

## Social Inventors for Territories where Life can be Lived

Martine Theveniaut - Detailed Summary 2015<sup>1</sup>

*A common thread. Each section can be studied individually.*

*The purpose of this research is to highlight the social engagement of a generation and explore its contribution to the movement of contemporary ideas (10-40)*

### **The hard facts**

When the social ladder broke down in the 1980s, exclusion became a feature of our prosperous societies. The events of the 20th century illustrate the damage wrought by the blind and unfounded belief in indefinite prosperity. The women and men who, like myself, were born in the post-war period discovered that the state did not wear the kindly face of a bountiful mother who keeps the scales balanced. Our societies underestimated, and even hid, the power structures at work behind the increased prosperity that has benefited us. The rise in inequalities, global imbalances and human and ecological disasters are the other side of the same coin. Moreover, we lost understanding and mastery of a large part of the choices that affect us. The resulting situation was unprecedented. Even if we continue to dream of separate worlds that keep us safe from the way things are going, such a separation is simply not possible. Globality shifts geographical boundaries and identities, causes significant migratory movements and redefines allegiances.

If “interculturality is the destiny of peoples,”<sup>2</sup> how can we find self-fulfilment and live together, in the same places, “among blood brothers and chance relations”<sup>3</sup>? The question applies to each and every one of us. This research proposes exploring it on the basis of the role territory plays in globality. A territory is not only a given area, it is also a kaleidoscope of social representations and socially coded individual and collective practices. “Territory is a human creation. It is the geographic basis for social existence. It is thus an appropriated and appropriate space. All societies have a territory, a product of territory. In fact, they usually have several territories, or even a multitude of territories, wherein to live, work, reinvent themselves and even dream; lived-in spaces and imposed spaces; local units and branching networks. This is what complicates the situation, what enriches it and lays the foundation for freedom. The worst situation is to only have access to one territory that has to be defended against all intruders; this happens to animals, and to communities that are powerless.”<sup>4</sup>

**First proposition:** “The social matrices for finding a solution to the crisis are identified, formulated and tested at the local level, because it is here that the most material of concerns are associated with the most essential of relations. This is where each society solves its problems, meets its needs, pursues its dreams by constantly creating mechanisms and regulations capable of providing collective modes of operation.”<sup>5</sup>

Territorial governance that seeks to move towards social relations with a more human face within the globality of a single planet must take into account the fact that interdependence has increased, including when providing solutions for basic needs such as food, housing work, planning living spaces and living in safety and harmony. This shift calls for forms of organization that do not yet exist.

---

1 Economic sociology thesis supervised by Jean-Louis Laville - Conservatoire National Arts et Métiers, Paris. Link to the full text: (to be filled in). [http://www.socioeco.org/bdf\\_fiche-document-4386\\_fr.html](http://www.socioeco.org/bdf_fiche-document-4386_fr.html)

Although social and economic justice for all remains the primary requirement and is the ultimate goal, understanding forms of interdependence has become key to attaining it. For no one, no matter where they live, is safe from the impact of the decisions or inactions of other people in a globalized world. To change direction, we therefore need to engage resolutely with the transformation of the major global challenges.

**Second proposition:** building collective knowledge of shared or similar experiences in a variety of places by means of a horizontal sharing process is probably the most appropriate method for opening up understanding of the world to more and more people. For although the local level does not hold the key all by itself, it provides the foundation for the edifice, as a force for opposition, a test bed, a source for socio-economic and cultural biodiversity with great potential for multiplication.

Ultimately, taking global and local into account together equates to reconciling both ends of the spectrum, by furnishing a qualitative and durable response rooted in solidarity to the need for a human-scale living space, and by preparing mechanisms for a more realistic global approach to change than strategic plans disconnected from on-the-ground realities, lacking in any human substance and with no consideration for actual people.

*“To all mankind they were addressed, those cries for help still ringing in our ears! But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not!”<sup>6</sup>*

#### **Deliberations conducted with a view to transmission.**

The transition risks being particularly brutal since the general situation is characterized by the end of a world where the security provided by solidarity has been weakened. Goodwill alone will not ward off the collapse we are witnessing. But powerlessness, despair, cynicism, revenge, the refuges provided by the ego and the stigmatization that goes hand in hand with laying the blame only take us even further into the downward spiral. Rather than living in expectation of the shipwreck, even if we cannot exclude it as a possibility, it is far better to take risks, to identify and name the resources we have at our disposal in order to delimit the impact of forms of dominations and stop submitting to them. There are a number of us white-haired people who deplore the fact that hardly any young people are joining with us in our movements. But we have to admit that we have not been very forthcoming in expressing and describing how the path of inventiveness broadens life’s horizons. On the other hand, have we learned any objective lessons from our more short-lived intentions, the ones that only lasted as long as an opportunity? In the lack of any deep-reaching debate on aims, the political system has lost much of its legitimacy. To prevent the alienation of our creative powers becoming “the brilliant ally of [our] own gravediggers”,<sup>7</sup> we need to deconstruct and put the right words to the shortcomings of the obsolescent systems that, in order to remain in place, suck up the power of inhabitants and citizens to effect social transformation. One thing is certain: if the women and men of my generation do not feel that the desire to transmit is their concern, the young will be left to grow up by themselves, bereft of guidance. This research seeks to illustrate how projects, when sufficiently numerous and significant, keep alive hope for the future in the face of the headwinds that displace or blow away our bearings – just for the sake of it! It provides a critical and forward-looking overview that hopes to open up dialogue with the generation following on our heels.

The choice of writing does not fall upon the “I”. A feminine subject presents her experiences and analyses without hiding behind an academic “us” or indefinite “one”. After many years spent living in an urban environment and researching as a historian of contemporary times, circumstances led me to

---

6

7

settle in the rural department of Aude in Languedoc-Roussillon. It was there that I found the necessary environment for living well and socially investing my expertise within a context that meets “the historical need to find a method that detects – and does not cover up – ties, links, complexities and forms of solidarity, involvement and overlapping.”<sup>8</sup> The idea is not to crush hope under the weight of the “countless misfortunes of the world, which are legion,” as Jacques Prévert said. Quite the contrary; we need to liberate the energy buried in the blind social mechanisms that prop up institutions which are so clearly inadequate. Emerging alternatives are diffuse, multi-faceted and fragile in their attempt to embed a new social contract. The journey taken by these reconfigurations is less spectacular than the major discoveries of modernism. Qualitative, bringers of peace, they lay no claim to all-or-nothingness. The time is ripe for an inventory, a compilation of a number of the elements that make up a panorama, now that advances in summarizing have made enough progress, that convergences have produced changes or breakthroughs, giving us a glimpse of where they could lead. We are engaged in a transformation. We have to accept the knowledge that the span of this transformation stretches much further than our own lives. “The paradigm of complexity will be born of an ensemble of new conceptions, visions, discoveries and reflections that will come to agreement and join together. We are engaged in an uncertain battle and we do not yet know who will win.”<sup>9</sup>

Martine Theveniaut

December 2015

## **Part 1: The 1980s - The power of action in home territories (41-158)**

### **Creation of socially useful jobs and activities and how they are rooted in the Aude department**

This account develops how social inventors have succeeded in meeting identified needs, shared their ideas and established themselves collectively in order to incorporate their social propositions into public debate. The account developed in this first section is not a monograph but the description of a journey, methodically and rigorously analyzed. Although the journey is unusual, it is one of many, all belonging to the same emerging movement for social transformation. This movement, characterized by a plural and parallel approach, has become part and parcel of collective life in France, Europe and the rest of the world. Three chapters each develop a different facet of this emerging movement.

#### ***Chapter 1: Taking control of one's life (41-81)***

##### **Deconstruction to avoid historical repetition (42-55)**

The conditions that paved the way for the development of major industry and the Fordist system arose in the 19th century, at the same time as construction of the social state. They produced the “indefatigable little worker” whose descendants we are. The condition imposed on workers was to spend all their time working in order to merit their wages. The label of statistical unemployed in 1896 distinguished the people it covered from those living on the margins of society (Bohemians, prostitutes, foundlings, etc.) because they were not always responsible for the situation. Public treatment of this category was based on a trade-off between public expenditure and a possible risk. Rights were granted then stripped back in line with the vagaries of public finances. In the 1930s, observers deplored the incoherence that made their application impossible.<sup>10</sup> A system based on collective belief became a necessity as Europe emerged from the horrors of the war. In a nutshell, the work of each individual was seen as the best (and only) path to happiness for all. It assuaged people's desire to consume. The horizon was seen as limitless. This unfounded belief was first applied in the context of a Europe decimated by war. It constructed a vision that, despite some major differences, was endorsed by all parties, including those representing the working class. The two rival blocks resulting from the division effected at Yalta both projected development as a plan for society and sign of its progress. This model was imposed on the parts of the world under their domination.

The right to work enshrined by the Constitution of France in 1945 translated into putting the entire active population to work in a vast collective effort focused on productivity. In 1945, the state, having centralized unemployment statistics during the war years to organize the enforced management of labour, set up “an authoritarian management of labour movements, ideologically closer to the Occupation than the Liberation.”<sup>11</sup> “A new general obligation for citizens during peace time must be proclaimed. Serving means doing what is necessary, and not what is pleasant. We must not encourage anyone to be unreasonable simply because they can count on the assurance of being paid a wage.”<sup>12</sup> Work and employment relations were thus established during the post-war boom period. With the introduction of the notion of “statistical unemployed”, the state held the monopoly over

---

10

11

12

communicating unemployment figures. Reflecting an age-old fear of civil insurrection, the bar of 300,000 unemployed symbolized society's fear of mass unemployment which in the 1930s supposedly led to war. A hybrid system of insurance and welfare was put in place in the 1950s. The system's malfunctions were initially attributed to the accidental or incidental. But once "full employment" proved to be a specific moment in the reconstruction of a France that was at full throttle, public welfare become conditional once again. It is the weakest link in the social state.

In the 1980s, unemployment rooted in exclusion challenged the social state's theoretical framework. In a context where excessive focus on productivity led to overheating, collective redundancies increased, primarily affecting the least qualified employees in traditional industries. These were people who had gained their skills from social learning far more than from their initial education, which they stopped very early on. They were ejected, first from the production system, then from the training system. This mechanism of double exclusion was absolutely unprecedented.

In today's world, we are undeniably heading towards a particularly pernicious form of totalitarianism, given that anonymity encourages people to turn in on themselves. Democratic checks and balances have been weakened. Only a difference of degree, but not of nature, has until now prevented successive governments from taking the plunge and introducing an authoritarian work placement policy.

### **What does learning mean? (56- 66)**

The 1971 law established lifelong education as a new right. It is one of the rare public innovations designed for the advancement of the individual. In 1990, a positive programme appealed for research "to support public action and decisions"<sup>13</sup> on the question of training and learning for adults with few qualifications.<sup>14</sup> I took part in the programme with an applied research programme in the Aude department. A great many people are excluded due to the destruction of industrial jobs and the lack of the professional skills required by the (rare) job offers they receive. Everyone knows each other in this little universe. Shame causes people to turn in on themselves. The lack of a plan for their lives or of the desire for anything is the worst affliction. It applies to many young people. Despite major funding, it constitutes an obstacle to vocational retraining. The breakdown in social integration serves as a reminder that "the professional is a person."<sup>15</sup> A successful life transition draws on the personal desire and capacity to project oneself into an uncertain future. The ability to love is necessary to learning. In a report drawn up in 2005, B. Schwartz deprecates the fact that "innovations that used the widespread application of the principles of permanent education for a more egalitarian division of knowledge and thus of power have been abandoned. It has resulted in a rise in exclusion, a drop in cultural level and an increasingly visible divide between those who own knowledge and who do not have access to it." He adds that "refusing to change within a fast-changing society can only lead to ossification."<sup>16</sup>

**Choice over a place to live transforms the individual and social practices.** The story of the settling of new residents (30% of the population in 10 years) in the southern Aude underscores the social value of engagement. The Aude's rural territory has been reinvigorated by new residents. These situations call for the capacity to adapt and to show solidarity in order to integrate into a new living environment. Many people created useful activities in the territory while holding down a job and thus ensured that public services have been maintained.

---

13

14

15

16

To conclude this chapter, a parallel is drawn with the international phenomenon that is the emergence of cultural creatives. This emerging trend is associated with the “social movements of the 70s, crystallized in Seattle. They succeeded in changing society because they sought to understand what was hidden behind the regulations. By taking a step back from the established order, they understood that when we try to change the culture of the past, we cannot be happy with the solutions it proposes. We have to find our own solutions or invent them.”<sup>17</sup>

### **Lessons**

- *Until now, we were not allowed to say that the desperate pursuit of growth does nothing to prevent jobs being destroyed. Refraining from analyzing reality is one of the most powerful obstacles to solving the problems facing us.*
- *Deconstructing and honing our critical spirit are key to taking control of our lives.*
- *In creative terms, the “desire for oneself” is the best asset to help tackle ordeals.*
- *The chosen place to live is a tool for understanding individual and social mobilities.*
- *Social proposition: it is better to base social support for transitions on good knowledge of individual and territorial resources rather than on norms for taking action.*

.....

## **Chapter 2: Building “space created so that [people] may organize themselves in meaningful ways”<sup>18</sup> (83-128)**

### **Introduction**

The energy of a chosen living space, rooted in the personal desire for “one’s own” territory, allows us to observe how this desire makes a place for itself by linking to what already exists in a “territory specific to something.”<sup>19</sup> The contribution of migration represents an opportunity for spaces that are overgrown or in the grip of speculation. But it introduces new socio-economic practices. Difficulties can arise between native and adopted inhabitants. And the sum total of individual life plans does not guarantee that people will manage to “live well together”. This chapter highlights the territorial impact of group dynamics on local socio-economic life.

### **Social inventors sharing practices at the crossroads of the economic and social spheres (88-106)**

When setting out on the second stage of the FAAPQ research in 1992, my contact advised me to “aim for a preliminary accumulation of knowledge before elaborating an issue and methodology in order to be useful to practitioners.”<sup>20</sup> I followed his advice. I wrote to people organizing the creation of collective activities just starting out, asking them to reflect on the issues. Their activities covered home help services, reusing paper and cardboard as an activity support and collective service, craftwork based on the art of carpet-making, teaching illiterate North African women to read and write, the installation of multi-purpose activities in the rural environment, and maintenance of rural and forest areas. The process of reflection began with looking at how activities are created, with three points of departure: the territory where the activity is set up and the resources used; what benefits can be obtained from public funding in order to ensure that production activities and services make money, and how to contribute to a credible alternative for promoting a more autonomous territorial development than the profitability norms of a production-obsessed economy that destroys rural

---

17

18

19

20

territories, victim to the rural exodus. This space for sharing practices opened in 2012 and took us all of us on a journey. Our relationship then took concrete form with the creation of the not-for-profit organization PARI (Praticiens de l’Action et de la Réflexion pour l’Insertion - *Practitioners of Action and Reflection for Integration*), which operated until 2005 when we decided to close it.

**Bureau pour l’Action Solidaire dans l’Espace Sud Audois (BASE Sud Audois), founded in 1999 (106-118)**

In 1999, for the first time, a law attributed 20% of funding for the state-region planning contract to concerted initiatives. All stakeholders had to validate a sustainable development charter representing a ten-year commitment. The founders of BASE Sud Audois represented existing organizations and wanted to ensure their voices were heard in the creation of a local area. They decided to “pool skills and resources to consolidate active forms of solidarity at the territorial level and boost the impact of an economy better rooted in solidarity and a development model that respects people and natural resources.”

One of their first actions was to update earlier demographic studies. They followed this up with the creation of the “first directory of solidarity actors and initiatives” in 2005, later transferred to a website, and an Experiences Fair in 2007 based on their belief that “the currency of exchange is exchanging.”

**Concluding opening**  
- *People’s inventiveness, their linking up and the activation of their energies produce social inventions and a “shared immaterial and tangible social capital.”*  
- *Their grouping together generates knowledge that is useful to action and stimulates various forms of debate and convergence for organizing collective actions.*

- *The decision to learn from cooperation means “confirming the human character of the contemporary economy and attributing a positive value to the density and quality of cooperation between actors. This equates to moving the cursor.”<sup>21</sup>*

.....

**Chapter 3: How organized collectives and elected representatives have re-energized the democratic process from the bottom up (121-159)**

This part of the research concentrates on the potential multiplying effects of localized composite systems of action. In today’s shifting context, these practices are not merely of interest to a handful of social outsiders, but rather correspond to deep-reaching needs wherein material survival fuses with social recognition. The potentialities embodied in their power for action are considerable. The problem is not their ingenuity, but the vehicles needed to make them visible from the higher levels in order to change the scale of solutions.

**PARI: prototype for a space offering public debate with national scope (122-134)**

“Composite system of action”: PARI sought to help redefine the aims of living together. Following its participation in the national encounters organized by the FPH in 1995,<sup>22</sup> its members engaged in local

---

21  
22  
7

efforts to organize a discussion of the proposed framework law against exclusion. They organized a public debate in 1996: “Integrate into what?” Guests from outside the organization added a national dimension to this inaugural event, based on the expression of non-partisan political views and the principle of mutual respect. Censure and laying the blaming on others were not allowed, since they cannot produce any shared assuming of responsibility and would allow social negativity to get the upper hand. Each participant was invited as a “practitioner in their area”: deputies and senators for their representation of Aude at the legislative level; local elected representatives for their management of local territory; employees and civil servants for their application of public policies; not-for-profit actors and social entrepreneurs for their socio-economic contribution, and the beneficiaries, the main target for the range of mechanisms designed for them. While the law on social cohesion had not yet been voted, PARI organized another public debate in Montpellier with unemployed people's associations following their social protest movement. A report for the prime minister,<sup>23</sup> Lionel Jospin, advised “not mortgaging the future and clearly laying out the alternatives our society is facing. Social partners, unemployed people’s associations and this country’s citizens need to debate and, especially, rediscover solutions in the face of the long-term unemployment that has deeply destabilized our country’s social cohesion.” The government may have heard the message, but it took no notice of it. The essence of the debate was appropriated. It took action as an emergency response, like a pyromaniac fireman. We have still not extricated ourselves from the situation.

### **Local Pacts: a national process for legitimizing inventive practices (135-143)**

In the 1990s, a panel of socio-economic innovations provided answers to some of the main problems of daily life. They gave concrete form to the need for a concerted territorial organization of resources, both human and natural. This mode of action, going against the grain of hierarchical and sector-based approaches, was unusual. It remained on the margin of instituted systems. A panel of socio-economic innovations exists, but spaces for peers to meet and share this approach are rare. The collective was set up in 1998, drawing on this pool of people. The FPH provided funding as part of a partnership established with PARI. It remained informal until 2005, opening a space for on-going debate on the question of social cohesion and, more broadly, on local forms of cooperation and their effects. Two examples of former members with whom lasting and developing relations have been established (135-140) are the greater Dijon area Pôle d’économie solidaire [*Solidarity Economy Hub*], which provides support for the creation of individual and collective activities, and the creation of services in response to atypical needs initiated by local councillors from Betton, a commune near Rennes.

#### ***Lessons learned from the development of Local Pacts***

- *Sharing initiatives on different levels from the original experience enables social inventors to discover and inter-relate with each other and to formalize principles common to individual journeys.*
- *The monitoring and capitalization method is one of the strengths of this space for peers to discuss and share ideas. Commitment is voluntary and analysis both non-judgemental and rigorous. The goal is to take a step back and improve, or even reposition, how activities are conducted.*
- *Their approach generated elements used to produce a definition and analytic framework for the Local Pact: “a variety of forms of local cooperation and partnerships with enough in common to be able to promote key proposals together.”*
- *This national process for legitimizing inventive practices produces a new type of collective actor, increasingly established and visible.*
- *A multiplying effect: from direct involvement to expressions of interest, the collective reached over a thousand people and their networks in 2004.*



### **Public territorial action seen from the ground floor of the World House (143-159)**

Decentralization resulted in a delegation of a number of powers. “It is difficult to manage a territory when we have not even observed it. The state was very useful we could always rail against it. The moss-covered stone has been lifted, revealing a teeming mass of local questions, pockets of poverty, rundown neighbourhoods, damaged areas, society’s rejects, overflowing schools and empty schools, everything the state was in charge of and hid. This produces a massive need for territorial knowledge.”<sup>24</sup>

### **Three types of action for elected representatives within territorial reconfigurations (155-159)**

- Eligibility rooted in the citizen’s vote applies within the framework of areas where elected representatives obtain one or more mandates for a limited period, usually on the basis of the programme of a political party they claim to espouse in order to form majorities.
- Territorialization is the public scope for action, termed decentralized, determined at the national level with the delegation of financial resources. It is a lever for action used by elected representatives in a way that is fairly disconnected from the political programme they presented to get elected. It is very dependent on an administrative framework made up of rules and procedures applied by professional bodies which remain in place at the end of the representatives’ political mandates.
- Territoriality defines the space wherein lie cultural and linguistic perceptions and identities. They trigger participation that is more voluntary but selective. One example is the “Cathar” reference in the Aude. It appeals to native inhabitants, far less so to newcomers.

These three types of action guarantee neither the coherence nor the durability of a territorial policy, which is also significantly affected by forms of interdependence it has no control over. “The political sphere does not create change. Elected representatives can support change and they are part of it, within a given role, but they do not cause it to emerge. Power is therefore not the central and ultimate goal of protest, it is situational. If a new sort of radicalism really does emerge, then would be the moment to ask what form of adequate representation is possible and how to bring it about, based on an inventory of resources and needs. The construction of checks and balances denotes this position, which seeks neither a confrontation with nor replacement of power.”<sup>25</sup>

### **The example of Eric Andrieu, councillor at Mouthoumet, in the Corbières area.**

He is an interesting case, because he has succeeded in combining the three types of action during a certain period in order to organize a participative territorial development. His method succeeded because it reinforced the real economy. Elected as a regional councillor in 2004, he resigned from all his other mandates, except for the mayorship of his commune. But tradition dies hard. It put the son of the previous general councillor in control of the canton. In 2005, he took over management of the socialist party federation in Aude, but the cronyist tradition seemed to have prevented him from increasing his power to take transformative action. His qualities are put to better use as a European representative, where he currently champions the deployment of the potential offered by a form of territoriality he has himself already tested.

### **“Towards shared references”: territorial public management action research (146-155)**

There is a general agreement that micro-projects, built on people’s desire to take action where they live, are curbed by territorialities based on managing multiple institutions. This phenomenon has the

---

24  
25

effect of making integration endlessly complicated by starting from the bottom of all the data concerning the problems to be solved. A convention signed in 2002 between PARI and the regional prefecture was designed to define “shared references to increase social entrepreneurs’ capacities and provide a better solution to the lack of social and professional qualifications.”<sup>26</sup>

**Three levels of relevance identified for far more proactive partnerships.**

- A local level for bringing about improvements where solutions are based on close collaboration. Solidarity organizations request that all resources be considered, human and natural, including those that are defined other than by their market value, such as the resources hidden in non-monetary exchanges, and people’s different aspirations, which also contribute to a territory’s wealth.

- A territorially-rooted level for a process of consultation large enough to provide a space for the cohesion of public services and economic development based on endogenous resources.

- A comprehensive territorial level for guaranteeing access to basic rights that may be underestimated when applied to the territorial level. The research concretely identified the role of networks of relations and influence of social entrepreneurs from the local to the international level, agreement on the target outcomes in the same region, and national and/or European measures like LEADER for the territorial brand Pays Cathare or redevelopment areas in Aude’s Haute Vallée.

PARI proposed testing this approach to support the organization of partnership contracts as a concrete follow-up to the action research. This proposal was never actioned.

## **Part 2: Emergence of the solidarity economy in France (160-259)**

The hypothesis is that the solidarity economy makes sense because it crystallizes a possible path for change. Localized composite systems of action take form concomitantly until they constitute an autonomous representation that lies outside the strictly public sphere. How has their mobilization become incorporated in the debate on ideas and the broader social movement? In the context of the changes we are currently experiencing, what potential and which hopes are embodied by this emergence, wherein the territorial approach plays a decisive and unprecedented role?

.....

### ***Chapter 4: 1990-2000 - From emergence to entry into public politics (160-207)***

#### **Legacy of the 19th century perception of solidarity (165-174)**

Each generation has the task of sifting through this legacy to construct its own understanding of the present. Our generation had to question many groundless certainties. Some of them are still taught in schools as legitimate and honourable principles, covering up the physical and symbolic violence upon which the power of nations is built. It would not be unreasonable to hope that social reconfigurations rooted in a genealogy of human solidarity open up new prospects for the future. Bruno Frère<sup>27</sup> developed the idea that, in France, the solidarity economy is not an ex nihilo theoretical creation but a grassroots movement. The perception of utopian socialism as a theory and of mutualism as a practice, championed in the 19th century, shared two underlying principles that we are seeing again today. “Take action here and now against exclusion.” It is Kant’s imperative taken up by Proudhon. “I act in your favour as I would like you, later, to act in mine.” Linked together in the era of mutualism, these two principles seem to have disappeared, replaced by the figure of the social state. In reality, they resonate with a solidarity movement that is searching for its identity. Frère shows how ALDÉA<sup>28</sup> “reinvented” the association of these fundamental principles in the 1980s. By helping the disaffiliated, it restored “work for all as a sovereign good.” In doing so, it articulated the moral demands of the contemporary world in four key values: taking action for a better world, self-management, conviviality and the local micro-economy. “They are thus breathing new life into an identity rooted in solidarity and elaborated within collective initiatives as heterogeneous as those designed to counteract the disastrous effects of 19th pauperism.”

#### **Theorization of the solidarity economy crystallizes a community of values (173-190)**

In the early 1990s, practitioners and researchers were all progressing on their different paths towards a place lying between a space for initiatives and the “horizon of expectation”.<sup>29</sup> How did constructive practice and conceptual thought come together and mutually support each other to create a movement? The concept of the solidarity economy was reinvented in intellectual spaces where lively and fruitful debates take place on the notions of self-management and autonomy in the context of a shared left-

---

27

28

29

wing programme. CRIDA<sup>30</sup> organized a national transfer initiative focusing on the characteristics of the notion of the solidarity economy. This approach, by interconnecting theory and practice, served as a catalyst for those undertaking the journey, providing a shared meaning wherein social inventors could recognize each other and producing a multiplying effect. This was the point of departure for a collective process of construction that served to bring the CRIDA and ADSP closer together.<sup>31</sup> This dialectic of mutual support created long-lasting teams. I took part in this process in the 1990s.

### **Formulating a shared meaning for the words used to define actions (161-164).**

PARI members did not all agree with the decision to make the “solidarity economy” their collective project. They met to define the shared meaning they attributed to this notion. Together they asserted that “the market criterion cannot serve as the basis for social exchange values. Their economic action meets plural needs and contributes to the general good. It can be evaluated on the basis of qualitative criteria. Their knowledge of micro-social needs makes them the pioneers of economic relocalization. Their conception of solidarity extends to the international dimension. They seek a radical change that renews ties with politics, utopia, philosophy, and spirituality for some of them, within a twin movement: a focus on people in their legitimate quest for personal growth, with all the inherent risks of individualism, and integration into collective life as the path to fulfilment. How to build bridges linking these two shores is a question posed by the solidarity economy and which will allow it to avoid being adulterated or instrumentalized.”

### **Lessons**

- *Historical reinterpretation is useful in deconstructing “naturalized” certainties as well as incorporating understanding of the present differently, into a genealogy of human solidarity.*
- *From the individual to the collective, the time taken for appropriation is irreplaceable. It has produced a “land of knowledge”<sup>32</sup> for those who experienced the transfer initiative.- CRIDA helped to introduce economic sociology into the democratic debate.*
- *Relations between members of CRIDA and ADSP were a major factor in establishing the agency as an emblematic organization of local solidarity-based services.*
- *Words, when given importance, help to consolidate a shared language, to organize and to meet challenges and move from enthusiasm to affirmation.*
- *They serve to systemize social inventions, from the specific stage to their broader application, and contribute to their recognition as a legitimate subject for thought and political action.*
- *To remain credible, we have to recount what we do with our own words...and do what we say!*

### **Proximity and territoriality within the construction of the solidarity economy (180-188)**

In 1997, the “Solidaires” addressed an appeal to a campaigning Lionel Jospin for “the renewal of public life.” They wanted to be “constructive and vigilant participants who would contribute to the deep-reaching changes vital to eliminating exclusion.”<sup>33</sup> However, establishing a relationship with the authorities was extremely problematic. As underlined by Annie Berger,<sup>34</sup> “we did not yet have an organizational matrix for operating as a network to create an alternative social movement.” Actors’

---

30

31

32

33

34

expectations continued to focus on calling on the public authorities. They failed to grasp the extent of the gap separating their power, rooted in taking action, from the institutional power to manage public action. The social movement was very quickly exposed to the risk of losing its autonomy to manage action.

### **Centralization of the ADSP's organizational matrix.**

Methodology was the cornerstone of the agency's invitation to "form networks". Its objective was to bring together a selection of project promoters that share the same values. Relations between the sector-specific approach of solidarity services and the territory as a system of relationships remained a background concern. In reality, its members operated on territorial levels ranging from highly local to regional. Each system of action depended on the existence and quality of its relations on the ground and on opportunities from above. The different relations could be characterized as pragmatic, fleeting or lasting to varying degrees. Openly subscribing to the solidarity economy's values sometimes proved to be counterproductive. Their territorial contacts (local authorities and the state) managed power delegated at their level on the basis of procedures. A shared responsibility for finding a solution to a problem covering various skills remained the exception. And involving innovative citizen initiatives by cooperating with them was even rarer.

In 1997, after two years of existence, ADSP set up a work group on "the territorial approach" to reflect on the structure and funding of a network of "hubs". I was put in charge of organizing the project.<sup>35</sup> The mobile group was made up of around ten volunteer participants. From this period on, many of the inventions elaborated in the 1980s had trouble establishing a lasting presence. The results of the initiative remained on the margins of ADSP's strategy. But the relations established as part of the project then went on to reform in other configurations, including the Local Pacts, since the process that united them was reflection on forms of cooperation within territories.

**Inter-Réseaux Economie Solidaire (IRES) founded in 1997.**<sup>36</sup> The networks had various different backgrounds. The pooling process was declared necessary, but each party stuck to their position. Priorities differed. The desire to expand was severely tested in highly ideological debates. The majority vision of territorialization that won out was a top-down approach marked by a strongly Parisian bias. The question of the mandate that each party "naturally" held was not tackled. Member networks tended to move their pawns around in piecemeal fashion, adopting a short-term view. Several of them became councillors at government ministries. The rhythm of governmental measures very quickly set the pace. Suspicion prevailed. This affect effectively destroyed opportunities for cooperation as they arose. The DÉSIR project<sup>37</sup> led by the MB2 network as part of IRES, designed to stimulate inter-regional relations as the main ingredient in horizontal cooperation, was rejected (215-219).

### **The national emergence of a practitioner-based discourse (191-208)**

After a first phase, DIES<sup>38</sup> re-emerged with broader functions. Hugues Sibille was appointed as the inter-ministerial delegate. He organized the panel on associations in February 1999. They highlighted the huge diversity of types of association and their spheres of action. One of France's main employers, they represented 20 million members, 11 million volunteers, 900,000 jobs and 308 billion francs. The panel led to the signature of a charter of mutual commitments "in order to strengthen democratic life and civic and social dialogue." In late 1999, the DIES announced "regional consultations on the social and solidarity economy." This announcement mobilized local actors who had plenty to say. An in-

---

35

36

37

38

depth examination of the Languedoc-Roussillon consultation described the establishment of direct relations between PARI, recognized as the regional ADSP centre, and André Bresse at SGAR,<sup>39</sup> with positive effects in terms of recognition (196-201). The “local” was no longer seen as the bottom of the pyramid,<sup>40</sup> but as a horizontality, a forum for diagnosis and debate, the ideal space for social and economic reconfiguration within a vision open to the world. There were generally high hopes that this development would be accompanied by the necessary political will, in the form of recognition of the right to experiment and local specifications governing implementation. Proposals ranged from the highly concrete to the reaffirmation of a political strategy which questioned “the principles of a society that excludes.” The systematic processing of the reports produced highlighted the collective emergence of a composite source of proposals with a fairly tenuous relationship to the conceptualizations under discussion by researchers and practitioners on the subject of the solidarity economy. Their practitioner-based discourse crystallized the emergence of a mature and plural social movement.

### **The DIES fails to provide political back-up for the grassroots discourse it requested.**

The acronym “ESS” (SSE in English), which sounds so strange, was introduced as an umbrella term without any discussion. However, reality shows action-based movements that did not know much about each other and provided different experiences. This choice was very challenging for them. A number of them reacted forcefully, underlining the lack of objectivity shown by the national summary prepared by Hugues de Varine and the DIES department.<sup>41</sup> “The report accepts and endorses the idea that to be serious involves being in the market economy. When in fact what people need is a vision for society so they can project into the future. Our place is at the point where the market and the public sector meet, which provides political justification for our economic role. To say that the SSE lies within the market economy equates to excluding recognition that self-production can also be a factor in social development and neglecting the cultural dimension of problems. The total absence of international perspective cannot be accepted, since solidarity and equity within North-South relations are a fundamental aspect of the SSE.” “Why should we fear that the SSE will emerge as an opposition force, unless we are denying that we are faced with the power of large corporations and all sorts of lobbies? The future of the solidarity economy does not depend primarily on it being officially represented. We could even imagine that such representation could result in it being well and truly buried. We must not put the cart before the horse. We need to encourage the gradual structuring of the solidarity economy based on current realities. This is the commitment that the government will or will not make in response to these proposals, which will be the touchstone of the political will to advance in the right direction. We need to extend the public debate established by the regional consultations and take into account the time factor, absent from the report.”

**Is there a pilot on-board?** Confusion reigned at the head of a state torn between different visions, ministerial spheres, lines of credit and networks of political influence. In the wake of a vote opposing the National Front’s Jean-Marie Le Pen and Jacques Chirac, ministerial friction could be seen in all its irrelevance, like the bitter fruit of a lack of political coherence and courage. The SEES<sup>42</sup> sunk without a trace. The DIES returned to its stagnant state. Ultimately, this collapse was the result of social divisions that were not tackled. If the call for civil society by Jospin when he was a candidate had not gone unheard in 1997, the inter-ministerial consultation and government solidarity would have been organized very differently.

---

39

40

41

42

*During this period, government-administered management of integration shrunk the horizons for a constantly rising number of the excluded. We were heading straight into a blind alley.*

**Lessons learned from the Republican collapse of 2002**

- *Which strategic relations need to be maintained with government representatives? In terms of the social movement under construction, failing to learn any lessons from this emergence as a collective actor would see the solidarity economy reduced to one of those “on-trend” words so beloved in government rhetoric, used to make the old look new.*

- *“The strength of the contemporary development of the association movement has opened up a path to real embeddedness and is already helping to partially halt the erosion of the wage-earning society,” wrote Bruno Frère.<sup>43</sup> Yes, it is true that a collective resource was crystallized by expressing itself. But it seems that the “Solidaires” tend to reproduce the fragmentation which saw them disappear from France as a collective actor a century earlier. - In reality, there is not yet an independent force within society for setting up and ensuring the respect of shared and democratically validated regulations.*

.....

**Chapter 5: Territorial organization of the solidarity economy (209-255)**

The consultations also underscored the region’s position as a level of intermediate governance (209-237). New forms of networked organizations operating in the solidarity economy did exist. I carried out an inventory of them in 2001 at the request of André Bresse at the SGAR, which was considering setting up an agency in Languedoc-Roussillon.<sup>44</sup> This snapshot was a discovery for public regional and national actors, as well as an illustration of their local vitality several months earlier. These are all prototypes which this chapter describes: la Conférence permanente, l’Agence, la Chambre régionale, originating in the RÉAS<sup>45</sup>, APEAS<sup>46</sup>, in the PACA region and the infra-regional solidarity economy hubs, assembled within the national MB2 network. Over a year, the different families of actors began to know more about each other. Partnerships were launched in several regions. The public authorities at the central level recognized the complexity of realities. A vision based on forging ties had made headway. If we adopt the viewpoint of interests that are well understood, the historical experience of doing business differently, each in their own way, that is their legacy was seriously threatened. The neoliberal economy was not likely to confine itself to the three statutes in its pursuit of market share. If it refused a more autonomous economic model, the solidarity economy would be reducing its role to a field hospital. In both cases, the question centres on identifying the basis and method for linking together and forming mutually beneficial alliances pursuing objectives agreed upon by all the parties concerned.

In 2005, the solidarity economy’s territorial foothold did not develop significantly, as shown by the study undertaken by Mouvement de l’Economie Solidaire (MES) [*Solidarity Economy Movement*],<sup>47</sup> which took up where IRES left off. It accounted for 25 organizations, most of them operating very modestly. Many long-term agreements failed to be honoured, as early as 2002. The “partner state”

43  
44  
45  
46  
47

commitment did not even last a year. Another factor had an impact. The supervising bodies concentrated most of their energy on international strategy, to the detriment of time spent on consolidating and expanding their grassroots and defining a collective strategy. Naturally enough, MES was not seen by the small-scale actors as working on their behalf.

### **PARI reinvests its social capital in a Languedoc Local Pact (223-238)**

In spring 2000, PARI, branched out from its roots in the Aude and formed links at other levels. Its foundations seemed solid enough for it to reinvest its social capital in a regional learning mechanism. PARI looked after coordination and assembling with a view to developing potential by means of mutual support and multiplying impact. Six experimental platforms (PFE) based on local activities in three departments took part. Each one defined its strategy and acted as the local interface for the overall project. They expected something useful and tangible in return for their involvement. They also expected the project to expand and improve institutional relations. Indicators for self-assessment and reporting were determined using the logical framework method that Alain Laurent introduced to the collective. This learning process ensured that a decisive step forwards could be taken. The approach interested institutional partners and attracted funding, divided between the two active PFEs (35% each) and PARI (30%).

#### ***Main lessons learned from the 2005 initiative***

- *The solidity of a small team, quality of relations and logical framework method ensured that the project could stay on course and report on results.*
- *The action programme enabled each PFE to achieve a positive result, with or without PARI's direct support, as well as boost their capacities and reduce the gap in relations with regional contacts.*
- *The durability of self-organized processes continues to depend on the energy of the people who drive them and external factors they have no control over (such as the sudden interruption in funding 2002).*
- *In 2004, PARI was invited by a Green Party elected representative to the launch of a solidarity economy regional policy and discovered that no record remained of the 1999-2004 period monitored by state departments. How can lasting relations be established in the absence of an institutional memory?*
- *Highlighting the need for autonomy and for recognition, the findings here point to citizens focusing on acquiring an autonomy of thought and action and consolidating their networks at every level where their viewpoint is relevant, with examples to back them up.*

### **1- Daring to choose diversity: a European process for legitimizing local initiatives (239-242)**

In the 1990s, the European Commission published a white paper on growth, competitiveness and employment. The 1994 inventory details the activities resulting from local initiatives in four main areas: daily life, living conditions, leisure activities and the environment. The results exceeded expectations: hundreds of initiatives were recorded and compared, their obstacles identified. "The sudden advent of the local in the social and economic sphere is developing in areas opened up by changing attitudes, with the gradual abandonment of the hierarchical and sector-specific approach that characterizes the industrial model. Those who are experimenting with it are getting to the heart of sustainable development."<sup>48</sup> European strategy incorporated local development and employment



initiatives starting in 1995. It is difficult to count how many jobs were created in the absence of a suitable statistical tool, but such initiatives contributed to the creation of thousands of small companies in Europe, companies that provided real social value, often at a lower cost than the creation of supported jobs for the unemployed. Their success is a result of “the effect of EC legitimization and the mobilization of local economic development actors, quicker to take up the Commission’s proposals than governments!” Regardless of their relevance, the hopes placed in diversity as an active ingredient did not lead to any European amplification strategies. “In the early 2000s, the Lisbon Strategy took a tougher line. Each region was encouraged to become competitive and ‘sell itself’. The recommendations on local development were scrapped on the pretext of rationalization. The emergence of India and China as major economic players gave a new boost to the theory of exogenous development, even though the negative externalities of concentration were known and pointed out. This European trend conformed to the discourse voiced by international organizations and UN agencies. Ultimately, the dominant economic model, by introducing the notion of competitiveness, appropriated the immaterial factors of territorial dynamism for the purposes of competition and propelled relationships based on conviviality and collective fulfilment into the market sphere.”<sup>49</sup> But such relationships do not belong in the market sphere!

#### ***Lessons learned from this analysis***

*This episode marks the limits of the local approach to solutions. Social and economic justice for all remains the primary requirement and is the ultimate goal. Understanding forms of global interdependence has become key to attaining it. To change direction, we therefore need to engage resolutely with the transformation of the approach adopted to tackle major global challenges.*

### **The Local Pacts become catalysts of a learning method (242-256)**

The collective became a recognized association in 2005 so it could develop its project, defined in a four-year action plan. Its members, wishing to help change the scale of solutions, took part in preparations for the 4th meeting of the Réseau Intercontinental de Promotion de l’ESS (RIPESS) [*Intercontinental Network for Promoting the SSE*], held in 2009 in Europe in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. They joined the steering committee and prepared a cross-cutting workshop on “democratic participation and territorial rooting of the solidarity economy. Six regional meetings were held by participative organizations rooted in their territories, previously identified and chosen for their exemplary activities and valuable results. Each meeting was attended by 50 to 80 people: elected representatives, inhabitants, trade unionists, authorities, associations and researchers. They established a dialogue organized into three stages: illustrate-debate-propose. Each stage identified solutions, already provided or to be invented, to a number of major territorial problems. The last stage, in April 2009, saw the Aude playing host to an international delegation of participants who arrived in Europe ahead of the Lux’09 forum from the Philippines, Malaysia, Quebec and Burkina Faso.

An experimental platform was set up at a preliminary stage to organize the preparation of a cycle, planned over eighteen months. It was defined by operating rules and was open to everyone who wished to get involved, as long as they committed to making an active contribution. Its role was to test the relevance and efficacy of an objective centred on consolidation and, at a later stage, dissemination. A single analytic framework compiled comparable information. Regional meetings alternated with intermediate meetings, described as “outside the territory”, to review the lessons learned, welcome new initiatives and tackle key questions on the aims and necessary conditions of strategies for change.

The goal was to learn lessons on two levels: by examining proposals on versus “global”, and by circulating them among the participants so they could appropriate them and use them for communication purposes. These meetings, led by the platform, were accompanied by an on-line forum in three languages.<sup>50</sup> Twenty international examples were collected and a definition of territoriality within globality validated ahead of the Lux’09 meeting ([see end of chapter 7](#)).

### **Social propositions**

*The experience that shapes takes shape* is the title of the summary document.

- *The conviction they reached is that “to transform public action and balance endogenous and exogenous economy, it is better to trust in human inventiveness to meet basic needs than expect institutions to do everything. And it is better to take territorial realities and natural and cultural resources as the basis for finding viable and lasting solutions to the challenges of sustainable development.”*

- *To achieve this, “adopting a policy based on a tried-and-tested approach is key to transforming limited prototypes into conditions for a deep-reaching democratization of the economy, whether by means of the rigorous analysis of conditions for the emergence, existence, expansion and dissemination of individual projects or the analysis of all kinds of results and effects.*

- *This tried-and-tested policy “accompanies all aspects of a policy for communicating, making accessible and teaching by identifying the communication codes for information that is accurate, plural, non-simplistic, suitable and accessible to everyone. It is essential that the challenges are properly considered over the long term so that the cursors can evolve.”<sup>51</sup>*

### **Concrete follow-ups to the first Learning Journey cycle**

Ben Quiñones<sup>52</sup> from the Philippines reiterated the proposal he made during his trip to Aude for the 6th meeting. “We need to gather together learning experiences to show the world that they constitute an alternative, and compile case studies to produce the effect of a collection. Not to duplicate them, but to be inspired and to compare. Not to import them, but to understand real situations and explore them within non-academic discussion groups. Appropriating lessons as part of these discussions between peers allows us to deal better with uncertainty, multiply the potential of solutions and work together to put forward proposals.”<sup>53</sup> In April 2009, workshop participants validated the territorial approach as one of the pillars of the solidarity economy in order to rebalance the prevailing sector-specific vision.

Ben Quiñones announced that ASEF<sup>54</sup> would host the 5th RIPESS meeting in the Philippines in 2013. The territorial approach would be included as a working theme in its own right for Manila’13, linked to the notion of sustainable development. “The thematic focus places greater emphasis on certain dimensions/aspects, sectors or activities of the SSE, such as: fair trade, social currency, social finance, ethical consumption, food sovereignty, etc. W7TF proposes to provide a balance to this thematic approach by elevating territorial anchorage to the top agenda. This thematic approach corresponds to the current form of organization of the international meetings of RIPESS. An important advantage of this approach is to provide a realistic view of the level of development of SSE in communities, countries and continents. It allows for more rigorous efforts to examine various facets and dimensions of Solidarity Economy at its current stage of development and to enhance and stimulate them in order

---

50

51

52

53

54

to advance SSE as a sustainable alternative economic reality in a given locality. More importantly, territorial anchorage sharpens the focus on the role of governance in the promotion of the solidarity economy as an alternative economy, in the context of the globalization process.” This result represents a significant step forwards, to which the Local Pacts approach has contributed. Yvon Poirier and I reintroduced the results in November 2009 at the ASEF meeting in Tokyo, which launched preparations for Manila’13.

#### ***A culmination and departure point, “the snowball effect”***

- *The platform demonstrated its relevance for testing out processes of convergence that are meaningful for everyone.*
- *It established the consensus that “the seriousness of the crisis is an opportunity to overhaul the underlying principles of the economy by reconnecting to the social and environmental dimensions at the relevant level: the territory, with the individual as the departure point of analysis and action.”*
- *A new four-year learning cycle was initiated. Local Pacts became European Pacts in November 2010 at the European Committee of the Regions in Brussels, in the presence of guests from every continent. Denison Jayaasoria, ASEF president, proposed “The search for a shared analytical framework centring on lessons learned, backed up by examples” as a tool for continuity between Lux’09 and Manila’13.*
- *Funding for the role of organizing emerging initiatives was only rarely provided. Without the FPH’s continuing support from 1998 to 2015, we would not have been able to carry on exploring this path to knowledge.*

.....

#### ***European Pacts proposals***

- ***They open the door to dialogue, as an organized civil society committed to building the future at different levels:***

*in the territories where they live, as diverse as the people themselves;*

*in Europe, at the geographical, cultural and political level;*

*as citizens of the world.*

***They seek to:***

- *become a permanent collective of resources aimed at pooling experiences, learning from each other (popular education), hand on lessons learned, multiply them by using them, support each other and jointly make their voices heard;*

- *raise their collective independent voice for advocacy, as collectively constituted in the PACTS movement, to address European, national, regional and local institutions in order to provide people with a means of consulting civil society.*

***Proposals put forward within the European programme consider that sustainable local development provides a positive road to overcoming the current crisis, if certain conditions are respected:***

- *a strategy designed and applied to provide concrete answers to essential everyday issues: managing shared resources, activities and employment, living conditions and services all aimed at fostering an opening up and ties of solidarity between territories;*

- *a strategy aimed at providing a medium- and long-term legal framework for local and regional issues (territorial interactions and cooperation);*

*- the key principle is based on shared responsibility. Multi-level governance is the instrument. It includes organized civil society as a stakeholder in building and implementing actions, as a collective actor in the real economy and in territorial governance;*

*- a strategy based on different sources of funding in a facilitating programme framework with simple and transparent rules for implementation;*

*- the objectives for results should be defined with both quantitative indicators (how much/many) as well as qualitative indicators (how/what impacts) such as: satisfying essential needs in the real economy: the collective quality of our lives, resilience, the vitality of our democratic and cultural existence, a lesser dependence on fossil fuel as well as on imported food or foreign finance.*

### **Part 3: Beginnings of an alterlocalization process, between an approach centred on creativity and resistance to the inhuman, seeking radical change (256-330)**

#### **Introduction**

**“Small is beautiful” is simply no longer possible.** This brutal fact arises here at the crossroads of the research’s three sections. We can no longer imagine living well at the local level without incorporating an analysis of the global environment that encompasses our collective living. Since the 1980s, alternative approaches have crystallized various forms of resistance which found a home in “alter-globalization” and raised the profile of civil society to allow it to become a factor in world governance. Alterlocalization, a term borrowed from France Joubert, is the preferred choice here as it better integrates the contexts, cultures and available resources we depend upon in order to imagine and produce viable and lasting solutions.

The last section builds on the two previous sections by identifying transformative processes as the most constructive path forwards. Etymologically, the term means “moving forwards” with a sequence of actions organized to target an objective. It has the same origins as procedure. It designates both the process and the target destination. In our societies where “progress” remains the goal to strive towards, anticipating means eliminating the unknown so that everything can become predictable. The procedure became the compulsory approach/tool to adopt, its goal to reduce diversity.

#### **Goal of the process**

- The reference to the process used here retains the idea of progression towards a goal defined as **living well together in the same places on a planet fit for everyone to live on.**
- In the absence of collective regulations suited to the interdependence that characterizes our era, we can only find our path by walking it. Our steps are not erratic, although we might hesitate and backtrack when the future is so uncertain; we need time to find the right path and stay on course. This is what good sense tells us.

.....

### ***Chapter 6: Basic ethical principles and processes for making the transition to another possible world (260-297)***

Not everything should be thrown into the institutional basket. The *lack of law* benefits power. Never before has it been concentrated in so few hands. Without democratically established principles of law and legitimate institutions to ensure they are respected, there is nothing to prevent the law of the jungle holding sway. This is why it is impossible to neglect the foundations of a power’s legitimacy: the power to do what, exercised in which way, and for what purpose?

#### **Learning the lessons provided by an honest assessment in order to take back control (260-265)**

## **Who has the power to do what?**

The first section demonstrated how the gap has grown between the goals of action-based power appropriated by social inventors who act under their own authority, and the power held by institutions whose rationale for action remains determined by their own reproduction. Integration as invented by civil society in the 1980s, which went on to be framed by public policies multiplied by “social emergencies”, is no longer the basis for a workable or humanly acceptable social contract. This is the reason why PARI decided to disband 2005. The “I” in its name no longer conveyed either the values or the social significance attributed to it in 1992.

The official term “solidarity economy”, with its extra “S”, is the mark of a state power that feels authorized to impose its views. This amalgamation translates the DIES’ refusal of any authentic debate on the issues at stake behind the words. The energy deployed by the state power to harness citizens’ creative power indicates its incapacity to invent. We lacked both confidence in the significance of the collective emergence of our inventions, and the lucidity needed to properly understand the possible forms of cooperation with state representatives. I do not exclude myself from this analysis; it is not a criticism addressed to others and allowing me to shrug off my part of the shared responsibility. Born in the post-war period, we had no experience of an illegitimate state and did not imagine encountering this obstacle. Which is why, now that we have been hardened by experience, it is our responsibility to draw the conclusions of an honest assessment. The debate on the essential issues has been appropriated, as illustrated by unemployed people’s social protest, nipped in the bud in the 1990s. This strikes another blow against the representativeness of the past, already on its knees, as embodied by trade unions, parties and different expressions of representative democracy in general. In the light of the need for autonomy and for recognition, institutions’ operational legitimacy needs to be questioned in terms of their recognized functions in serving the general interest and common good. The Republican collapse in the 2002 elections served as a reminder that Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933 on the wholly legal basis of a vote.

## **The role of subjectivity in democratic life (266-274)**

This section explores the role played by subjectivity in building a society. The notion of a subject with rights and interests to defend became popularized in the wake of Descartes’ work. “Within this representation, the subject rules her/himself, protected by his/her rights. However, since the advent of psychoanalysis, we know that the subject is divided, existing initially via the alterity that it comprises.”<sup>55</sup> People become the subject of their existence via a process of subjectivation which allows them to build bridges between their personal identity and the place they wish to occupy in contemporary social and democratic life. When asked to build a society, they are likely to imagine and consider solutions to problems such as improving democratic practices, expanding the number of places where they can be applied, reducing and controlling exclusion processes, inventing the economic regulations needed to develop forms of social solidarity, etc. Forging one’s own path is a difficult task. Which is why it is illusory to hope for significant social change as long as we continue to cling to a representation of the subject that is cut off from her/his subjectivity, in other words, incapable of making ethical choices in the concrete situations that life presents.

## **Institutional flaws are the underlying cause of multiple forms of violence.**

In our societies, different forms of violence directed at individuals can all be characterized as an attempt to shut people up: whether with a flood of meaningless words, the cancelling out of the meaning that is being expressed, manipulation of communication, absence of a human response to the question asked, or the repression of speech until the individual is wiped out.

We encountered violence as part of this research in the depersonalization of relations imposed on the unemployed, rather than a constructive search for transitions adapted to other possibilities, both for them and their living environments. The situation also affects employment professionals, obliged to play a prescriptive role that denies a reality they are very familiar with: employment for everyone does not exist in the current context, although there is a great deal of work which would be very useful in meeting social needs, but is not encouraged to become economically viable so as not to upset the state/market duo. All of this does a lot of damage, on both sides of the desk where they meet. Each party is forced to hold back from expressing their feelings of injustice or discomfort and keep them inside, wrongly confined to “the private sphere”. Silence reigns over the issues that really count due to a fear of facing the consequences of democratic deliberations on redefining the social contract. We should not be surprised that this operating mode accumulates violence, to the point where the Pandora’s box of destructiveness is opened.

### **Where lies the power?**

Holding down a steady job does not necessarily prevent ill treatment. Harassment in the workplace is not limited to individual abuses, and is practiced on a wider scale by many organizations, as revealed by Centre ESTA’s research.<sup>56</sup> A woman speaking at a discussion group for people suffering from harassment says: “I saw the power held by executives as a decision-making authority rooted in competence; the power held by staff representatives as an opposition force inspired by activism; the power held by labour inspectors as a protective authority endorsed by the law, and the power held by medical inspectors as the state-recognized authority to intervene. In my case, I realized that this power was nowhere to be found. All it takes is a lawless individual who thinks he can reign supreme over a limitless universe to ward off the army of institutional representatives who fail to lay claim to the power they hold, more worried about making a blunder than the terrible consequences of their disengagement!” Understanding the nature of the trauma this produces encourages individual resilience-building processes. Participants in the discussion group help each other understand that the idealization of their work blinded them to the dangers inherent in the balances of power underpinning the working context. When their difficulties become more objectifiable, they also become more complex. In contrast to the “face-to-face” encounter with the harasser and the vacuum in personal relations, they can position themselves on a battlefield where they meet challenges, establish alliances and aim for targets. This process forms the basis for the creation of new social ties rooted in resistance.

### **Social ties rooted in resistance and respect for the basic tenets of the law.**

In reality, organization and institution are linked together, since it is by creating rules that the organization performs the act of instituting. But the exercise of power is legitimate “thanks to” respect for shared rules and the function/mission for which the institution is responsible: for example, hospital and health, schools and education, etc. “A decisive opposition exists in society between the symbolic function on the one hand, and the violence with which an all-powerful imaginary, confined in the unconscious, seeks to turn strategy into manipulation, power into instrumentalization of individuals, domination into exploitation. The rules require a differentiation of positions and roles. By marking out boundaries and separations, they prevent confusion, encourage recognition between actors and ensure that they cannot do whatever they feel like whenever and however they feel like doing it.

Symbolization is an endless fight against the forms of violence that tend to affectively ensure the effective exploitations. It lies equally in the social sphere, history and singular subjectivities.”<sup>57</sup>

### **The ethical issues involved in assuming shared social responsibilities (275-279)**

“Majority rule is the cornerstone of democracy in the prevailing state-based theory. But when majority rule does not correspond to the requirements of law, then law must unquestionably override the majority.”<sup>58</sup> Our societies are dominated by a culture of obedience right from childhood. This means that blind obedience is more often responsible for the death of democracy than civil disobedience. “In the context of an interdependent world where individual and collective acts can have consequences that are distant in time and space, responsibility is at the heart of ethics.”<sup>59</sup> In contrast with morals, which draw on orders that have to be obeyed, ethics consists of developing the ability to make choices inspired by values. It questions the nature of the power exercised in the form of the power to define and ensure respect for universally applicable rules, in compliance with the principle of shared humanity, but also as the power to transgress them when they are not founded in justice and precision.

By introducing this perspective into its work, the Council of Europe opened the door to legal recognition of joint responsibility. It based its definition on dialogue. It resulted in a common meaning of responsibility on three levels: “‘Responsibility’ is defined as the state in which individuals and public and private institutions are accountable for the consequences of their actions or omissions [...]; ‘Social responsibility’ is defined as the state in which individuals and public and private institutions are accountable for the consequences of their actions or omissions in the fields of social welfare and the protection of human dignity, the fight against social disparities and discrimination, justice, social cohesion and sustainability, showing respect for diversity with due regard for the applicable moral, social and legal rules or obligations; ‘Shared social responsibility’ is defined as the state in which individuals and public and private institutions are accountable for the consequences of their actions or omissions, in the context of mutual commitments entered into by consensus, agreeing on reciprocal rights and obligations in the fields of social welfare and the protection of human dignity, the fight against social disparities and discrimination, justice, social cohesion and sustainability, showing respect for diversity [...].”<sup>60</sup> Despite huge resistance, this approach slowly made headway until it produced a “recommendation” based on this definition. It was validated in January 2014 by the Committee of Ministers for the 47 member states, without being overly watered down by discussions.

### **Power of action, resistance to insignificance and self-constitution of society (278-282)**

Cornélius Castoriadis’s approach to autonomy is thought-provoking, and suggests that instituting involves all processes whereby reflection takes on social form in order to reshape the world. “When we take into account the historical dimension, we see that each society institutes its reality. This institution of a world cannot be reduced either to what was already there or to real or rational factors external to the society in question. It is the creation of a singular world, the fruit of a radical social-historical imaginary, the union of and tension between history already made and history in the making. The emergence of new institutions and new ways of living is thus not the result of a ‘discovery’, but of an active constitution. Autonomy emerges as an explicit, lucid, considered and deliberated self-

---

57

58

59

60



constitution of society rooted in the knowledge that the institution is the work and product of humans.”<sup>61</sup>

We know without a shadow of a doubt that we will see a break with the trends of the past, producing a different world for the future. Burying one’s head in the sand is a common and understandable attitude considering how helpless such a radical change of direction can make us feel. We no doubt benefited from receiving an image of the earth from a human walking on the moon to bring us to the realization that the earth can turn without humans on it! The very fact that this possibility exists awoke an ethical awareness, as illustrated, for instance, by the solidarity-influenced perception of social justice in the 19th century, reappropriated and adapted in the 20th century. We began to take on board the notion that for social transformations to take concrete form, they have to be anchored in the materiality of a space and time located “here and now, among blood brothers and chance relations.” But this realization did not suffice. For life on the planet to carry on, we also needed to agree on purposes, shared social responsibilities and operating modes with other humans who live on the planet, in the materiality of a space and time located “here and now, among blood brothers and chance relations”! Since we could not do away with geographical distances, space-time continuums based on affinities have “self-constituted”. They are already cooperating by using communication technologies to meet, alternating and associating long distance with face-to-face encounters to prepare tomorrow’s world, a process totally unimaginable a century ago.

## **Learning and knowledge (282-297)**

### **Self-organization based on human choice - A change of perception? (284-285)**

Elinor Ostrom’s research <sup>62</sup> is part of a vast corpus of research undertaken in the USA on the governance of commons, not made available in Europe. On the basis of numerous field studies, she reaches the conclusion that “What is missing from the policy analyst’s tool kit – and from the set of accepted, well-developed theories of human organization – is an adequately specified theory of collective action whereby a group of principals can organize themselves voluntarily to retain the residuals of their own efforts.” She addresses social science researchers “proposing a new perception that recognizes individuals and their collective inventions as actors “struggling to find workable and equitable solutions to difficult problems within arenas provided by courts, by legislative bodies, and by local authorities.” She points out that ““getting the institutions right’ is a difficult, time-consuming, conflict-invoking process. It is a process that requires reliable information about time and place variables as well as a broad repertoire of culturally acceptable rules.” However, the prospect of a theory positing that self-organized and self-governed companies – based on human choice – being fully developed and accepted is obstructed by major political decisions continuing to be based on the assumption that individuals do not know how to organize themselves and will always need to be organized by external authorities”.

#### ***Converging viewpoints at the pivotal point in research on how to transform institutions***

*- Reversing the burden of proof would be one way of forcing systems to face their responsibilities, in terms of the authority bestowed on them to fulfil their mission. We must not forget how the lack of dialogue between social sciences hindered the resolution of the unprecedented problem of social integration in the late 1970s in France, preventing the construction of “an operative collective knowledge” within the framework of a vast national interdisciplinary research.*

---

61

62

- *How can the sum of collective damage be assessed, along with the personal and social effects of individual disaffiliation?*
- *It is important to carve out the rightful place that belongs to inhabitant and citizen initiatives due to the legitimacy acquired by means of tangible results in the real economy and improvements to territorial governance. By leaving them out, representation is weakened.*
- *They have made a breakthrough by successfully incorporating solidarity into composite systems of action. They have thus produced rules within composite systems of action that are acceptable because they have been appropriated and applied to concrete situations.*
- *Tried and tested by having been experienced together in a context marked by given resources, their socio-economic inventions can serve others, with the question of how to transpose or adapt them using open processes rather than restricting procedures left open.*
- *The forms of organization they have introduced have provided new answers to old questions by moving from the individual to the collective. The experience that shapes takes shape...and transforms.*
- *On a modest and tangible scale, it contributes to the construction of rules that restore the foundations of a possible social contract within globality.*
- *Reflection has become forward-thinking, drawing on observation of the factors that produced the concurrent emergence of initiatives.*
- *Over a period of more than thirty years, this type of research, benefiting action and shared with other parties, themselves “research actors”, has served to identify active processes and learning mechanisms and learn lessons to be applied to action.*
- *The method is thus an ethical choice. These social inventions do not correspond to an ideal model. They cannot be appropriated. Their diversity has value in itself. 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.*

***It is possible that by adopting this approach, “the interconnected-local” approach has moved ahead in terms of relevance and efficacy.***

### **An economy based on sharing, knowledge and citizenship (292-293)**

In our globalized system, the law of the market attempts to impose itself on everything and everyone as the only possible form of regulation. We can observe that “the regulatory role of the market is advocated, understandably, but we forget that a multitude of economic agents do not yet practice it, and that the world economy’s heavyweights no longer practice it. Consequently, we manage neither to imagine nor to describe that which, in a crisis, results from the overdevelopment of the latter and the scorn poured on the former.”<sup>63</sup> In a heavily populated, fragile and interdependent world with finite natural resources, the economy needs a radical overhaul. Pierre Calame identifies four categories of goods:<sup>64</sup> “First category goods are those that are indivisible, or which, if they were divided, would be destroyed.” Examples are monuments, as products of civilization, and the biodiversity of ecosystems that forms a whole. “Second category goods are divisible when shared but finite in number. They are not, at least as far as their quantity is concerned, the fruit of ingenuity and human labour. Examples include water, energy, and fertile soil.” They are usually essential basic necessities whose management must be governed by the principles of responsibility (they must not be used up) and equity, to ensure that everyone has access to them. “Goods and services belonging to the third category are divisible

---

63

64

when shared but are above all the product of ingenuity and human work.” They fall under the sway of market mechanisms.

#### **A fourth category of goods multiply as they are divided**

“Our first example is life, or, specifically, the genetic code. From the cell to the human being via plant seeds, life is a process of duplication and multiplication. [...] Computer technology and the internet opened the door very suddenly to mechanisms allowing for multiplication and duplication at low cost.” A network of farmer’s seeds introduces mutualisation, where duplication costs little or nothing. This exchange is balanced by a reciprocity that expresses “symmetry of attitudes”. Other examples are emerging, such as sharing experiences. They allow participants to discover similarities and underpin a radically new knowledge. They do have a cost, which can even be quite high. They are largely overlooked, and constantly risking appropriation by the market-centric system. Patenting of the living world is a particularly abhorrent form of this. The market economy does not have the legitimacy to do so.

#### **Towards knowledge, an open learning system (288-296).**

A new battlefield is posing a specific threat to the free energy that civil society is endeavouring to strengthen to produce alternatives. This is where the real issues are at stake, issues centring on the production of the necessary conditions for building trust, cooperation, autonomy, understanding, renewed cultural resources and the mutual strengthening of social relations based on resistance and creative energies. When reading mathematician and philosopher Michel Authier, I felt a deep connection with the way he formalizes learning relations that characterize a “land of knowledge.”<sup>65</sup>

##### **How do we learn?**

“Individuals construct themselves by bringing complexity to their area of knowledge, thanks to the knowledge of other people who freely place their trust in them. Their multiplication depends on the fact that humans are infinitely knowledgeable and have no other means to perceive their knowledge than to find an echo of it in the knowledge of another person, then, by extension, of a growing number of people, thus expanding their area of uncertainty and freedom. Integration is thus an active process which spreads from one person and gradually affects the others. Sharing differs from exchanging. Exchange, as defined in economic theory, is only possible because it identifies the moment when property changes hands. Sharing, on the other hand, is characterized by the absence of loss. It is a new paradigm whose consequences we are far from being able to measure.”<sup>66</sup> “Intellectual technologies do not occupy a place like any other within contemporary anthropological changes; they are potentially the critical zone for these changes, the political platform. We can't reinvent the instruments of communication and collective thought without reinventing democracy, a distributed, active, molecular democracy. Not by placing its destiny in the hands of some so-called intelligent mechanism, but by systematically producing the tools that will enable it to shape itself into intelligent communities, capable of negotiating the stormy seas of change. At this tipping point in history, humanity has the chance to regain control of its future”<sup>67</sup>.

##### **Sharing and collective intelligence within voluntary networked relations**

This passage links Michel Authier’s analysis to the initiatives presented in the first section.<sup>68</sup> “For a collective to start up, someone has to put their trust in it. Collaboration and mutual support are maximized in small groups, from ten to twenty people, not much more, when the individual and collective benefits are greater than the results that would have been obtained if everyone remained on

---

65

66

67

68

their own. These constructions take time, require a certain degree of skill and respect for individuals and use integration processes. Experienced and well-practiced small groups have active characteristics such as transparency, the sharing economy, a collective consciousness, polymorphous social structure, a large capacity for learning, converging interests between the individual and collective levels, the famed human warmth and, above all, a greater capacity to embrace complexity and the unexpected. PARI and BASE Sud Audois are collectives of this type, aiming to play a socially useful role in their living environment and within spaces for construction, mutual aid and collective expression.

Other cooperative approaches exist, including “collectives that make use of a quasi-object to accompany and capitalize on the interests and benefits acquired by their members’ practices. The prototype of these types of collectives is a team playing a football match. The ball used for a match on a sports field is a quasi-object that is emblematic of collectives in motion which pose different problems and give rise to other hopes than do unchanging communities. As soon as the match begins, the ball belongs to all the players. When the game is interrupted, it becomes the property of the referee. Everyone agrees upon the quasi-object. It creates the conditions of a unifying game, in the sense that the match’s result records this unification once the game is over. Collectives with quasi-objects play with a place and places, create movement, transforming the problem of sharing and eliminating the need adjudicate to achieve satisfaction. The quasi-object defines the nodal point of minimal recognition, the basis for indefinite play. It takes shape thanks to the action of each individual and their accumulated violence.

However, in the absence of a quasi-object, each individual claims sole possession of knowledge within the confusion they maintain with the notion of learning. For by reducing their knowledge to learning, the instituted form of knowledge, each individual is criticizing other people’s knowledge for not specifically recognizing their own, producing a significant gap in collaboration due to an exhausting effort to produce definitions. This is the trap that an organization like Inter-Réseaux de l’économie solidaire has fallen into, preferring “a good definition” over mutual recognition between the people sitting round the same table, with their good will and their diversity.

“The shared characteristic of these new forms of collective intelligence is the many-to-many communication structure. Cyberspace offers co-operative instruments (though still somewhat primitive, these are constantly increasing in sophistication) for the construction of a common context among numerous, geographically dispersed groups. Communication unfolds to the full extent of its pragmatic possibilities. It is no longer a matter of simple forwarding or broadcasting of messages, but of interaction within a situation that every participant helps to stabilise or change; of a parley about meanings; of a process of mutual recognition of groups and individuals through the activity of communication. The main thing here is the partial objectification of a virtual meaning-world which participants can share in and re-interpret within many-to-many communication set-ups. This dynamic objectification of a collective context is an operator of collective intelligence, a living bond doubling for a common memory or a common consciousness. A living subjectivation emerges in response to a dynamic objectification. The common object dialectically sustains a collective subject.”<sup>69</sup> The Local Pacts movement is included in this category. It provides a space for dialogue outside member organizations’ internal life. It aims for an anchoring of practical realities in a shared vision of social transformation by means of positive interpersonal ties. This is not simply a geographical form of the local: it is open, interlinked, systemic. It is aware of tackling issues that may be in opposition and accepts disagreement. This approach has established trust and produced elements of a qualitative added value that has encouraged the collective capacity to seize opportunities and thus experiment with changing the scale of solutions. It has gradually taken the network’s activities to the European

and international level, starting in 2005, and produced a second proposals paper in 2011, *Making a P'act*.

In late 2015, the network's future was unclear, since the path it is on depends on the relevance that participants attribute to it, for however long a time.

.....

## **Chapter 7: Globality and alterlocalization (297-330)**

### **Globality and cultural membership (299-306)**

#### **Cultural relationships after four centuries of Western domination.**

This section does not claim to address the vast issue of destructiveness, but cannot wholly ignore the place it occupies relative to future social transformation. We have to accept that which is inhuman as the hidden face of that which is human. Many people are suffering from an increase in violence, all the more pernicious as it takes multiple forms, reflecting the multiple sociocultural contexts that provoke it. It is no longer a matter of dealing with an abstract social division but of facing up to the serial breakdowns that it engenders. In today's conflicts, with their overlapping causes, it is no longer possible to unequivocally state who is in the wrong, and who is in the right. Even if public opinion may designate a victim, that is not enough to restore peace.

Psychoanalysis has taught us that the subject is divided, existing initially via the alterity that s/he comprises, becoming a subject in a process of recording and differentiating the possibilities for openings and threats of blockage from within. "History shows abundant examples of humanity's dogged battles to protect its cultural autonomy from the constant dangers of encroachment. People grasp with all their might at the painstakingly constructed techniques that allow them to become and remain singular."<sup>70</sup> However, situations of domination inevitably produce defensive collective attitudes as protection from any sudden changes. Regression is the most common form of dissociative acculturation. When confronted with a contact, people turn out to be incapable of visualizing themselves as a subject. "The act of self-defining in terms of a class identity, massive and dominant, constitutes the first step towards a defensive renunciation of [the] real identity." Cultural creatives account for 25% of the American population, according to the study by Ray and Anderson mentioned above. Is it not paradoxical to note the parallels between this emergence and the dated and increasingly hardline mindset of a quarter of the USA's population? Or the cohabitation of the new aspirations of the Arab youth with a warlike Islamism and the massification of the manifestations of inhumanity that these frictions provoke in proportions never before seen, in neither number nor simultaneity. Might we think, as these authors do, that this is a desperate attempt on the part of those they term "modernists" (50%) to preserve or regain control of a situation that has slipped from their grasp, and that it signals the foreseeable end of a five centuries of a certain way of running the world?

An analysis based on the long time-span of civilisations led Fernand Braudel to offer a more guarded response: "I don't think that, for civilisations, social catastrophes are necessarily irremediable, unless, of course, humanity commits suicide, as it is now equipped to do. In the world's deep diversity, every civilisation, and all civilisations together, place us within an immense historical movement that is, for every society, the source of an internal logic and of innumerable contradictions." His "first reflex is to

have faith in heterogeneity, diversity, permanence, survival — which in our present civilisation is to place an emphasis on examining acquired reflexes, inflexible attitudes, well-worn habits, deep-seated preferences, which only a slow-moving, ancient history can account for, one that has little place for consciousness, just like the many antecedents that psychoanalysis tells us lie at the very heart of adult behaviours. This is something that needs to be studied in schools, yet all peoples are fixated with examining themselves in their own mirrors, to the exclusion of others.”<sup>71</sup>

**‘Interculturality: the peoples’ destiny – but not just any how!**

When Jean Malaurie was asked in *Le Monde* what he considered to be the most significant feature of the previous millennium, he answered without hesitation: “the emergence of first nation peoples, the discovery of the diversity and complementarity of world cultures.”<sup>72</sup> We live in historic times, and the power of peoples brings with it hope for a reconfiguration of the conditions needed for a life in society that is mobile and alive with curiosity about the Other. Various examples suggest themselves, including *Falun Gong* in China which challenged the Chinese state in 1999 by affirming that “hearts cannot be caged.” Its followers, some 70 to 100 million of them, adhere to three tenets drawn from Chinese and Buddhist spirituality: truthfulness, compassion and forbearance. The Zapatista army won the semantic war in Mexico which the Mexican government could only respond to with indiscriminate violence. “Not even all their soldiers could manage to block off all the pathways that preceded our suffering and now follow our revolt.” “Welcome to the indefiniteness,” declared sub-commandante Marcos, a Ladino who chose to commit to action through the Indian side of his culture. “Peace requires compromises that are necessarily dependant and thus limited,” he said. “They are predicated on diversified local economies that prioritize use of available resources to meet the basic needs of members of the community. Local self-determinations such as this then become self-managing, which is a path to democratic development.”<sup>73</sup> This movement has gained traction in numerous places around the world, often using these approaches as their starting point.

**Closer to home, dissidents in eastern Europe struggle to regain their creative powers.**

Dissidence is “an attempt to recover responsibility for oneself.” The concrete individual is often a “person who has been seduced by the consumer value system, whose identity is dissolved in an amalgam of the accoutrements of mass civilization, and who has no roots in the order of being, no sense of responsibility for anything higher than his own personal survival, is a demoralized person. The system depends on this demoralization, deepens it, is in fact a projection of it into society.” Yet, Havel continues,<sup>74</sup> “individuals can be alienated from themselves only because there is something in them to alienate. The terrain of this violation is their authentic existence. [...] Every society, of course, requires some degree of organization. Yet that organization is to serve people, and not the other way around, then people will have to be liberated and space created so that they may organize themselves.”

The potential power of the energy accumulated in the acts of individuals regaining control over their lives is “incalculable,” it “takes place within semidarkness, unapparent until the time it finally surfaces into the light of day as an assortment of shocking surprises.” Havel posits that such resources are not “calculable.” They swept away Stalinism.

**Construction of a self-aware civil society (307-318)**

Seattle, USA, 1997: the first international summit to be successfully blocked by non-violent demonstrators. Activists came from all around the world. This event shone a light on the role of information in a global international mobilization around a set of problems. “Global civil society, in this act of defiance that was the culmination of years’ of resistance, formally marked its arrival on the

---

71

72

73

74

scene and the birth of a new history.”<sup>75</sup> The views of Nicanor Perlas, the Filipino economist, are that it is necessary to meet “the challenges of elite-based globalization that has imposed itself on the world. According to this vision, people, nature, culture, spirituality and social considerations have disappeared.” He suggests a threefold approach founded in the interaction of three functions of humanity’s activities. The economic sphere ensures the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services to provide an appropriate response to human needs. The political sphere ensures equity in all aspects of human relations. The cultural sphere defends and promotes values that are in tune with humanity’s common good.

One of the conditions for civil society’s emergence as the third pillar is that it takes account of the cultural nature of its power, learns how to resist the risks of being co-opted or instrumentalized in order to create the conditions needed for negotiating with the government and the market. When civil society groups achieve this, their key institutions then benefit from their own space within which they can exercise independent thinking, put forward the case for alternative policies and protest against practices that are unjust and inequitable. “Civil society’s independence from the political powers is vital, as creative democratic values are the basis of true democracy. In order to mitigate this damage, it is important to start by respecting the different tactics and strategies of criticism, from refusal to practical engagement, all of which have their uses. This respect would be all the stronger were we to manage to create trusting relationships and strategic alliances based on these differences.”<sup>76</sup>

#### **A comparison with the situation in France at the end of the 1990s.**

The various theoretical and practical actors in France’s solidarity economy during the 1990s were insufficiently aware of their cultural power when political opportunities arose, preventing them from claiming a place in the public sphere. Their vision of political power remains strongly idealistic. The government failed to enter into a true dialogue with civil society, nor did it meet its commitments to become a partner state. Instead it argued with itself about the best way to use this opportunity in the short-term for its own advantage.

Another problem is that there was, and still is, no “organisational matrix” sufficiently widespread and shared to be able to translate civil society’s cultural power into an integrated and non-hierarchical democratic way of working, working from the bottom up. This is what Elinor Ostrom describes when she notes the lack of theoretical approaches predicated on human choices. “Yet the binary state-market models have nothing to say about what people will do once they have sufficient independence to create their own institutions and how they are able to influence standards and benefits. Neither do they tell us anything about innovators’ abilities to develop institutions capable of producing results, better rather than worse, for themselves and for others, perhaps strengthened or watered down by the institutional structures of the prevailing political environment.”<sup>77</sup>

#### ***Lessons for increasing autonomy***

*“To reconquer critical autonomy and creative powers is to enter “the arena of dialogue and partnership, open-minded yet without illusions, to understand the institutional dynamic, to stay protected and sensitive to the question of maintaining independence.*

*In order to take its rightful place in threefold relationships and fulfil its historical mission, civil society must establish a strategy for independent action that grows its power to influence, dispute, and set out concrete responses; that allows for the fact that each element of the response cannot succeed alone and must learn to partner with others to build concurrent and/or converging positions, strengthen*

---

75

76

77

*mutual legitimacy, capitalize on progress to ensure lasting existence, regularly re-examine the diagnosis, and adjust action and communication strategies.*

*To expand the conception of power and how it might be exercised in future is to be aware that individuals within large institutions do not all share the same model of beliefs and motivations. Some share our diagnosis and are potential allies in strategic partnerships designed to bring about true change. At the point where we are now, with a civil society that remains insufficiently self-aware, it is in this way that threefold partnerships can be established or progress.*”<sup>78</sup>

## **Obstacles to alterlocalization in world governance (318-330)**

The world economy does not incorporate concern for territories into its exogenous development strategies. When there is no more profit, it moves on, leaving behind industrial wasteland and polluting factories. Overall, administrative and political territories remain part of a geography of hierarchical and sector-specific powers. This explains the strong resistance that the territorial approach to solutions encounters. Our societies are not prepared for what is in fact a cultural change.

### **Primacy of centrality in geographical representations of the world.**

Most prevailing theories explain the localization and distribution of human activities by referring to the major role played by distance. Certain places are selected as centres and then acquire the social, symbolic and economic value of a centre, relegating everywhere else to a more or less remote and peripheral role, which “almost never results in totally reducing inequalities.”<sup>79</sup> This theoretical framework does not seek to deconstruct the mechanisms of power but is determined by the wish to explain “why it is the way it is.”

### **A world behind the world.**

Roger Brunet says he is “struck by the general nature of the phenomenon of exceptional places, not to say the strange complicity over the black points, blind or blinding, in geographical space: narco-networks, free-trade zones, tax havens or disconnected, relegated, alienated spaces I call the anti-world – the world of places that reject the world but are inseparable from the world.”<sup>80</sup> The geography of this anti-world should be included in education programmes to provide an idea of the times to come. These lawless places are home to mafia groups, smugglers, flags of convenience and “neutral” spaces that turn the oceans into a dustbin. And then there are the “separate” places, the refugee camps produced by massive displacements of people dispossessed of their right to land, the boats of despair and the cemeteries of the sea.

### **“Macro-tropism” at the world economy level.**

Even more problematic than those acting outside the law are the heavyweights of the world economy that choose not to respect the rules imposed on others. “This means they lose all sense of the necessary coexistence of economic, political and social situations, linked in various ways. The resistance put up by civil society to this fundamental lack of respect still seems irresolute and disorganized. The cynics are not necessarily right. Those rebuilding effective communication between levels have an opportunity.”<sup>81</sup> Karl Polanyi predicted that by dint of undermining the ethical foundations of society, the economy must expect “a massive backlash that will hit it hard.” The same message emerges from World Bank figures, indicating that 64% of the world’s wealth is due to the presence of “social capital”, while business capital contributes a mere 16%!

---

78

79

80

81



**Ecology: global and local are not connected.**

“The concept is unquestionably distinguished by a large capacity to ask and, importantly, link together several of the key questions confronting our societies: the question of the purpose of growth and a possible compromise between diverging economic, social and ecological interests; the question of time and competition between short and long term, present and future generations, and the question of ‘spatial identities’ and the problematical link between the principles of globalization and of local territory automatization.” Jacques Theys writes that behind this rhetoric of good intentions, “the main characteristic of this discourse is to erase the contradictions it articulates so as not to resolve them. It is essentially at the territorial level that the indispensable links between the social and ecological dimensions of sustainable development can be constructed democratically. This assertion may appear surprising if we recall that the concept emerged in a context that was very far removed from local preoccupations in terms of global risks and North-South relations. It may also seem very out of step with the current situation, marked as it is by economic deterritorialization, the widespread mobility of people, information and capital, and some degree of elimination of borders. And yet, it corresponds to a highly concrete reality: in today’s world, the problems of sustainable development are essentially felt at the territorial level, and it is equally true that this is where they can find solutions that are both equitable and democratic.”<sup>82</sup>

**The lack of social intermediation mandates leaves a large part of humanity voiceless.**

This is another one of the missing links in any effort to meet the challenges posed by complex situations. Institutional flaws benefit power. The experience acquired by trade unions and other intermediary bodies would be more valuable than ever in constructing a form of resistance suited to globality and obtaining enforceable legal solutions.

**A democratic deficit in public territorial space.**

Consultation is now incorporated in official texts and making its way into political discourse. But this sphere is clearly “polarized” in the public space. “The northern hemisphere” of “public debate receives more recognition and support, but involves less actors.” “The southern hemisphere”, home to territorial dialogue, provides “a series of consultation and mediation processes aiming to mobilize a territory’s inhabitants and organized groups, with a view to defining development strategies, managing local conflicts, implementing projects and creating social ties. The decisions proposed within these spaces for consultation and construction tend to go unrecognized, despite the fact that they generate a real capacity to take action with few resources. The formats for action they contain are far more diversified and sometimes informal.”<sup>83</sup>

**Territories that organize themselves are not necessarily institutions and are not limited to local authorities.**

Inhabitants and citizens who exercise their power of action in the real economy and territorial governance should become the natural partners of local and regional government representatives. But the reality is very different. There is a missing link in the desire to build far more cooperative partnerships that take into account each party’s social commitments, as illustrated by the “for shared references” study in the Aude. Regional and national governments have a role to play in ensuring that solutions being put into practice are maintained over the long term. Their role needs to be redefined with clear mandates and feedback from voters. This is another one of the missing links in democratic governance. By excluding authentically cooperative relationships, representation is weakened.

**Citizen legitimacy sometimes collides with the public authorities’ legitimacy.**

82

83

Adult citizen participation takes action in the name of objectives likely to correspond to those of the public authorities in the general interest, but also to oppose them if they are likely to destroy common goods. Far too often, the choice of economic localization is imposed without taking account of the conditions governing inhabitants' daily lives, with the agreement of the authorities. The obstacles that recognition of territorial social dialogue encounters reflect the resistance of instituted systems to transforming themselves. This question is akin to the democratic debate on the social contract, according to which an authority can be exercised legitimately or illegitimately. Meaningful discussions on choices affecting the future need to be incorporated into decision-making processes, including citizen approaches, since they effectively contribute to the real economy and territorial governance.

### **Learning the lessons of citizen mobilization in territorial society means:**

**Adopting a citizen-based approach to constructing the intermediate level.**<sup>84</sup> To renew the regional development model is to find a dynamic means to link regions to the globalized economy. The resources are different in nature: multi-actor networks operating in territories; SMEs, operating in the market economy, the hybrid economy or the third sector, which does not preclude them from seeking to generate profit. With the backing of their results, cultural values, territorial usefulness and the scope of their networks, they also seek to produce norms and new regulations. A civil society that writes its own part, rather than being passive, is also one of the driving actors in this regional development model. Much is made of levels of abstentionism at elections, but at the individual level citizens do more than just vote (or not). They create associations, set up spaces where citizenship can be exercised and within which the participants take decisions on matters that affect them directly.

***Democratic renewal is impossible without learning the lessons of these social realities.***

### **Using the real economy as the basis restructures business activity and creates tomorrow's jobs.**

Local businesses cooperating with each other contribute to the reconstruction of local economic cycles to the benefit of the communities concerned. Experience shows that this can only be accomplished with a scaling up of combinations of monetary and non-monetary resources, both public and private, by means of social action, voluntary non-material investment, swapping, mutual aid with or without money, etc. The goals are to obtain more comprehensive and lasting responses to essential needs, and to test out a transition offering a real alternative to state and capitalist models.

Seeking to loosen the grip of exogenous development, these initiatives are developing very rapidly in terms volume of activity, turnover and examples recorded. For example, 5,000 complementary regional currencies exist around the world.

*The combined influence of these socio-economic inventions can already be seen in an erosion of the complex components that form the macro economy.*

*Even when severely tested by the increasingly harsh impacts of developments that are ever more irresponsible, these collective initiatives, projects, tools and alternative markets are now producing real opportunities to "build a system" that works for a radical and necessary transformation of the fundamentals.*

**Taking the path of prosperity rooted in qualitative development is possible**, once we recognize that the major source of jobs in the future will be the capacity to meet the essential needs of daily life with responses based on quality, durability, solidarity and proximity. Meeting these needs means restructuring employment as a function of these opportunities and the political will to take this direction. In concrete terms, human activity mobilizes personal and professional values within a territorial context and pre-existing social context. A systemic and interlinked theoretical approach based on concrete situations that create activities supports the adaption of working relations, curbs the erosion of jobs, helps to create new markets and high quality territorial sectors of activity, organizes short circuits, creates secure workshare jobs, and consolidates the development of international coordinated movements for promoting new solutions.

*The collective project to support, create and link together activities that are useful to our societies in ecological, economic and social terms is taking shape. As it does so, it is building viable and innovative economic models for tomorrow.*

**Territorial embeddedness provides a concrete basis for learning how to manage common goods and defining shared social responsibilities.**

The conventional conception of ownership as an individual's right acquires an entirely different dimension when the existence of a collective right to common goods is recognized. What are the consequences of redefining land as common goods? What becomes of the public space if it can no longer be privatized at will? How can access to common goods, humanity's heritage, be guaranteed? How can they be distributed fairly, when territories do not have the same resources? These questions underpin the principles and conditions of exercising shared social responsibilities, which need to be developed.

*Alongside management by means of individual ownership rights or by the state, a third and competent institutional framework can exist wherein communities and organized groups can collectively manage common goods, or "commons" as they are usually called today.*

*The fundamental debate over common goods, in terms of the theoretical, democratic and territorially operational aspects, is the concrete testing ground for the development of world citizenship.<sup>85</sup>*

**"Creating bridges should be at the heart of sustainable development"** with a constant focus on creating ties between the local and global, the sector-specific and the spatial. The tools exist. They are lacking in strategic ambition and call for a real Copernican revolutions in our representations of space. By looking to "topology" rather than the more traditional figure of the hierarchy or network, we should certainly be able to improve how we understand and integrate the local and global issues of sustainable development. By giving a central place both to the singularity of places (geographical specificities or local potential) and to the elements that link them, we can gradually move towards the global space. Anyone who understands the territorial approach to socio-economic problems is aware of the importance of examining divisions and what triggers them. It is another facet of the same problem. "Building bridges and developing solutions to ensure continuity between levels implies placing the priority on taking an interest in the spaces where discontinuity reigns: the no man's land between two neighbourhoods, industrial wasteland, the effects of division and border zones.

*Tirelessly creating new ties involves far more than institutional arrangements, it is a state of mind, a way of seeing that puts the focus on 'relations between ... and between...' territories, neighbourhoods, urban areas, labour market areas, regions, countries as well as between cities and cultures in the North and South.*<sup>86</sup> **Conclusion: two key points to be stressed**

## **1. The method is an ethical choice: experience and knowledge multiply as they are divided**

### **On completion of this research, the ideas emerge more clearly.**

This definition of territory within a globalized context was formulated and shared by citizens from all over the world, engaged in a territorial approach within their respective environments, to prepare a cross-cutting workshop on “democratic partnership and territorial rooting of the solidarity economy” as part of the 4th European RIPESS meeting.

It was validated at Lux’09 in 2009, and used as a working basis for preparing the 5th meeting in the Philippines, in 2013. It was confirmed as a relevant definition as part of the Manila’13 workshop on *SSE Initiatives in the Territories*, with 60 contributions to the online forum.

Seven experiences were presented: community forestry in Nepal, sustainable livelihoods through small-scale agriculture in Bangladesh, community-supported agriculture in Europe and worldwide, coordination of small-scale fair trade producers in Latin America and the Caribbean, the defence of territories in Guatemala and Central America, territorial coaching in solidarity economy initiatives at the local level, and the perception of community economic development in Canada.

Discussions produced a general consensus on three priority strategies for the SSE’s territorial approach over the coming years: strengthen cooperation and solidarity at the local level; organize democratic territorial governance at different levels of the social, economic and the ecological spheres, and incorporate the contributions of the territorial approach in the global SSE programme as an alternative model.

### **Definition of territoriality within globality**

*This term has different meanings depending on different languages and cultures. For us, a territory is a geographically-based action system, where social, cultural and economic relations are organized: at the grassroots level, between inhabitants who share a common heritage, a past and a future in a same area, that they inherited and that has a destiny (whether native born, of adoption, migrants or visitors);*

*at different levels, between organizations with multiple features (businesses, local authorities, states, networks, mutual aid, sectors of production, etc.);*

*between these individuals and these organizations with a specific bio-geographical environment;*

*between all these components and larger (macro) or smaller (micro) groupings.*

*These systems of territorial relations (whose local roots can vary according to the nature of the interpersonal relationship in question) are necessarily open and connected to the outside. For in today's world, interdependence has increased. Solving concrete problems such as housing, food, development, infrastructure, services, employment, use of natural resources, the allocation of resources, etc., must take into account:*

- *constraints and opportunities relating to the production and distribution of globalized goods and services;*
- *the shortcomings of current international governance in the organization of a fair, just and appropriate territorial management of natural and cultural resources, “the global common goods and shared values” and flows of all kinds that are appropriate to the diversity of different situations (ecosystems, overcrowded metropolitan areas, vulnerable territories, etc.);*
- *new links and forms of organization (institutional, economic, social but also cross-cutting, financial, fiscal, technical, etc.) that territorial governance must create.*

### **Reinvesting social capital supports the movement and produces recognition.**

**The Local Pacts network initiated a new two-year cycle of Learning Journeys** starting in 2012. It was one of the “snowball effects” produced by the development of the Local Pacts network, which became European 2010. It was a founding member of RIPESS Europe in 2011 and associate member of the RIO+20 collective, which began making preparations in 2011 for the 2012 summit.

European Pacts has been testing out the Learning Journey as a tool to promote cooperation since 2007. It provides a customized and formal framework for achieving target results, defined and validated beforehand between the partners of the Grundtvig PACTS project.<sup>87</sup> The project’s partners have been committed to local processes for over 30 years for some and just a few years for others. Their goal is not only to take remedial action, but also to introduce dynamic, interconnected and transformative approaches. Their cooperation is rooted in a critical and constructive approach to the formalization and transmission of concrete benefits and the cross-cutting lessons their practices have taught. During six meetings, members and partner organizations from six countries in northern, southern and central Europe met 35 organizations and observed how they have succeeded in finding solutions to the basic problems of everyday life.- As part of this collaborative training-action learning system, host partners shared the collaborative methods they have developed to carry out activities (getting people involved, running collective learning processes, and self-organization to transform local daily life) and their expertise in building an economy more rooted in solidarity and democratic forms of governance by various means: companies pooling to create jobs, sustainable rural regeneration within a holistic approach centred on transition, short circuits between producers and consumers, social enterprise as a tool for the local economy, popular education and active solidarity with the unemployed and those suffering from job insecurity.

### **The added value of the European dimension is undeniable and tangible.**

The project built trust between European partners, expanded the general scope of the grouped lessons, received an excellent evaluation from the project sponsors, and increased the feeling of participating in a project-based community and the desire for concrete follow-ups. “When we share at the European level, we imagine that there will be lots of differences. The sociologies do differ but the types of problems are the same.” “New communities already exist. We have had similar problems that allowed us to make progress.”

Mutual understanding requires time and compassion. Their discussions showed that key notions such as “community”, “territory”, “social economy”, “solidarity economy”, “transition” and “resilience” are understood in different ways depending on language and context. This collective intelligence approach introduced a process that gradually grew in scope. It progressed along the path of shared references.

---

87

There is still a long way to go to create the conditions for an effective transfer of social inventions from one context to another. It is a work in progress, aiming for a humane globalization.

### **The catalyst for a method that lays the foundations of a society based on balanced links between the economy, politics and citizen cultural power.**

*- Trust in the experience and basing actions on resources and realities are the two underlying principles.*

*- The three-tiered imperative of know-understand-act (I illustrate, I debate, I propose) is the fuel that drives a machine for boosting credibility and thus obtaining the means to take action. The public space and citizen debate provide the engine, as we confirmed in 2009.*

*Taking back control over our creative power means becoming visible and asserting ourselves as aware and responsible inventors, linked together by horizontal relationships within networks.*

*- The definition of territoriality in the 21st century is generic, consensual and clear, making it an ideal tool for generating understanding, organizing public debate and raising awareness of the issues.*

*- Reconciling both ends of the spectrum to link local and global is a self-transformative process that increases the power for action and for concrete solutions. It also renews the basic principles of collective action, and produces knowledge appropriate to the conditions governing globality, shared references, new institutional arrangements and rigorous indicators for articulating that which characterizes alterlocalization as an alternative model.*

## **2. An approach implemented with a view to transmission.**

Due to the nature of our era, we run the risk of transformations governed by a short-term memory. At our contemporary level of temporality, the damaging effects of the gaps in institutional memory have been fully experienced over the last ten or so years, since the turn of the century. Changes of government are speeding up, as is the volatility of consensual views, producing breaks in continuity that do not seem to worry anyone. Over ten years, I have seen bodies of research break up or totally vanish, thus ruling out the possibility of a global perspective or forward-looking assessments of findings. Examples include the multi-disciplinary FAAPQ programme (training and learning for poorly-qualified adults), the body of practitioner-based discourse, and social propositions expressed during “regional consultations on the social and solidarity economy” demanding “the right to take action” and “a better state”. This also applies to the long-term agreements signed by the DIES in 2001. All, or almost all, of them have, like PARI and the Local Pacts, suffered from the sudden halt in funding with the fall of the government in 2002. The case is the same for hundreds of “dormant projects”, some of them funded, others not, created in response to the call for “solidarity initiatives” by the SEES – which lasted less than two years! If we ourselves fail to transmit the contributions of our generation to the progress of ideas, no one will do it for us. As civil society actors, we have learned to our cost that the state’s promises do not last beyond the electoral cycle. Social innovation is thus cut off from resources that are common goods, and that could have been used to capitalize, disseminate and amplify the social and organizational lessons learned within a continuity of intelligent practices. Such behaviour opens the door to groundless affirmations, in contrast with “recount what we do and do what we say,” and, with the passing of time, the very worst forms of “revisionism”. Democracy cannot prevail in this situation.

**Assembling the 20th century's social inventions means resisting the break in collective memory.**

This body of work provides an eyewitness account of what already exists, as suggested by the first point of this conclusion. The value of examples and the social capital they have produced has ensured the continuity of social relations and traceability of lessons learned. However, they are underestimated and underused. In the light of the acceleration of an increasingly irresponsible model that is on its last legs, it is clear that regression will be played out in endless and sterile debate. In a system where participation is based on voting, civic debate is limited to reacting to discussions led by professionals on other people's ideas and subjects previously debated in representative assemblies. However, democracy is a process whereby checks and balances are capillarized. "Deliberation fulfils one of its most noble functions: the intelligence of debating all the parameters of the decision. It has been confiscated by large-scale democracy, but reappropriated by social inventors who have opened up "spaces for autonomy wherein actors can take collective decisions in real time, either by circumventing institutional power or organizing spaces for freedom."<sup>88</sup> Small-scale democracy succeeded in building its legitimacy because it produced positive achievements for all actors. I am convinced that the act of transmitting is key to preparing the future; in the current vacuum created by the lack of vision for society and active links between generations and world cultures, each individual, at their own level and with the expertise acquired by their practices, could feasibly find themselves on the threshold of a radical and peaceful alternative, a "re-enchantment of the world" combining creativity and refusal to accept the unacceptable. Such is the core conclusion this research journey has reached. It holds out a rational hope, not a promise that no one could possibly guarantee.

"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. Transmitting, in the meaning used here, means linking together: in turn, linking together means relating, recounting an experience. In this work, I demonstrate that redeveloping living and liveable territories is a life choice 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 providing a critical assessment and proven results as food for thought in the process that each generation has to undertake, of sifting through the legacy it has inherited.

Linking together means reconnecting that which has been separated, externalized, segmented in order to reconstruct an overall vision.

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

How can we take back control over use of 64% of the world's wealth, which has been taken away from the vast majority of humans, in the name of the common good and the future? This question underpins this work and is the common thread binding together the reflections presented here, reflections that look to the future. To answer the question, both theory and practice are indispensable. A better understanding and definition of the territorial embeddedness of economic solidarity at different levels is a strategy for transforming restricted prototypes into the conditions for a deep-reaching democratization of the economy. Applying this perspective to territoriality prepares the ground for democratic governance of the social, economic and ecological. In conclusion, reconciling both ends of the spectrum can serve to banish the arbitrary by gradually producing the necessary conditions for exercising shared social responsibilities.

*Martine Theveniaut, 15 December 2015*

*Translated from the French by **Philippa Bowe Smith**, 19 January 2016*