

Editorial

This special issue marks the 50th anniversary of the journal *Économie et Statistique*, now *Economie et Statistique / Economics and Statistics*. Adopting, of course, a long-term perspective, this issue brings together a series of papers on some of the major trends in the French economy over the past half-century or in more recent decades, in areas such as the distribution of value added, growth and income distribution, changes in the labour market and social structure, and inequalities. It also addresses the new challenges facing our economies, with the question of artificial intelligence on the one hand and the emergence of environmental concerns on the other. Finally, two papers also examine developments in some of the techniques used by studies published in the journal, namely econometric policy evaluation methods and microsimulation models. This collection of papers does not claim to be exhaustive since it would have been impossible to cover all the topics examined by the journal in its 500 or so issues published over the past five decades. However, it is indicative of the progress made and of the position now held by the journal – specifically, an academic-level journal devoted to providing quantitative insights into the economy and society and publishing articles that draw on a large amount of data produced by the official statistical system, whether or not their authors work within that system.

The journal's current position is the result of a process of gradual change. When the journal was founded, Jean Ripert, then Director General of Insee, presented it in the editorial of the first issue as “Insee's flagship journal, intended for specialists but also for a non-specialist audience” (Jean Ripert, 1969. *La réforme des publications à l'Insee, Économie et Statistique* n°1, pp. 3-5). The aim was to present “the work of the Institute”, to “guide the reader through statistical production” and to “describe and disseminate the available data”. Jean Ripert also noted that Insee could not claim to reach all audiences effectively, but that its responsibility was to “act as the first link in the chain” and to “facilitate the work of those who come after us – the press, but also intermediary bodies, associations, teachers, companies, etc.”

It was in this line that the articles were initially published, then the journal evolved more clearly towards the side of research: today, the journal is no longer focused on disseminating the work of Insee statisticians – the Institute's editorial offer has expanded, thereby fulfilling this objective – but stands rather as an academic journal published by a statistical institute, a very special situation which has hardly any equivalent. The journal has evolved, but its goals remain fundamentally the same: to inform the social and economic debate with facts and observations and to allow all parties involved to use the publication to ensure it reaches the widest possible audience. Two essential requirements must always be reconciled and cannot be contradictory: first, the quality of analyses and, second, clarity of expression.

Today, the journal is no longer the sole preserve of Insee's economists and statisticians, having gradually begun in the 1990s to welcome external contributors, who now account for the vast bulk of the journal's authors. Should we regret these changes? Absolutely not. After all, they reflect another very positive development, which is that all researchers, whether or not they belong to Insee, can now access all the information collected by the official statistics system, including, of course, aggregate level statistics, but also detailed data on individuals, households and firms, which provide the material for so many studies. Long gone are the days when only an Insee researcher could gain access to certain survey data or administrative files.

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Alongside this, quality standards have improved. Originally, publication was only subject to internal approval from above. Today, the manuscripts submitted are systematically assessed by anonymous reviewers as part of a standard peer review system. And the journal, like any academic journal, now has a formal governance structure with a Scientific Committee since 2003 and an Editorial Advisory Board since 2014.

As a natural corollary of these changes, the papers published in the journal do not necessarily reflect the views of Insee. Indeed, the readers are systematically reminded that “the views and opinions expressed by the authors are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the institutions to which they belong or of Insee itself.” This precaution is not always sufficient, and when there is a debate over a paper, it is often presented as “an Insee study”. From my point of view as a publishing director, I find the confusion regrettable, although it does not, and indeed should not, cause us to avoid a subject or reject a paper on the grounds that it might generate controversy. In practice, informing debates cannot always be done by staying out of the debate.

The editors have always been, and remain, committed to facilitating access to articles, in particular with the use of “boxes”. While these were initially intended to accommodate the most technical developments so that they do not interfere with the ease of reading, they now contribute to a rigorous presentation of the sources used and their possible treatment. I am aware that this is not standard practice in academic journals, but I will nonetheless continue to defend the original model – an extremely useful model in my view – of a journal that sets high standards while at the same time striving to remain accessible to readers who may not necessarily be experts in the topics discussed.

In very recent years, the journal has continued to evolve with the aim of achieving greater international openness. This is precisely why *Économie et Statistique* has become “*Economie et Statistique/Economics and Statistics*”, published simultaneously in French and English, and both available on the Insee website. However, the journal has remained faithful to the same key principles, including openness to different topics and disciplines and a dual commitment to official statistics and research, which give it a distinctive place both at Insee and within the field of French journals.

While I very much hope that this anniversary will be followed by many more, I would also like to thank the editors-in-chief we have had since 1969, the academics who have agreed to sit on the Scientific Committee over the past fifteen years, and all the reviewers working anonymously behind the scenes.

Jean-Luc Tavernier
Director General of Insee, Publishing Director

Former Editors-in-Chief :

Michel-Louis Lévy (1969-1972); Alain Desrosières (1973-1974); Bruno Durieux (1975); Catherine Blum-Girardeau (1975-1980); Claude Thélot (1981-1982); Daniel Temam (1983-1985); Alain Charraud (1986-1989); Philippe Domergue (1989-1993); Pierre Morin (1993-2011); Didier Blanchet (2011-2015); Laurence Bloch (2016-2018).

Former members of the Scientific Committee :

Antoine d’Autume (2004-2011); Lionel Fontagné (2004-2007); Jacques Freyssinet (2004-2009); Olivier Galland (2004-2007); Stéphane Grégoir (2004-2009); Roger Guesnerie (2004-2007); François Héran (2004-2011); Pierre Mohnen (2004-2007); Pierre Pestieau (2004-2009); Patrick Sevestre (2004-2007); Alain Chenu (2008-2017); Brigitte Dormont (2008-2012); Philippe Martin (2008-2009); Henri Sneessens (2008-2011); Antoine Bouët (2010-2015); David de la Croix (2010); Dominique Goux (2010-2015); Joël Maurice (2010-2018); Catherine Sofer (2012-2017).