



INSTITUT DE RECHERCHES
ECONOMIQUES ET SOCIALES

IRES SEMINARS 2007-2008 : What is the future of the French economy? The discussion of trade unions on new chal- lenges

Corporate strategies, changes in the productive system and their impact on employment and work

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Deindustrialisation, relocation and financialisation of the economy are all topics that have dominated recent political and social debates - both in France and, more generally, in Europe. Some think that it is necessary to adapt to the new realities of globalisation; others that they should be fought. It is therefore essential to understand, in order to take more effective action.

Objectives: With this in mind, it is a matter of contributing to a better understanding of companies' strategies, as far upstream as possible, as well as their impact on corporate governance, industrial relations, processes of innovation, employment, work and the areas where they establish themselves. In order to analyse them, it is necessary to take into account changes in the productive system, which are now well known, and public policies that are implemented at different (local, national and European) levels. Lessons can be drawn by, on the one hand, attempting to formulate shared diagnoses of these issues, and, on the other, by proposing guidelines for public debate. This would thus promote involvement of the players concerned, by giving priority to collective anticipation, rather than to the prevailing culture of adapting to constraints.

Positioning: These seminars provide an opportunity for discussions and comparisons, using applied research, results of experiences and first-hand accounts. Each of the eleven sessions will bring together researchers, company managers and union/employee representatives. In addition, employer organisations, local authorities, the French and European administrations, experts and so forth will be invited depending on the topics covered. The 'Made in Europe' label is thus intended to highlight the major challenge of building Europe, based both on global competitiveness and social responsibility.

Themes: In globalised markets, company size remains a fundamental element of competitiveness. Although it was not new, the powerful process of concentration from the 1990s onwards, which is on the increase, does nevertheless have its own features: on the one hand, there has been a transition from strategies of internationalisation to ones

A presentation and report of each session will be provided and made available on the IRES website:
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of globalisation, where it is a matter of having a world stature as quickly as possible; on the other hand, strategies of diversification and conglomerates are giving way to strategies of refocusing and outsourcing of various kinds. At the heart of both of these trends, external growth with F&As, combining industrial and financial rationales, is playing a key role. We will therefore analyse some symbolic cases of F&As, amongst the numerous recent or ongoing operations between major groups (Arcelor/Mittal, Air France/KLM, Pechiney/Alcan, Sanofi/Aventis, Crédit Lyonnais/Crédit Agricole, etc.), and also SMEs.

Other companies favour long-term strategies of internal growth. They count first and foremost on fundamental mechanisms of competitiveness and its decisive criteria, namely innovation and proactivity for reducing uncertainty, as well as flexible organisation. Toyota and Saint Gobain are good examples of this approach based on sustainable growth, which is less influenced by the financialisation of the economy. The case of Alstom reminds us of the fact that when a company is experiencing difficulties, which threaten its very survival, a strategy involving internal mobilisation can open up new prospects.

In relation to the strategies of corporate groups, it is essential to identify the situation of small and medium-sized companies - namely their growth and funding policies, as well as the new levers they need to mobilise, in order to perform well, and their ability to become international, while at the same time keeping close links with the areas they come from. However, depending on whether they are subsidiaries of a major group, independent companies or subcontractors, their greater or lesser dependence on their environment can have a different impact on employment, the development of work and also on the location of their sites.

A political initiative can also be the source of an industrial and commercial project. Some European countries have taken the initiative of pooling their efforts for promoting the creation of world-class European corporate groups in areas that are considered to be strategic. The study of Airbus will enable us to draw some lessons about such forms of cooperation, which have transformed State action regarding technological and industrial policy and have led to new forms of network organisation.

Downstream, there have been major changes in the relationship between industry and commerce as a result of developments in retailing, which is adapting to new consumer behaviour. Besides the regulatory and competitive framework within the commerce sector, the development of relations between industry and commerce is dictated by changes in the architecture of markets in the knowledge-based economy.

Finally, during the last session, we will draw lessons from the research, experiences and discussions in order to attempt to draw up shared diagnoses and policies for action in a perspective of sustainable development.

Programme: all the sessions will take place on Thursday afternoons, from 2.30.p.m. to 6.00.p.m. at the latest.

- 22 November 2007 **Session 1.** General diagnosis: a new look at new realities.
- 20 December 2007 **Session 2.** Successfull of the firms: what contribution to the French economy? Strategies by internal growth (I): the case Alstom and the case Danone.
- 30 January 2008 **Session 3.** Successfull of the firms - Strategies by internal growth (II): the case Saint-Gobain and the case Toyota.
- 14 February 2008 **Session 4.** Global strategies and F&A (I): the case Air France/KLM and the case Mittal/Arcelor.
- 27 March 2008 **Session 5.** Points of views of the leaders (president and general secretary) French trade unions.
- 24 April 2008 **Session 6.** To speak of the nationality of the companies, is-it realistic today? The case Airbus.
- 29 May 2008 **Session 7.** Roles of small and medium-sized companies and Revolution in the relations between companies and distribution.
- 26 June 2008 **Session 8.** What economic and industrial policies for France in the future?

This cycle of seminars has a scientific committee (which is in the process of being established). The seminars will be introduced on 22 November 2007 by Eric Besson, Secretary of State for future projections and evaluating public policies, and concluded on 26 June 2008 by Edith Cresson, former Prime Minister (1991-1992) and European Commissioner for research and education (1995-1999).