Évolution et hétérogénéité des standards de mesure de l'inflation et du coût de la vie à travers le monde

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Evolution and Heterogeneity of Inflation and Cost of Living Measurement Standards Across the World

WORKSHOP
04.02.2026

Programme

10:30 - 10:45
Accueil & introduction
Organisatrices : Florence Jany-Catrice & Aykiz Dogan Chaire EQAM, LASTA, Université de Rouen-Normandie

10:45 - 11:30
Tracking the Cost of Living, for Whom and at What Price? A political economy of price indicators in Madagascar
Isabelle Guérin IRD-Cessma (UPC/Inalco/IRD)

11:30 - 12:15
Inflation Double Standard, or: How we learned to stop worrying and love house price inflation (US, UK, France, EU)
Maxence Dutilleul, CEE, Science Po

12:15 - 13:30 Déjeuner / Lunch

13:30 - 14:15
Quantifying Biases in the Measurement of Inflation and Purchasing Power in France
François Geerolf OFCE, CEPR

14:15 - 15:00
Accounting for Quality Change in the Swedish Consumer Price Index during the 20th Century
Daniel Berg & Rasmus Fleischer Department of Economic History and International Relations, Stockholm University

15:00 - 15:15
Pause-café / Coffee Break

15:15 - 16:00
Reflections on the Argentine Price Index
Cecilia Lanata-Briones Department of Economics, University of Warwick

16:00 - 16:45
The Compromises and Controversies of the Harmonized Consumer Price Index (HICP)
Florence Jany-Catrice & Aykiz Dogan Chaire EQAM, LASTA Université de Rouen-Normandie

16:45 - 17:30
Discussion générale / General discussion

Université de Rouen-Normandie
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10:30 - 11:45

Accueil et introduction des organisatrices

Florence Jany-Catrice & Aykiz Dogan
Chaire EQAM, LASTA, Université de Rouen-Normandie

10:45 - 11:30

Tracking the Cost of Living, for Whom and at What Price? A political economy of price indicators in Madagascar

Isabelle Guérin
IRD-Cessma (UPC/Inalco/IRD)

This contribution explores the production and meaning of price indicators in Madagascar, a post-colonial context characterized by a weak state, the prominence of international aid, and repeated food crises. We observe a profusion of indicators, data, and analyses related to prices. Such profusion illustrates not only different meanings of the cost of living but also fragmented economies and a fragmented mode of government in which nongovernmental organizations and international organizations play a leading role. Whatever their efforts, these initiatives struggle to capture the specific features of the cost of living in a context where the subsistence economy remains hardly convertible into numbers. Our analysis confirms the close links between statistical production and modes of government. The Malagasy Consumer Price Index coexists with many disparate initiatives aimed to cope with inequalities and emergencies, reflecting a country in the throes of repeated political, economic, and social crises. The presentation draws on a co-authored paper with Florent Bédécarrats, Flore Dazet, Mireille Razadrinfakoto and François Roubaud.

11:30 - 12:15

Inflation Double Standard, or: How we learned to stop worrying and love house price inflation (US, UK, France, EU)

Maxence Dutilleul
CEE, Sciences Po

This article examines a largely overlooked yet pivotal dimension of the financialization of the economy in the US, the UK, France, and the EU: the controversies surrounding the measurement of housing inflation. Through a historical reconstruction and comparative analysis of these debates, the article explains how a "flow-of-services" approach to accounting for the cost of owner-occupied housing came to prevail, ultimately leading to the exclusion of house prices from the official definition of inflation. It explores why countries with such different statistical systems and measurement traditions converged, from the 1990s onwards, on a dual standard for inflation that separates consumer prices from asset prices. The article identifies context-specific factors driving this convergence, including the mobilization of welfare economists in the US, the growing centrality of national accounts, and the influence of monetary policy on the creation of statistical norms. Emerging in the 1980s and 1990s, this shift in measurement reflects the institutionalization of a dual inflation standard and the decoupling of inflationary preferences within a newly emerging policy regime.

12:15-13:30 **Déjeuner / Lunch**

13:30 - 14:15

Quantifying Biases in the Measurement of Inflation and Purchasing Power in France

François Geerolf
OFCE, CEPR

This paper aims to quantify, as much as possible, several biases in the measurement of inflation and purchasing power in France. The analysis shall focus primarily on four dimensions: (i) the price/volume split for rents, in particular the exclusion of furnished rentals and the effects of rent control; (ii) the treatment of owner-occupied housing and the relevance of imputed rents in a context of rent control policies; (iii) the impact of quality adjustments, especially for technological goods and in the context of the green transition, including the impact of the extensive use of the bridged overlap method in France; and (iv) the effects of the growing use of scanner data for the measurement of food prices.

14:15 - 15:00

Accounting for Quality Change in the Swedish Consumer Price Index during the 20th Century

Daniel Berg & Rasmus Fleischer
Department of Economic History and International Relations, Stockholm University

Our monograph Varors värde (2023) is the first historical study of the Swedish CPI. It comes out of a three-year research project covering the period 1940-1990. Relying on a vast material of archival sources from Statistics Sweden, we have been able to unearth the various ways in which price statisticians have dealt with the problem of quality change, not only in theory but also practically, in relation to specific products. In particular, we have focused empirically on three categories: food, clothing and automobiles. With this completed study, we have attempted to lay the ground for further investigation in a field we frame as "critical index studies". We will conclude the presentation with an outlook to our new, ongoing project "Inflation measurement and the dark side of the digital", where the approach is somewhat more contemporary, international and perhaps speculative.

15:00-15:15 **Pause-café / Coffee Break**

15:15 - 16:00

Reflections on the Argentine Price Index

Cecilia Lanata-Briones
Department of Economics, University of Warwick

The first Argentine cost of living index was released privately in 1918, when many other similar price indices were published for the first time in different countries of the Global North. It was the first of its kind in Latin America. The second index was released in 1933 by an agency of the national statistical system. These two estimates had similarities and differences with their European counterparts that suggest some consensus as to how these indices had to be elaborated, following the guidelines of the ILO's International Conference of Labour Statisticians. This presentation will be an invitation to reflect on historical traits of cost-of-living indices, the predecessors of today's consumer price index, based on the traits of the Argentine cost-of-living index.

16:00 - 16:45

The Compromises and Controversies of the Harmonized Consumer Price Index (HICP)

Florence Jany-Catrice & Aykiz Dogan
Chaire EQAM, LASTA, Université Rouen-Normandie

This presentation focuses on the Harmonized Index of Consumer Prices (HICP), designed to meet the Maastricht convergence criteria and now central to European economic governance. Conceived by European experts around Eurostat as "a new indicator" after failed attempts at harmonizing national indices, the HICP materializes an alternative approach to statistical standardization in EU countries through regulatory coordination and compliance monitoring. We trace the HICP's trajectory to analyze the tensions between national sovereignty and supranational harmonization within the European Statistical System based on an indicator often perceived as the backbone of the legitimacy of national statistical institutes. A case study of France illustrates how the discrepancy between the HICP and the domestic index can contribute to social controversies over purchasing power, wage indexation and redistribution. Drawing on archival research, document analysis and interviews, we argue that the HICP not only embodies the political rationalities of European integration but also reconfigures public debates about measurement, expertise, and social justice within national contexts.

16:45-17:00 **Discussion générale / General discussion**