



Bernard THIRY  
Philippe BANCE (eds)

THE ECONOMY OF THE COLLECTIVE INTEREST:  
75 YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH



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# **The Economy of the Collective Interest: 75 years of scientific research**

**Bernard THIRY and Philippe BANCE (eds)**

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**CIRIEC (International Centre of Research and Information on the Public, Social and Cooperative Economy) is a non-governmental international scientific organization.**

Its objectives are to undertake and promote the collection of information, scientific research, and the publication of works on economic sectors and activities oriented towards the service of the general and collective interest: action by the State and the local and regional public authorities in economic fields (economic policy, regulation); public utilities; public and mixed enterprises at the national, regional and local levels; the so-called “social economy” (not-for-profit economy, cooperatives, mutuals, and non-profit organizations); etc.

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Préface

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  - II. Les enseignements de l’histoire du CIRIEC. Ancrage sociétal, mode opératoire et perspectives pluralistes de la recherche scientifique, P. Bance
- Article 1. Milhaud, E. (1908). Notre programme. *Annales de la régie directe*, 1(1), pp. 1–6.

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## Scientific Editors of the publication

**Philippe Bance** is Professor of Economics at the University of the French Antilles (UA) and CNRS laboratory LC2S - France. He was President (2014-2021) of the International Scientific Council of CIRIEC, Vice-President of the Université de Rouen Normandie, France (2007-2010), Science Adviser at AERES and then Hcéres (High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education, France) (2010-2018). His main papers since 2015 concern: Social solidarity economy and public policies (*Revue d'économie régionale et urbaine*, 2021), Commons (APCE special issue, 2021), multilevel governance and contingent valuation method (*Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration and Public Policy*, 2019, *International Journal of Public Administration*, 2018, *Politics & Policy*, 2017, *Revue française d'économie*, 2016), Public enterprises and the general interest (APCE special issue, 2015). He has also edited or coedited six books, four at the Presses Universitaires de Rouen et du Havre (PURH): *Numérique, action publique et démocratie* (2021), *Éducation et intérêt général* (2018), *Quel modèle d'État stratège en France ?* (2016) and *Internalisation des missions d'intérêt général par les organisations publiques* (2015); *The Routledge Handbook on State-Owned-Enterprises* (2020) and one with CIRIEC Studies Series, *Providing Public Goods and Commons* (2018).

**Bernard Thiry** is Director of CIRIEC since 1990. Holding a PhD in Economics from the University of Liège and a degree from Stanford University, Bernard Thiry is now Professor emeritus, after a long career at the University of Liège, teaching economics. He was Director of the Creg (Gas and Electricity Regulatory Commission), President of the Forem management committee (Walloon Office for professional training and employment), President of the National Union of Socialist Mutual Health Insurance Funds (UNMS). From 2008 to 2016, he was CEO of Ethias (mutual insurance company). He is Director of several regional and local public companies and he chairs since early 2022 Socofe, a Walloon public holding active in the energy sector. He is also the author of numerous articles and books in various fields, such as public and social economy.



## Foreword

For 75 years, the scientific network CIRIEC has dedicated all its work to those forms of economy that contribute to collective interest, whether they are public or in the social and cooperative economy. All along those years and thanks to the prolific output of its researchers, CIRIEC has remained faithful to the spirit of its founder, Professor Edgard Milhaud, ardent militant for cooperation between the various stakeholders in the economy that serve the general interest. In his view, coordinated objectives needed to be pursued after the war, in order to help "*a more conscious mankind in becoming master of its destiny in an ever-increasing degree while at the same time securing the emancipation of the masses from all forms of exploitation and servitude in the full respect of the liberties and rights of the human being as well as peace*"<sup>1</sup>. When reading the papers in this collection by Bernard Thiry and Philippe Bance, you will notice that the research published up to now is well in line with the will to promote economic models that create collective value and are factors of peace.

Today, in the light of the excesses of unbridled globalisation and the inequalities they generate, confronted with the challenges of the economic, social and ecological transition upsetting the world, but also with a view to the lasting structural effects of the digital revolution, the theses developed by CIRIEC take a particular importance and a very modern character. In its work, CIRIEC has never shied away from a debate on the means that States have to conduct their public policies, and among these means, public, national or local enterprises. The researchers think that after years of privatisation and deregulation, these enterprises need to play a new role in economic development, in innovation, in future-oriented and strategic sectors, and with modes of governance adapted to the objectives pursued and to the current context. The same applies to the social and solidarity economy, turned towards humanity and the environment, which has shown its resilience in times of crisis and takes a fair share in the general interest approach. Public economy, social economy in all its different components - cooperative, mutual, associative - definitely constitute a major opportunity to transform the economy, for less inequality, more democracy, to finally become actors of an economic system taking into account the needs of the people.

Therefore, many thanks to all the researchers of the scientific network for enabling CIRIEC to materialise its commitment to pursue Edgard Milhaud's work, and to develop academic research on economic models dedicated to collective interest and the satisfaction of social needs.

Our world really needs it.

Alain Arnaud  
President of CIRIEC

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<sup>1</sup> Edgard Milhaud, The International Centre for Research and Information on Collective Economy, In APCE, 1948/1, p. 27.

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Bernard Thiry and Philippe Bance



*Edgard Milhaud*  
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