



Joseph Merlot - Joseph Leclercq Prize 2018-2019

The Prize Joseph Merlot-Joseph Leclercq was created by the Belgian Section of CIRIEC in 1964 and aims to reward a PhD in the field of public economics.

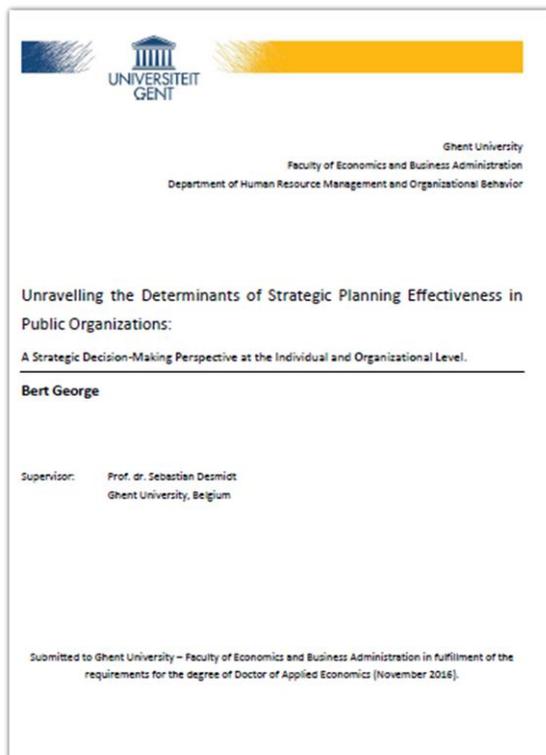
It is intended to honour the memory of two pioneering promoters of public enterprise Joseph Merlot and Joseph Leclercq. It aims to stimulate research on the public economy, especially in the area of services of general interest, public policy and evaluation tools.

In an amount of 3 500 EUR for a doctoral thesis, the Merlot Joseph – Joseph Leclercq is awarded every three years by a jury. In the absence of a doctoral thesis justifying the Prize, a dissertation (Master) can be rewarded to the tune of 1,150 euros.

The **2018-2019 Prize** is financed by the Province of Liège, RESA (main operator of the electricity and gas distribution networks in the Province of Liège) and intercommunal from Liège (AIDE, CILE, Intradel). These sponsors thus perpetuate the memory of the founders of the Belgian Section of CIRIEC.

Complete rules in French and Dutch available on the CIRIEC website:

<http://www.ciriec.uliege.be/notre-reseau/sections-nationales/belgique/>



The 2018-2019 award winner is Bert George for his thesis ***“Unravelling the Determinants of Strategic Planning Effectiveness in Public Organizations: A Strategic Decision-Making Perspective at the Individual and Organizational Level”*** focusing on the public sector.

(A brief overview, see verso)

Biography, Abstract and Thesis are available on the CIRIEC website :

<http://www.ciriec.uliege.be/en/our-network/national-sections/belgium/>

A brief overview the Merlot-Leclercq Prize 2018

The thesis of Bert GEORGE investigates **the relation between strategic planning and decision-making in public organizations**, based notably on case studies in the Flemish local government and in Flemish pupil guidance centers.

Strategic planning is an accountability instrument

- providing insights on the priorities of an organization;
- and also ensuring that goals and means are balanced in order to define desirable but also feasible strategies for the organization.

It has been argued that strategic plans are static and rigid tools that do not fit the complex, dynamic and adaptive environment of public organizations.

This doctoral thesis looks into two aspects of this complexity: stakeholder participation and organizational behaviour:

- to check if the government/public authorities are citizen-centric and responsive to changing demands and new forms of voicing.
- to understand the human element: Who was involved? Was there room for discussion and debate? How did group processes influence strategic plans and financial documents and reports?

Focusing on micro and macro-level issues, analysing 225 municipal strategic plans, and basing on surveys of over 2000 politicians, decision makers and planning team members, Bert GEORGE's high-quality work offers real insights about how strategic planning has been practiced within public organizations.

Its last chapter (8) presents what practitioners can learn about:

- the role of politics in strategic planning
- the necessity to have flexible and participatory planning
- the optimal composition of the planning team accompanying the process
- and how to bridge the divide between local politics and administration.