

CIRIEC International Scientific Commission Social Economy

Proposed working group

SSE and Territories: between interaction and co-construction

Leaders:

Nadine Richez-Battesti (MCF Economy, Aix-Marseille Université-LEST-CNRS)

Xabier Itçaina (CR CNRS Political Science, Centre E. Durkheim Sciences Po Bordeaux - Marie Curie Fellow, European University Institute Florence)

The territory as a social construction

The relation to the territory is a central element of the social and solidarist economy (SSE) to the point of being presented by the players in the field as one of its constitutive values. The forms of anchorage and territorial dynamics of the SSE are diverse, are the subject of institutional arrangements and merit detailed characterisation.

At mesotheoretical level the SSE lends itself to a dialogue between the various institutionalist, proximitist and territorialist approaches. These approaches share a critical stance towards those postulating the unicity of a rational agent, axiologically neutral and a-spatial, for which the territory is reduced to an external spatial variable with low explanatory value.

In contrast, we consider the territory as a social construction, or "a gathering of players in a given spatial context that seeks to bring out, then attempt to resolve under environmental constraint, a shared societal or production problem" (Pecqueur and Itçaina, 2012). Territorial governance, in that sense, may be taken to have a transversal meaning, both socio-economic and political, as referring to a process "of coordination of players, but also of appropriation of resources and construction of the territoriality" (Leloup, Moyart, Pecqueur, 2005) in which the public players are nodal but not monopolistic. The whole challenge then consists of enrolling the territorial players, including the SSE, in the process in order to "encourage their adhesion, participation and involvement in an idea of collective construction of systems of public action" (*ibid.*, p. 329).

The "new" status of the SSE and the new chains as territorial constructions

From then on, and from a methodological viewpoint, the interactions between the SSE and the territory should be approached as much from the angle of governance of enterprise as from that of territorial governance. The territorial reference is situated at the confluence of entrepreneurial models, public policies and socio-territorial mobilisations. In particular, the emergence and consolidation, in many countries, of multi-partner statuses for the organisations of the SSE bringing together private, "social private" and public players in the name of the territorialised general interest provides a solid base for comparison. If the Italian social cooperatives, for instance, are the classic example in the matter, a good many institutional innovations of the same order have emerged elsewhere. For Southern Europe alone, the SCIC in France, the social initiative cooperatives in Spain, the social cooperatives and the community cooperatives in Italy are significant examples of these institutional arrangements with strong territorial rootedness.

It is then a case of studying these new formulas by combining a socio-economic approach and a double political approach (public policies and social movements).

At socio-economic level, it will be a case of defining the contribution of the SSE to territorial regulation in the sense of the "mode of interaction and coordination of activities, employment and incomes and capital flows that allow a guarantee of the regularity of the production system" (Demoustier, Richez-Battesti, 2010: 8). Is the territory no more than one of the elements of their contextualisation, one resource among others?

How have the organisational innovations proper to the SSE helped over the past 30 years to transform the relation of the "civil economy" (Bruni and Zamagni, 2009) with its territory? How have the organisational innovations helped to internalise the territory within organisations of the SSE? Are we witnessing strategic changes within organisations, given the development of a more territorialised, more open governance in the territory? How does the link with the territory find expression and affirm itself within the organisation: is it embodied only in the authorities of governance? Or does it draw support from the new internal mechanisms for linking (strategic committees and other scientific committees, ...)? What are the effects of the local context on these organisations? And how are the risks of localism and enclosure to be avoided?

In another perspective, how do we evaluate the emergence, the development and the first effects of these new territorial networks of the Social and Solidarist Economy, most often carried by the players of the SSE: we are thinking mainly of the territorial Centres of economic cooperation that are developing in France or, again, the clusters of the Social and Solidarist Economy. What links do they maintain with the other players in the territory? What is the situation in other national contexts?

Beyond that, at meso-economic scale, what are we to make of the renewal and diversification of the short production chains, often at the initiative of the players of the SSE, whether they concern agriculture, trade, energy production, or the taking into account of waste management. How do we assess the effects on a territory in terms of modes of cooperation, the fixing of prices and strategies for coproduction and their forms of incorporation in the territories? Can we define ideal sectoral or national models?

Finally, because the organisational and statutory innovations are also likely to affect indirectly the more traditional forms of the SSE, such as the cooperative banks or agricultural cooperatives, generally of large size; do these organisations reinvent their relation to the territory and according to which rules and procedures?

The relation with policy must then be analysed from two angles. The first, centred on public policies, refers to the contribution of the SSE to territorial governance, this time understood as a "framework of institutional rules and procedures for decision-making on the mode of territorial development through public debate, public action and, more precisely, the production of public policies" (Demoustier, Richez-Battesti, 2010). The participative imperative was able to bring different players together in a joint approach to territorial governance and the institutionalisation of the SSE (Bassi, 2010; Ségas, 2007; Jérôme, 2010). However, the assumption of perfect congruence between the SSE and horizontal territorial governance, in particular via the new statutes and cooperation mechanisms, must be questioned (Itçaina, Pecqueur 2012). How do we approach the relation between social capital, social economy and local development policies (Kay, 2005; Evans and Syrett, 2007)? What are the territorial processes for publicisation of support for the SSE, including in their conflictual dimensions? Are their different configurations of processes of institutionalisation of the SSE as a sector of public action? How are we to characterise the resultant process of standardisation? Finally, what is the impact of the scale of sectoral policies (Jullien and Smith, 2008) on the dynamics of the SSE?

The second policy concerns the links between the SSE and social movements, considered here in their territorial translations. The sociology of social movements manifests a new interest in

cooperativism and the social economy as organisational translations of movements in search of alternative action, often by default access to policy (Soule 2012; Schneiberg et al. 2008). By way of an example Arthur et al. have also seen in the mobilisations around the takeover as a cooperative of the Tower Colliery mine in Wales the expression of a contested social space (*contentious space*) (Arthur et al. 2004). Through the ethnographic analysis of the Hotal Bauen, set up as a workers' cooperative in Buenos Aires, Faulk (2008) points out how cooperativism, as a social movement (distinguishing between formal cooperativism, affective cooperativism or *compañerismo* and community participation) creates a space for the emergence of new conceptions of work and of citizenship, conceptions alternative to the dominant neoliberal model. In Italy the social cooperatives have managed to become one of the organisational instruments of mobilisations of the civil society fighting organised crime (Buccolo 2013). In the Basque Country and in Quebec the complex historic articulation between cooperativism and territorial identity mobilisations under various banners is also emphasised. More recently it has been a case of observing whether the anti-austerity mobilisations, particularly in Southern Europe, have completed their protesting action by local innovations in the matter of the social and solidarist economy. This opens up a field of discussion, still largely unexplored, on the role of social movements in the production, implementation and acceptance of organisational innovations of the SSE.

Objectives

This working group intends to culminate in a coherent collective comparative publication that will not be just a simple compilation of national and/or regional monographs. Recentring on "new" multi-partner statuses - differing by country - could be a common base to that effect and possibly extend to the renewal of short chains. It will be the group's task to define the territorial scales to be set in comparison. However, it strikes us as necessary, considering the theoretical and empirical objectives, that the research is based on observations on the ground and is not limited to a comparison of nominal national instruments.

Calendar

Two meetings per year over two years (a total of 4 meetings)

Timetable:

- A first show of interest could be presented for early September in 1page:
 - provisional title of the proposed communication,
 - name of authors
 - territory (territories) and organisation(s) concerned,
 - nature of questioning and WG method of integration in the problem
 - state of progress of the terrains

- first meeting: during the CIRIEC symposium in Antwerp on 24-26 October 2013 (debate and statements on expected production for those attending the Symposium)
- 2nd meeting and first draft: end of 1st quarter 2014
- 3rd meeting and second draft: 3rd quarter 2014
- 4th meeting: final texts: 1st quarter 2015
- finalisation of the work/review end of 1st quarter 2015

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