities at that moment – I changed my plan and decided to travel. From Australia to India, and other countries, I had time to think about what I really wanted to do, deciding to specialise in Energy Economics. This time also allowed me to dig further into this field, as well as learning skills that were relevant for Economics but that we didn't study much at university, like programming.

The second semester was more academic. I went to the Guanghua School of Management (GSM), in Beijing. The experience was rewarding: I met locals and foreigners there, some of whom I am still in contact with, and had the opportunity to study completely new subjects, such as accounting, entrepreneurial management, and finance. However, I did not find the workload very demanding, as there were not many courses to choose from. Because of that, I decided to do an internship while studying, and worked for a company called WildChina, a travel company, where I helped plan their long-term strategy, presenting financial support ideas supported by data. In addition, I joined the school's football team, and we won the University Cup!

2. How did the gap year contribute to your personal, professional, or academic development?

From a personal perspective, I learned a lot about being flexible and handling unexpected situations. I felt a lot of frustration at the beginning of the gap year, and at some moments wondered if I was losing my time: was this traveling giving me something? Finally, I realised that you can only partially control what happens in your life, and that being adaptable and optimistic in bad moments is important. This was also the period when I decided what my ultimate goals were: for instance, my goal is to learn as much as I can about energy economics, and I realise that it is more important to study this topic all day. This might "steal" time from the other classes you take, and maybe you risk receiving a bad grade in class. But what is the importance of passing M2 with, say, 13 instead of 12, if you know nothing about the topic you like the most? Don't just study: learn.

From a professional perspective, I learned a lot from working in a Chinese environment. The Chinese culture is so different in all



perspectives that the amount of things you can learn working for only six months is crazy. I also completely changed my plans in terms of professional career: I initially wanted to do finance, finally focused on energy economics.

3. What advice would you give to another student who would like to do a gap year?

The school administration is very helpful in the straightforward procedures leading up to the semester abroad. Most of what I can add could be found on the Internet, but here are some basic ideas and tools that could help students going to China for their gap year:

- Be aware that you will not have any data when you arrive. I bought a really expensive sim-card at the airport, but I suggest you to not do this and go straight to one of the big operators.
- Download a VPN (VPNExpress is the one that I used): you should pay for a good one.
- Download WeChat, it is like WhatsApp but much better and more necessary in China, as you can use it for other things, such as making payments.
- Try to be in contact before arriving with some real estate agencies that can help you find a place to live as soon as you arrive.
- Download MapsMe, it is like Google Maps (that you cannot use in China) but you can download the map of Beijing, for example, and use it without connection.
- Take a look at the website "www.thebeijiners.com", I used it to find my internship but it is also useful when you are looking to contact some real estate agencies. ■

The TSE Alumni Association

by Emilien Simioni

The TSE Alumni association gathers all students who have graduated from the Toulouse School of Economics. The role of the TSE's alumni association is to keep the link between graduates and TSE throughout their lives. As a growing association, its role is also to support networking by connecting all graduates with their fellow alumni all around the world, help former students find a job, and keep the spirit of TSE across generations. The TSE Alumni association has a strong presence all over the world: Paris, London, Brussels, Canada, Asia, Australia, etc... And still keeps a close relation with Toulouse.

1. What are our plans?

On October 2018, a new board has been elected, and will be leading the association for the three years to come.

The project is built around four main objectives:

To achieve financial independence from TSE. Several discussions are ongoing on how to finance the association. The goal is to engage the first steps of financial independence;

- To structure our network through a reliable update of the current professional situation of members, and the creation of a yearbook. The idea is also to increase professional interactions among alumni;
- To take part in the TSE's overall policy and assist them with some questions. The association must play a bigger role in TSE's development and strategic orientations;
- To develop alumni's network life and actions: afterworks, events, conferences... Several events are already organised but some surprises are about to be announced... Keep posted!

2. What actions are we taking?

Events: organisation of events to gather alumni around the world with the support of local TSE ambassadors. Since October, two events – one afterwork and one wine tasting – have been organised in Paris, as well as one conference/breakfast in Brussels. We have events planned for Montreal, London, Toulouse and Paris;

Network: network animation and better relations between graduates, professionals, current students, and professors;

Participation in the school's events: contribution to corporate events (Business Networking Day, Business Talks, etc.), the start of the school year and the reception of new students, the Gala, the Farewell Party, and the Graduation Ceremony organised by the school, to name a few;

Communication: promotion of TSE brands on social networks and within companies.

Here are some pictures from those events:



3. What are the strengths of our network?

Our network gathers fellow alumni, professors, and also numerous professionals thanks to:

- A platform, the sharing space for our growing community (news, discussions, job offers, search engine and events calendar): <http://alumni.tse-fr.eu>
- Events in several cities around the world to keep in touch (afterworks, conferences, sports meetings)
- A growing TSE professional network that creates many career opportunities (setting up a directory of alumni in 2019)

It is very important to keep your profile up to date on the TSE Alumni's platform. If this is not the case, please take five minutes to look at it and modify any information. You must also make sure that you have entered the correct location (in the parameter section). Remember to change it when you will move from Toulouse, for example, as this will ensure that you receive all the relevant information for your new city.

4. What is the role of a TSE alumni ambassador?

If you have graduated, you can become a TSE alumni ambassador. The missions of a TSE alumni ambassador are the following:

- Organise regular events to gather graduates at the local level and welcome newcomers
- Animate groups and discussions on social networks
- Help increase the size of the community: search for new members, encourage the local community to interact on the platform
- Represent the school within companies (recruitment of TSE interns...)
- Contribute to global events (Annual General Meeting, Annual Alumni Party, Graduate Ceremony and Business Network Day)
- Help the school to be referenced in local businesses

Our objective for the next three years is to have TSE alumni ambassadors all around the world. Every graduate or student will then be able to reach out to them in case of questions or for any information on the country, city...

Are you interested in joining our team?

Please contact us at: alumni.tse@gmail.com



5. Where can you find us?

- On the Alumni's platform directly: <http://alumni.tse-fr.eu>
- On our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/AlumniTSE/>
- On dedicated pages by cities, for now:
 - » TSE Alumni in Paris
 - » TSE Alumni in Brussels
 - » TSE Alumni in Montreal
 - » TSE Alumni in London
- On LinkedIn: Toulouse School of Economics Alumni ■

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M2 Choice

EMO – Economics of Markets and Organisations

Current student: Vincent Lim

1. Which aspects of your chosen program were the most challenging?

In EMO, you only have to follow four courses each semester (with an average of 12 hours of classes per week). It means that, most of the time, there are no tutorials. So, you have to understand the content and study by yourself.

The courses, focused on industrial organisation, can be either classified as theoretical or empirical. In the empirical ones, you may have to present a case or a paper using econometric tools that you have never seen before, or use them in a project. The theoretical ones are very close to the industrial organisation course that is taught in M1.

2. Which was your favourite course(s) and why?

In the first semester, my favourite course was Business Economics, a class given by Andrew Rhodes, but also by two external guest teachers. This class mixes theory, empirical papers, and applications to the real world.

I like this track for the freedom that is given to you. You can shape your M2 as you want. You are free to study if you want good grades, follow additional classes to prepare a PhD, work, but don't forget to just enjoy the last year of your student life.

Alumna: Camila Jaramillo

1. What are you up to now?

I just finished a project in UPS Europe Head Quarters office in Brussels, Belgium. I was working in their Revenue Management and Market analysis department, where I performed different economic and data analyses to estimate the demand and set the best price strategies to maximise the revenue of the company.



Vincent Lim

I am currently in the process of joining a consulting firm in pricing and market strategy. The main tasks there will be to identify the market, the competitors and possible substitutes to the products our clients sell. It will be a very nice challenge because I will need to use all my knowledge of microeconomics, industrial organisation, finance, economic strategy, and econometrics to give complete advice to companies in different industries.

2. Which skills, acquired from studying at the TSE, have you found useful?

Since I worked in the freight/parcel market that works very similarly to the air transportation market based on their capacity constraints and fixed costs, the course of the air transportation market was very useful. In particular, the first classes give you a general idea of how these kinds of industries work, and the modules about revenue and yield management they gave us at the end of the course were helpful. Besides, considering that the integrators (companies like UPS and DHL that provide all the supply change facilities for a business) offer different services and have



Camila Jaramillo

different business segments, the courses of Business and Market strategy were key. In those courses, professors teach you how to allocate prices when a company offers multiple products and give very good insights on how to understand and react to the strategies of the competitors depending on the concentration of the market.

Nevertheless, I think that the most important skills that I acquired in TSE are not related to one specific course, but with the capacity to understand general economic problems. During my Master at TSE, I got the opportunity to analyse some business cases that include situations such as mergers, acquisitions, location decisions, double marginalisation, and quantities and prices optimisation, which allows me to understand how the companies should compete depending on the market structure and what would be the principal aspects to consider in order to make a complete economic analysis of these situations. Also, at TSE, I received all the econometrics, data analysis, and quantitative knowledge necessary to support my work with quantitative arguments, thus making it strong and easier to understand for people with other backgrounds. ■

EEE – Econometrics and Empirical Econometrics

Current student: Valentina Narvaez

1. Which aspects of your chosen program were the most challenging?

I think one of the most challenging parts was at the beginning of the master. During the M1 we are not required to do much coding, thus the first challenge was to be patient and take the time to google questions about the packages, even the most basic ones, such as how to upload a CSV file in Python. Another challenge has been to find a balance between school work and personal life. We usually have several projects at the same time, however, if you plan well your projects, there is time to go out with friends and exercise.

2. Which was your favourite course(s) and why?

My favourite subject so far has been High Dimensional Modelling. Don't get me wrong it's a difficult subject. However, after taking the time to study and going through the slides, it was rewarding to understand the main concepts of the course, and even do an application using Singular Value Decomposition.



Valentina Narvaez

Current student: Vincent Larrieu

1. Which aspects of your chosen program were the most challenging?

During the EEE program, you will become familiar with several quantitative and econometric methods which are useful in economics. We mostly apply these methods to economic issues which, from my point of view, is the most interesting part of the program. Additionally, applying methods to concrete cases will provide you with some valuable experience to bring forth during interviews. However, as we mostly have 15 hours of courses per week and at least one project in each course, you have to be organised to not be overwhelmed by all the projects.

For those who are already comfortable in programming, it will be easier to manage this work.

I think this master is for those who would like to have solid-skills and gain experience in empirical project management to either continue in pure statistics/econometrics or apply these methods to a specific economic field.

2. Which was your favourite course(s) and why?

In the first semester, I think the most interesting course was Non-parametric Methods. Non-parametric Methods are used in a various range of econometrics and economics, such as measuring the distributional effects of a public policy on a population. It is easy to implement once you have the theoretical background. Finally, the projects we had to do made us improve our programming skills, which are highly valuable.

In the second semester, the most interesting course seems to be Program Evaluation. It was an interesting topic in M1 and the M2 course goes even further. It is great for students like me who would like to work in the public sector. Since the goal is to measure the impact of public policies, EEE students can link the program to a field in which they would like to evolve. Generally speaking, courses in the second semester are more interesting from my point of view, as we apply our skills to economic fields such as industrial organisation or finance.



Vincent Larrieu

Alumnus: Rolando Hernandez

1. What are you up to now?

I am a Research Assistant at the World Bank Development Research Group in Washington DC, United States. This group is the main research department inside the bank. I am currently working

with two researchers building comparable statistics on taxable income of firms across countries with different levels of income. The objective is to construct a cross-country firm dataset from administrative tax return data. With micro-level administrative tax data provided by government officials, we are able to produce a dataset with statistics on effective tax rates, reported profit margins and growth dynamics across firm size distribution. The project allows us to study other research questions including the evolution of firm-size distribution over the course of development, firms' behavioural responses to the tax system and the effects of tax reforms. Moreover, the department also provides daily academic seminars; an opportunity I have used to expand my knowledge in different areas of economic research.

2. Which skills, acquired from studying at the TSE, have you found useful?

As a former M1 Economics and M2 EEE student, I would say that my two years at TSE gave me different but complementary skills. The first year provided a strong theoretical understanding of various economic problems. These theoretical skills are extremely necessary for any RA position.

Yet, in my daily tasks, it is my technical background that allows me to produce all the necessary analysis. In my opinion, the strength of this M2 program comes from the strong technical skills gained during the course of the Master. Additionally, the ability to comfortably handle multiple programming languages is by far the most sought skill in many sectors. The program's structure for most of the courses is introducing an econometric method and then moving to technical exercises, which creates a great theoretical/technical balance that distinguishes EEE from the other M2 programs. ■



Rolando Hernandez

ERNA – Environmental and Natural Resource Economics

Current student: Isabelle Boudier

1. Which aspects of your chosen program were the most challenging?

The Master covers both theoretical and empirical aspects of environmental economics. Depending on the classes you take, there are more or less empirical papers to read. At first sight, it can be seen as a lot of work, especially at the beginning of the semester. However, I think it is necessary to understand the different situations that arise in the real world and the use of empirical methods. The hardest part is getting used to reading long papers.

2. Which was your favourite course(s) and why?

In the first semester, I liked the Valuing the Environment course because we studied different environmental valuation methods in various topics such as transportation, air quality, health, wildlife, forestry, etc. At the beginning of the class, we studied the theoretical foundations of different methods. Later on, we had to study in depth many papers about non-marketed goods, which I found interesting. Throughout the class, everyone



Isabelle Boudier

had to present a paper. The final evaluation was to perform a critique of a paper as well as a critique of another student's work. During the day of the presentations, the teacher launched a debate and it was up to each student to take part and present their own point of views. I think it was a good way to teach us to have a critical opinion. I also like the fact that we can choose our courses among many electives in the second semester.

Alumnus: Luke Edwards

1. What are you up to now?

I am about to start a position as a Climate Change and Land-Use Policy Officer as part of BirdLife, Europe's policy team based in Brussels. My role will be to help ensure that EU policies on the interface between climate action, agriculture, forestry, energy, and circular economy are ecologically sound and contribute to effective climate mitigation without increasing pressure on biodiversity. To achieve this, I will support and coordinate BirdLife Partnership's work on these policy areas, represent and promote BirdLife's views to the EU Institutions, as well as help design and deliver campaigns aiming to achieve policy priorities of both organisations.

2. Which skills, acquired from studying at the TSE, have you found useful?

The ERNA Ecology Track has ideally positioned me for this role by providing the skill set to identify and assess concurrent and legacy economic and environmental impacts from agricultural, energy and climate change policies on a regional scale, and the resulting impact on primary



Luke Edwards

sectors in individual countries. Courses at TSE provide the skills not only to analyse economic impacts of environmental policies, but also recognise and account for the economic benefits that biodiversity supplies through ecosystem services like pollination, provision of clean water, and carbon storage. This knowledge can be applied to policy decisions to assess whether policies result in the optimal use of natural resources, and sustainable harvest rates that preserve species populations.

The ecology courses completed in conjunction with Paul Sabatier University at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) in Moulis. They provide an understanding of the structure of ecosystems and the identification of key species, which if promoted through policy, can result in wider benefits to regional biodiversity. The combination of ecology and economics thus delivers skills to integrate ecological models into economic analysis in order to provide a more dynamic and holistic cost-benefit analysis and guidance for policies. ■

Finance

Current student: Alexandre Briois

1. Which aspects of your chosen program were the most challenging?

The most challenging part of the program I chose (FIRE M2) was definitely to adapt the way I handled theoretical problems, as they are quite different from what we learn in a classical economics program. The need to focus more on studying the P&L and the stakeholders instead of agents' theoretical behaviours was quite a new approach to me. In order to be able to

better understand some complex financial products, we have learnt about several techniques used by investors worldwide.

It was challenging to capture all the underlying effects of a given situation, especially on financial hedging strategies for instance. Despite the fact that many of the tools used in finance are widely known, these instruments are very often tricky and need to be understood thoroughly and handled properly by anyone wanting to work efficiently in the financial industry.



Alexandre Briois

2. Which was your favourite course(s) and why?

The course I liked the most was about asset pricing. It covered a lot of aspects of the industry operations, a part that I have found extremely interesting. Additionally, the knowledge acquired during this course turned out to be extremely valuable during my preparation for job interviews. We also learnt about many different products and markets, so in a short period of time being prepared for many internships positions in financial institutions.

Alumnus: Emilien Simioni

1. What are you up to now?

I have been working for two years as a Business Developer at BinckBank, a Dutch online broker. My job consists of analysing the French and the European markets to detect business opportunities. The job

is mostly composed of business studies, strategic analysis and meetings with potential partners or clients. Once an opportunity is found and can be developed, my task is to manage the project, to make sure all relevant teams (developers, marketing, legal, etc...) are properly working on it and that deadlines are met. The financial industry is a challenging landscape with a lot of opportunities. The most important thing to understand is that our job is to make sure that we meet our clients' needs.

2. Which skills, acquired from studying at the TSE, have you found useful?

The Master in Finance I undertook in TSE (Financial and Risk Evaluation) taught me the basic skills required in Finance (derivatives, asset pricing, asset management...). I'm using those concepts on a daily basis to understand different situations, to analyse strategic moves but also

to provide my managers with business opportunities. More than a specific skill, I would like to say that TSE offers a unique training on how to think and how to act. TSE forms students to be open-minded, reactive and passionate about their jobs. ■



Emilien Simioni

ECL – Economics and Competition Law

Current student: Camille Quideau

1. Which aspects of your chosen program were the most challenging?

The Economics and Competition Law program is challenging in the depth of the knowledge offered and required by the courses. Competition is a substantial part of industrial organisation and merely being able to examine the market structure and firms' strategic behaviour is not enough. Aside from receiving lectures of increased technicality, we receive deeper insights into the functioning of competition law and the importance of competition authorities in the market. The program has a lot to do with studying and understanding both the economic theory of harm and the juridical law reasoning of competition policies. This requires a lot of reading and autonomous work. It can also be rather demanding to be constantly switching from law to economic theory and empirical work. However, this has been the particularity of the Competition and Law track since day one. Although, this year has been more enjoyable and exciting.

2. Which was your favourite course(s) and why?

My favourite course is Topics and Cases in Competition Policy, given by Yassine Lefouili. What I like the most about this class is that each lecture is very informative



Tristan Salmon

and teaches a lot about the practical approach a competition economist and/or lawyer should apply when assessing a case. This course runs on both semesters and offers the opportunity to learn from leading specialists in the field. Indeed, most of the lectures are given by practitioners from law firms, courts, competition authorities, and economic consultancies. The ECL program's similarity to the real world helps us become the kind of economist and/or lawyer we want to be.

Alumnus: Tristan Salmon

1. What are you up to now?

I currently work as an Analyst in the Brussels office of Compass Lexecon, an economic consulting firm. My work

mainly focuses on European Commission competition cases.

I started as an intern in April 2018 and was lucky enough to receive an offer to become a full-time analyst in October.

2. Which skills, acquired from studying at the TSE, have you found useful?

A big part of the job involves working with data to produce various analyses, so the applied econometrics classes I took in Toulouse were very useful and made the transition to working at Compass a lot easier.

The courses I took in industrial organisation and competition economics were also very important to understand the broader context of the cases we work on and to be able to discuss the particularities of the cases. Make sure that you make the most of your time at TSE to understand the industry as well as you can!

While the technical and theoretical tools that I learned were essential, I would say that the soft skills I learned at TSE were the most useful, especially when working with people from all over the world on a daily basis. Studying in a very diverse environment with people from different backgrounds, as well as being part of the TSEconomist team gave me the tools to quickly adapt to this new life in Brussels! ■

PPD – Public Policy and Development



William L'Heudé

Current student: William L'Heudé

1. Which aspects of your chosen program were the most challenging?

The most challenging aspect of the PPD program is surely the wide variety of topics we cover, from the economic effects of political institutions and governance issues to the industrial organization of infrastructure and network industries. This diversity requires us to be quite flexible in terms of theoretical thinking and empirical analysis.

In addition, almost all the courses made us complete a project which I find particularly interesting since it allows us to think about the original topics or innovative approaches not yet addressed in the literature. For instance, in the lecture “Empirical Methods in Development”, we carried out a group project on a randomised controlled trial aimed at assessing the effects of organising informal waste pickers in Namibia. This project was challenging as this issue had never been explored before.

2. Which was your favourite course(s) and why?

My favourite course during the first semester was the Microeconomics of Development. It focused on the economics of infrastructure in the energy, transport, water, information, and communication technology sectors and I particularly liked doing an empirical project on the air quality effect of the opening of a metro system in Mumbai.

During this second semester, I am enjoying two courses: Econometrics of Program

Evaluation and Topics in Applied Econometrics and Development. Their objective is to provide students with technical tools to implement policy evaluations. These lectures are very practical which is really useful to understand the development economics' literature and to gain insights into real-life applications.

Alumnus: José Carlos Ortega

1. What are you up to now?

I work at the OECD in Paris as a consultant for the Health Division. Since I finished my internship, I have been working on new approaches for forecasting obesity and overweight rates worldwide. I was lucky enough to be offered a position in the Health Division. My primary mission is to provide support regarding health statistics and data visualisation. Currently, I am involved in an ambitious project that tries to gather and share evidence about the state of the health in the EU. In partnership with the European Commission and the European Observatory on Health Policy, we are constructing country health profiles which provide a specific snapshot of the population's state of health and a brief assessment of the efficiency of health systems.

One of the main reasons I decided to stay at the OECD is to gain some health-related policy experience. Aiming at an eventual PhD degree in Health Economics, I'm always eager to learn further and get in-depth approaches of health systems and health behaviours. Now, I'm collaborating with and learning from experts and experienced people in the fields of economics which interests me the most. In the OECD, we have a fantastic environment that promotes multidisciplinary knowledge sharing, and this experience will hopefully help me find the right direction to develop a meaningful research topic I feel passionate about.

2. Which skills, acquired from studying at the TSE, have you found useful?

The courses in applied econometrics have been of great help, as most of the work done in health economics is empirical and requires a good knowledge of microeconomic techniques and ability to work with data. In this regard, courses like “Health Econometrics” and “Empirical

Methods for Development Economics” provided me with a good understanding of problems arising when designing empirical identification effect strategies.

In addition, many PPD courses are focused on explaining the complexity of the social, political and economic systems in which policies try to intervene to fix market failures. Classes such as “Economic Effects of Political Institutions” were excellent to understand complex links and interactions between the mentioned systems and the cautiousness that should be maintained in any policy intervention.

I also have significantly benefited from the very international soul of TSE. Thanks to the university's multicultural environment, I now feel very comfortable working in an international organization. Moreover, the network of friends I have been able to develop during my studies is very valuable to me, both in a professional and a personal level. I would even go beyond and say that every TSE alumni is a friendly hand who is of great help when needed.

However, what I probably value the most about TSE is its spirit devoted to rigorous and honest scientific research. It may just sound like the slogan of the university, but it is true indeed. At TSE, I developed my passion for economics and understood how necessary it is to be honest in what we do. I believe these two values are very well appreciated by the private, the academic and the public sector, especially nowadays that our field has become discredited and that the world challenges are in need of good economics. ■



José Carlos Ortega

ECO-STAT – Statistics and Econometrics



Bastien François

Current student: Bastien François

1. Which aspects of your chosen program were the most challenging?

The main objective of the Statistics and Econometrics Master's degree is to provide students with a solid base in the major areas of applied statistics. It results in having many classes and projects on various fields of applications, such as Big data, Data Mining or Time Series. This allows us to have an overview of different statistical approaches and to develop a wide range of statistical tools, ready for use in a professional context. Although it can sometimes be sometimes hard to find enough time to delve into every subject covered in class, it is a great opportunity for students to expand statistical knowledge alongside both leading researchers and business professionals.

2. Which was your favourite course(s) and why?

Extreme Value Theory is my favourite course so far. It provides statistical tools to

predict the occurrence of rare events. The domains of application of Extreme Value Theory are large and include financial events (financial crises), insurance (claims due to catastrophic events), earth sciences (hurricanes), etc. Taking this elective course has been really appealing to me since it has allowed me to understand very important methods to analyse all kinds of rare events. Anticipating large-magnitude impacts on extreme events is of great importance for decision-makers, which makes this course fascinating for future economists.



Guillaume Simo

Alumnus: Guillaume Simo

1. What are you up to now?

Since the beginning of November, I am working as an AI engineer/data scientist for Decathlon Canada, in Montreal. Having completed my M2 internship at Decathlon Belgium in Brussels, I received a few job offers. One of them was from a consulting firm in the South of France, while two others were from Decathlon:

in Brussels, and in Montreal, where the firm's inaugural Canadian store is located.

I am currently working mainly on retail personalisation by implementing algorithms for the personalised recommendation of products. Each member of the team is "in charge" of a project, but we often work together. This means that I am involved in image analysis, models of sports recommendations, and in work on dashboards used to make data accessible internally.

2. Which skills, acquired from studying at the TSE, have you found useful?

As a data scientist, I would say that the programming skills I learned at TSE were the most useful. My current work requires me to make extensive use of Python, SQL, and a bit of R.

Furthermore, I believe that having had a lot of projects with deadlines to deal with, as well as group work with the statistical consulting, provided me with good training for professional work, where soft skills are just as important as the technical ones.

Concerning specific classes, "Introduction to big data" in M1, "Data mining" in M2, projects in Kaggle, as well as lessons taught by data science professionals were the most useful.

Finally, it is helpful to have acquired strong knowledge in mathematics, statistics, and econometrics, as this allows one to understand new machine learning models. Considering the speed at which this field is evolving, this is an essential quality. ■

ETE – Economic Theory and Econometrics

Current student: Nicolás Martínez Franco

1. Which aspects of your chosen program were the most challenging?

ETE's main goal is to select and prepare you for a PhD, and thus for a life of research. Since generally this is considered a very competitive career path, the master is designed to resemble it. The number of topics that teachers want to cover is very large, but they will rush on several occasions due to time limitations. You

are expected to learn many of those topics on your own, which might be quite challenging.

I would say that the biggest challenge is to handle the pressure and anxiety of the PhD's selection process. It will probably lead you to ask yourself: "Why did I choose to do this?" Which is why it is necessary to always keep in mind your goals and dreams. Having a good group of friends, to study with and who support each other, has been extremely important for me this year.

2. Which was your favourite course(s) and why?

Being the first building block of a PhD, all the courses cover the theory of different economic fields with the formality you should expect at a Graduate level. Even the 'applied' courses tend to focus more on the theory required for their use and not on actual applications. This can lead to some 'hard to endure' lectures in every course.

That said, the optional courses during the



Nicolás Martínez Franco

second semester will finally allow you to study the kind of specialised topics you will deal with in your research. Even with the huge workload of the master, I would advise you to attend seminars in your fields of interest. This will allow you to see more applied work and to think of better ideas for your M2 thesis.

Alumnus: Hippolyte Boucher

1. What are you up to now?

I'm in my 1st year of PhD at TSE. During this year we still have to take some advanced courses and at the end of the year, we will obtain a diploma. This is very similar to how other top PhD programs in

Economics work. Personally, I'm taking classes in Theoretical Econometrics and Public Economics as these are my main research interest for now. The workload is heavy but most of the PhD students, myself included, are still enjoying our courses.

If you are interested in doing a PhD, you should definitely apply to the M2 ETE. If you are accepted, you will be surrounded by very smart people, you will have the time to develop your own thoughts and you will go much further than in M2 since you will read a lot of papers from renowned journals (like *Econometrica*, the *Chicago Journal of Political Economy*, etc.). Additionally, at TSE, you have a lot of seminars every week, where professors and PhDs from other top Universities (including the Ivy League) present their work. You will hardly find anything as intellectually stimulating elsewhere.

2. Which skills, acquired from studying at the TSE, have you found useful?

I have always been into mathematics and statistics, that is why I completed the M1 Eco-Stats MAD, before starting the M2 ETE two years ago. In M1, I had good grades in Micro and Macro courses, but I did not really understand their core concepts. M2 ETE did more than fill that gap, I'm now familiar with most of the Micro



Hippolyte Boucher

and Macro concepts there are. Learning all of this was very difficult, I spent a tremendous amount of my time last year on Micro and Macro and not so much on Econometrics, which happens to be my strong subject. On the opposite side, other M2 ETE students had a stronger background in Microeconomics, Macroeconomics and Game Theory, so they struggled more with Econometrics and the rigorous maths required at the PhD level Micro and Macro.

Overall, whatever your initial background is, if you choose this M2, and even if you do not complete it, I can assure you: you will become a well-rounded economist ready to start a PhD in TSE and in other top universities. ■

Économie Appliquée



Helena Le Mezo

Current student: Helena Le Mezo

1. Which aspects of your chosen program were the most challenging?

The program is very general and covers many different topics: macroeconomics, international trade, quantitative marketing, and the evaluation of public policies are all examples of courses we have to take.

While this can be a positive thing, it also means that we must often work independently if we want to learn something specific. This implies speaking with professors and letting them know that there is a topic you'd like to cover. Fortunately, the program is still quite new and the professors are very open, and are often happy to adapt their curriculum to our needs and interests. This is, however, only possible if you are proactive and talk to the professors, which can be challenging at first.

2. Which was your favourite course(s) and why?

All the classes were interesting, especially since some of the professors come from the private sector (Matteo Mogliani from Bank of France, for instance), and are thus a great source of inspiration and insight. This is particularly helpful when thinking of what we would like to do after

graduation, and what we can learn and do in order to get there.

I especially enjoyed the Public Policy class. I am interested in macroeconomics and central banking, and while we do have a class covering macroeconomics, the material was not covering the evaluation of public monetary policy. The professor was receptive to my concern and adapted a module in which we spent some time looking at a policy that was very relevant to my interests and career inspirations.

Alumnus: Raphaël Sitruk

1. What are you up to now?

I am currently working at the Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (CSA) as an audience analyst and, more broadly, as a data analyst. I applied for this position after completing a six months internship at the CSA.

Using data of television and radio audiences, I produce monthly audience records and also analysis on more specific topics.

As a data analyst, I am also working with a large amount of data, from which I need to extract insightful results. In addition to this, I am in charge of the automatised process. This will, for instance, consist of extracting and sorting data from existing files in an automatic manner.

To summarise, the goal of my work is to try to make the institution and the audiovisual world more efficient, with the help of data analysis.



Raphaël Sitruk

2. Which skills, acquired from studying at the TSE, have you found useful?

The first that come to mind are the programming skills. By learning how to work with a large amount of data – scraping, sorting, and providing results – through code, I was able to acquire several tools that opened up work opportunities in various areas. These programming skills are one of the reasons why I was able to apply for an internship and a position at the CSA.

Secondly, studying at the TSE taught me a very important skill: how to reason wisely. It may sound trite, but working with a lot of data can lead one to a situation where some results comfort our opinions, when they are actually methodologically wrong or biased. Being aware of this and following a clear thought process is vital. This is a skill that the TSE provided to every student, in large part due to the strong focus on the rigorous mathematical foundation of economics.

Thirdly, it is important to point out that, besides technical skills, studying at the TSE provides you with a vast network and a great head start to your career. The TSE's increasing reputation carries over to the job market, whatever Master you choose.



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The disappearance of sand

By Christophe Laugé

For most of us sand recalls the beach, holidays, and the sun but that's about it. In our daily lives, we do not pay much attention to this insignificant matter. But is sand really that common? Is it in finite quantity and will it always be faithful to our holiday appointments? And beyond the coast, what is its real impact on our lives?

to be built. A larger building, such as a hospital, needs about 3,000 tons. A kilometre of highway uses at least 30,000 tons of sand. And a nuclear power plant swallows up to 12 million tons. The amount of sand consumed each year exceeds 40 billion tons which makes it the most used natural resource in the world after air and water.

the oceans that we take the majority of sand that serves to feed an ever more voracious clientele.

“Sand is the hidden hero of our time. It is everywhere and yet few people are aware of it.”

Sand is the hidden hero of our time. It is everywhere and yet few people are aware of it. When melted it is usually transformed into glass, but not only. Sand is the source of silicon dioxide, a mineral component that plays a significant role in manufacturing detergents, paper, dehydrated food, hair spray, toothpaste, cosmetics, and a multitude of products surrounding us. It is also a source of strategic minerals such as silicon, thorium, titanium, which are all necessary for our hyperconnected society. It is the basis of microprocessors, computers, bank cards,

The sand market is huge, and the grainy industry is doing great. Roads are deteriorating, which need to be redone, bridges also need to be renovated, people still need homes, buildings, etc. But meeting the demand is not always easy. Unlike popular belief, sand is not easy to find. Back in the days there were open-pit quarries of sand and gravel. But all the “easy accessible” and cheap resources have already been consumed. Then we switched to extracting sand in riverbeds, but we noticed that it could lead to more floods. Now we turn to seabed sand but we begin to realize that there are also many side effects. The ocean floor is not miles of sand deep. It is a thin layer that is habitat to microorganisms which feed the base of the food chain. Collecting that sand, which took hundreds of thousands of years to form, disrupts fishing in the area and landscape on shore. Yet it is here at the bottom

Dubai is a striking example of this voracity. In a few decades this fishing village has become a sandbox where everything is allowed provided that it is unique and pharaonic. But in Dubai the delusions of grandeur devours a lot of sand. Huge amounts of sand are used to make concrete but also to gain ground on the sea with artificial islands. In 2000 the land value in Dubai had soared so high that it was cheaper to build artificial islands rather than buying lands. This result is fascinating but also fearsome regarding the results of land speculation. In 2003 Dubai decided to launch an extravagant project “The World”. Consisting of 300 artificial islands supposed to draw the map of the world, the project gobbled 450 million tons of sand pumped off the coast of Dubai. But today the construction of “The World” has stopped. The overexploitation completely liquidated the sand reserves. Of course we can suppose it is not a problem since Dubai is right next to the desert. So why does not Dubai just use it? They have tried, but it gave up.



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