ABSTRACT

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Title : Business organisations and chambers of commerce : when a reform of chambers of commerce is voted in France in 2010, tensions among business representatives grow

Abstract: Our proposal, in this paper, is to study the daily functioning of chambers of commerce and industry and craft associations, more specifically their ways and means of intervention in local public policy. In other words, our aim is to study the so-called "fiscal" (tax based) business representative bodies along with their numerous interactions with the so-called "voluntary" business representative bodies (notably with employer organisations that put forward lists of candidates for the chambers' elections). This will imply firstly presenting the main rationale of the chambers' functioning and its evolution, and then underlining the rivalry among employer organisations that increases due to their different strategies to control these chambers, especially in a context of restructuration.

The first hand material used for this study is mainly based on interviews (sometimes repeated) with members of local federations or confederations of employer organisations as well as with members of the chambers of commerce. Both elected representatives and employees of these organisations were interviewed, even if the latter made themselves more accessible and more available. These meetings have also been opportunities for the collecting of written sources.

In this paper, we shall start by rapidly underlining the main aspects of the reform of consular chambers that is now taking place in France and their impact in terms of the functioning of these organisations. This will enable us then to show how employer organisations react to the evolution of what remains their main tool of intervention in the local economy, and how this ongoing reform makes tensions grow between competitive employer organisations when these haven't reached a solid cooperate agreement beforehand.