

During the thirty last years, the world economy is characterized by three *major reports* about the foreign direct investment (FDI), as following:

1. The *international economic integration* is done increasingly by the dynamics of the FDI and the strategies of the firms (especially MNCs) than by the one of trade and trade policy.
2. An *inequality ventilation of the FDI flows in different ladders*: world-wide, continental, regional, national and infra-national ones. The geography of the international economic activity watches the *concentration of certain activities in precise territories*. Certain countries *succeed more than others* to attract FDI projects.
3. The *lust of FDI projects* is real. In fact, we observe the *increased demand for FDI* since mi-1980. As consequence, the *competition to attracting investors increase* between different countries, national territories, and between under territories of even national space. The *territorial promotion agencies*, of which tries it summarizes in the 'sale' of product « establishment site », proliferate and *politics of attractiveness* multiply.

From this triple reports about the phenomenon of the FDI flows, several theoretical *questions* shouted at us:

1. Does it exist an *universal and unique model of the attractiveness* of the national territories for the FDI projects? The attractiveness of the territorial sites is it the same for all *nature* of FDI projects, and for all their *implantation modes*?
2. The conception of an attractiveness strategy, for a country or national territory, can it be *copied* on the model of another country or territory? Or it is more reasonable, for each country, to elaborate a based attractiveness strategy on *own* and *rooted specificities* in its *territories, culture* and in its *history*?
3. Does it exist an *optimum territorial attractiveness*? In case of affirmative response, *how country can attain it? And by what policy*?
4. A *trade-off* hypothesis between national territories, regarding FDI projects, is it *significant*? If yet, in which *conditions*?
5. Why the FDI projects of a given firm, in a given activity, are attracted by the sites of one national territory and *not by others*? How and according to which *criteria* the firms do they choose the sites of location of their FDI projects?

On the theoretical plan, an abundant literature on the international investment and the multinational firm proliferated since the years sixty. The first researches restricted to the study of the investments of the American enterprises before to generalize to the other MNCs of the "triade". Two major questions were at the basis of these efforts of researches:

1. Explain the enigma of the '**why** multinationalisation'? In the other words, why firms establish abroad? The principal question was to know why enterprise decides to invest outside its national borders rather than to content with domestic investment? Why it not limit to the exportations to supply the exterior markets?
2. **How** firm operate abroad? This is to say, which forms will take the expansion of the firm organisation abroad if it decides effectively to indulge FDI?

Another recent theoretical question, of which the roots date back to the history of the capitalist modern system, remainders a research fertile field and a big current event: the one of **the attractiveness of a country or of its national territories for the FDI projects**. Such a question is, well evidently, inseparable of the two preceding ones treating 'why?' and 'how?' firm invest abroad. It is also, without protests, inextricably linked to the question of the choice of the firm for her *establishment site*: "**where**" operate?

Nevertheless, the reflection on a **general theory of the attractiveness** of a national territory for the FDI projects widely surpasses the field of the traditionally analyses admitted by the explanatory theories of the said interrogations on the '**why**', '**how**' and '**where**' enterprises indulge abroad. We think that this one can not being, in any case, reducible to an alone integrated theory of the commerce, imperfections of the market, industrial organization and internalisation theory, location (economy spatial, urban and regional) and geographic economy theories including his new version. In fact, taken such theories separately only give us monist's explanations of multinational phenomenon. Its reason especially alone side of the **firm** operating FDI action and do not grant generally or few importance to the **national territory of implantation**. Now, this one is the real and physical support of the actor (firm) and of his action (FDI). It then appeared for us that a return on the said theories and even on the eclectic and synthetic approaches, that attempted to explain the phenomenon of the multinationalisation, will allow us *only a partial analysis* of the true problematic relative to a national territory attractiveness.

The territorial attractiveness must be analysed in the perspective of *overall development theory* that *combines*, in the framework of a global economy, *the both interests of countries and firms*. This that imperatively necessitates a variable geometry reflection more general and more multidimensional in a manner to take into account the entirety of the *objectives and preferences* of the *actors of attractiveness*, governments and firms, of their *characteristics* and of their *strategic interactions*. The analysis of attractiveness must take in consideration two realities. The first one is that the governments have *differentiated functions objectives* and are 'sovereign' (politically) on their national territories that are composite of *under territories* and *various implantation sites* in terms of *location conditions*. The second is that the firms are equally *differentiated* and invest, according to *specific strategies*, in *multiple* and *complex* FDI projects that can be divide or no in different *segments* with the target to *improve its global competitiveness*.

With the intention to think a **theory of the attractiveness**, it puts an epistemological problem of the concept itself. The notion of « **attractivity** », that is henceforth in the centre of the states economic policy, is it a **new concept of the economical science**? The response to this interrogation and to the preceding questions coming from reports statistics quoted above can be centred in the '*mysterious law*' governing the *geography of the international economic activity of the firms*. We decided, in the framework of this thesis, *to attempt a deepened analysis for this 'law' that focused on the concept of « attractivity »*. Our principal interest, after to have showed the historical and theoretical *emergence of the attractiveness imperative* in the countries economic policies (chapter 1), being to attempt a **general theory of the attractivity** based on an *analytical model*. This one exploits the elementary results of the theory of the exchange in a market economy (Walras and Edgeworth) reinforced by the provisions of the economy of information, essentially those of the theory of the contracts and mechanisms (chapter 2). The chapter 3, drafts the *theoretical factors of the attractivity* coming from a literary review of the determinants of FDI. In an empirical application, we will analyse the *paradoxical* case of France: **theoretical versus revealed** France's attractivity (chapter 4).