

## TSE researchers: week 3

19 December 2011: Farid GASMI

Farid is Professor of Economics at the University Toulouse 1 Capitole, and researcher at the Atelier de Recherche Quantitative Appliquée au Développement Economique (ARQADE). He has been a member of the Institut d'Économie Industrielle (IDEI), TSE's industrial research branch, since its creation in 1990 by Jean-Jacques Laffont, and held a position within the Groupe de Recherche en Économie Mathématique et Quantitative (GREMAQ), one of the TSE founding research groups, for 14 years before moving to the ARQADE group in 2007.

(1) Why did you choose to work at TSE?

Thanks to Jean-Jacques Laffont! After my schooling in Algeria I went to the US for my Masters & PhD (1988) in economics, both at the California Institute of Technology (CalTech). During my last year of graduate school, Jean-Jacques visited CalTech and I was lucky enough that the topic I was working on in empirical industrial organisation attracted his interest. We then began to collaborate on applied economics research projects during a period that lasted more than 12 years. When Jean-Jacques founded the IDEI in Toulouse in 1990, he naturally invited me to join the team. I initially came as a visiting researcher from Bell Communications Research (NJ - USA), where I was working at the time, and never left!

(2) How would you describe your research to the general public?

My research was initially rather theory-oriented, but when I met Jean-Jacques I was significantly inspired by his strong desire to test theory in a rigorous way by applying econometric methods to real-life economic situations. I now always strive, as far as possible, to find an application for my reasoning. In the early days at the IDEI my work concentrated on infrastructure economics, notably via telecommunications and energy networks. Since joining the ARQADE group, I have extended this area of expertise to development economics &ndash; to determine, for example, the extent to which our understanding of how telecommunications and energy networks have developed in advanced economies can be transferred to developing countries.

(3) How does this research impact on society?

One example is the guidance this research can give to international financial institutions such as the World Bank in providing funds for the development of infrastructure sectors in third-world countries. More concretely, it can help to identify the areas of these countries&rsquo; economies (both in the infrastructure industries themselves and in the institutions that support them) that aid should focus on in order to generate the highest gains in terms of development for the countries in question.

(4) A current or upcoming highlight in your work?

Although applied research occupies most of my time, I regard teaching as a very important part of my work. I must say that over the past few years during which I have been in charge of one our Masters programmes at TSE ("Economics of Markets and Organisations"), I have come to realise how excellent the training our students receive at TSE is, and how successful they are in the job market. This makes me particularly proud. You too right?

(5) A few words on your origins?

I was born in Algiers where my parents settled in the beginning of the 20th century coming from Kabylie, or Tamurt Idurar ("Land of Mountains") in the northern part of Algeria, which is the homeland of the Kabyle people, a Berber or Amazigh community in the Atlas Mountains. Needless to say, I am proud to share some roots with these people who managed (a miracle!) to preserve many aspects of their culture (language, living customs, music) across space (from the Egyptian Siwa Oasis in the East to the Canary islands in the West) and time (over 2000 years).