

A concluding proposal: to share this twenty-year review of the partnership between Pacts and the FPH to promote active citizenship that is interconnected from local to global.

In the 1990s, the Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation for the Progress of Humankind (FPH) undertook to contribute to systemic changes. By opening up national public debate in 1995 for “*a framework law against exclusion that leaves no one out and forgets no one*”, the FPH created a space for expression open to practitioners who identified with a territorial approach to the issues of social cohesion and employment. One of the results was the creation of the Local Pacts Collective in 1998. By recognizing that deep-seated change requires long timescales, it paved the way for a mutually beneficial partnership rooted in shared desires and target results as agreed upon by the concreating parties. This review reconstructs the stages in and lessons learned from the ensuring form of cooperation.

On this basis, Local Pacts succeeded in establishing trust between a diverse range of organizations and people, highlighting the potential for active citizenship with territorial roots. The pooling of these experiences via the Learning Journey, as an open and non-judgemental dialogue, served to formalize shared references. Although the contexts and cultures differed, these new forms of cooperation with multiple partners met concrete needs posed by daily life and the management of shared resources. They encountered similar problems in obtaining recognition and the support necessary to their development. As the process unfolded, the fact that people shared ideas based on their own observations increased the feeling of belonging to the same community with the same goals and desire for concrete results. This gradually led the Local Pacts collective to become the catalyzer of a learning method. Discussions during the Learning Journeys served to identify the different meanings attributed to essential notions such as community, territory, social economy, solidarity economy, transition and resilience by the various participants as a function of their languages and contexts. It is important to recognize the need to take the time to listen to and understand each other, whether the goal is to make progress yourself, multiply existing solutions or transpose them to other contexts or new territorial levels. Driving proposals together is not such an easy thing.

The public space created by the collective, without aiming to become a structure, drew its relevance in testing out this process of convergence for the benefit of initiatives, seeking to establish closer ties between them and strengthen them. The collective’s modest size contributed to the development of its potential, producing multiplier effects that acted as a lever. In its work on producing new engaged collective actors, it was marked by the quality of its relationships and commitment of its members, continuity in organizing the group, the pooling of references, a rigorous approach and professionalism. Its development, from informal to formal, local to international, including at the European level, thus contributed to highlight the potential of expertise acquired through practice, but also the persistence of the obstacles such expertise encounters. Given its approach, it was hardly surprising that its weak point was the integration of its achievements in the framework of established practices, marked as they are by the procedure-centric management of resources that constantly threatens to warp or curb inventiveness. So much energy goes into this mechanism for maintaining

the existing system, despite its obsolete nature, instead of into tackling the changes that today's context requires!

The systemic response is a long time coming

In the foreword to the general strategy outlined in the last convention signed in 2015 between the FPH and European Pacts, the FPH recognized that *“twenty-five years after having endorsed the Club de Rome’s 1974 identification of a three-way crisis, in relations and exchanges between societies, between people, and between people and their living environment, the analysis remains relevant. The situation has continued to deteriorate (...). And despite the multiplication of publications, campaigns and new initiatives, the systemic response is a long time coming.”*

Economic globalization is indeed exerting increasing and accelerated pressure in an effort to impose itself as the only system at every level, from the largest to the smallest. Without wishing to advocate “small is good” as THE solution, our experience has taught us that although local and global are interdependent, viable solutions can only be implemented within a territorially-rooted framework, since these solutions are both highly complex and highly concrete.

Method is an ethical choice

Taking the initiative to act liberates real individuals. By taking back control over their lives, they create the spaces necessary to become organized; they anticipate organizational mechanisms suited to the goal of a radical change of direction, trying to identify how to integrate the necessary interdependencies within possible forms of coexistence. By succeeding in introducing solidarity into composite systems for taking action, their findings produce acceptable rules, since they are suited to concrete situations. Drawing on their diversity and their similarities, they maintain the common-resource pool of ingenuity that humanity has access to for imagining and anticipating a change of direction in terms of active self-constitution.

Experience forms, takes form...and transforms Mutual understanding requires time and compassion, and failing to take the time for this sharing process results in impoverishment. The fact that solutions have been tested in real life situations within a given resource framework makes them a reference that could serve others, especially since they do not impose a standard transfer method, but instead use open processes to achieve adaptation/appropriation. Pooling means sharing in order to learn, get inspired, organize and disseminate forms of organization and methods that take a new approach to old questions on a path that leads from the individual to the collective. By putting non-academic ideas into practice to encourage interaction between “actors searching for solutions”, active processes and learning mechanisms can be identified and lessons learned from them.

The generational contribution of the Pacts collective can be characterized by the sharing of experiences and production of collective intelligence within a network made up of voluntary relationships. Its role was to promote the path of commitment, serving as a modest and tangible laboratory seeking to work with others to contribute to building a new and viable social contract in a globalized context. There is still a long way to go to create the conditions for a real change of

direction. It starts with the desire to do so. This is the challenge tackled in the quest for a humane form of globalization.

Now that the time has come to turn the page - a time that is also ushering in a new era - we have to acknowledge the difficulty of a direct transmission of these lessons to the young adults who are following on from us. Replacing the founding members who kept the Pacts organization active did not prove possible. The younger members do not feel sufficiently at home to give a new impetus to this space. We have reached our limits. Duly noted! The next generation has not wasted any time in developing their own approaches, which is a wholly good thing.

However, this does not in any way exempt us from asking the question of how to transmit the lessons we have learned and our achievements so they can serve the generation following in our footsteps. The times we live in present us with the major risk of implementing transformations that do not leave a mark. Political changeovers the volatility of consensus are speeding up, resulting in breaks in continuity which no one seems alarmed by, despite the dangers of a deregulation that undermines the very foundations of the human element of inter-relations.

“Inter vivos” transmission is different from the duty of remembrance, which honours those who have paid a high price for the freedom our generation has enjoyed. To transmit is to link together.

Linking together means relating, bearing witness to an individual and collective experience. Yes, planning and developing living and liveable territories, open and interlinked, is a life choice and a commitment that can fulfil the social dimension of human life. From this perspective, the end of the story has not yet been written, because life continues.

Linking together also involves a handover, by creating opportunities for sharing with the generation following on our heels:

- by continuing with the collaborative participation in activities in order to create opportunities to meet in real life situations. Certain members have expressed the desire to do so after the association’s dissolution;
- or by making available a collection of documents, put together over thirty years, to provide food for thought in the process that each generation has to undertake, of sifting through the legacy it has inherited. After the association’s dissolution (December 2016), archives will therefore be made available for consultation in paper, digital or oral form over the next four years.

Linking together means reconnecting that which has been separated in order to reconstruct an overall vision. We therefore hope that this review can serve as an opportunity for an open and broad-reaching debate promoting recognition of active citizenship as a key resource for viable solutions and of the path of citizen engagement as an ethical, political and methodological choice for creating a more peaceful future world. For the democratic deficit affects all territorial scales where solutions are applied. Too many links are missing in the chain of far more cooperative partnerships which take into account each party’s social commitments,

And linking together also means growing in number, because at every level of solutions, cooperating means realizing that strength lies in unity, that sharing leads to growth, and that organization produces efficacy.

Martine Theveniaut, 23 December 2016