Tackling Social Exclusion in Europe

The contribution of the social economy

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1. Introduction to an International Evaluation

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Since the second half of the 1970s, researchers from a number of disciplines have expressed a growing interest in voluntary sector and cooperative economic initiatives that belong neither in the sphere of classic private enterprise nor to the public economy. In fields such as economics, sociology, political science, management, law and history, more and more research into the social and economic realities of this "third sector" is appearing.

For most researchers throughout the world the idea of a third sector is certainly the most satisfactory approach to an overall understanding of this area. The association established by researchers in 1995 was not called the "International Society for Third Sector Research" by chance. However, this title conceals a wide diversity of approaches in different countries. In the United States these organisations are most often referred to as *non profit organisations* (NPO) or as the *independent sector*, whereas in the United Kingdom the idea of *voluntary organisations* predominates. French speaking countries have increasingly adopted the concept of *the social economy* to cover not only voluntary organisations but co-operative and mutual bodies too. This three or even four-pronged approach (if we include charitable foundations) is also being used increasingly worldwide, although this does not mean that all national approaches are modelled on the French pattern[1].

In recent years, several major research projects on an international scale have attempted to define the limits and the extent of this third sector.[2] Although there remains much to do in this field, the main questions for the future relate to the contribution made by these types of organisations and businesses in the context of the crisis that has hit developed countries. Such a perspective has also given rise to the collective research which has brought about the present work.

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1 The appearance of several new international scientific journals, and the relaunch of existing journals with a view to improved coverage of this field, are evidence of the growth of research in the area. In the French-speaking world, attention may be drawn to the new dynamism displayed by the *Revue des études co-opératives, mutualistes et associatives* (formerly the *Revue des études co-opératives*, Paris). In English, the journal *Voluntas* founded in 1990, and the revived *Non profit and Voluntarv Sector Quarterly* (previously the *Journal of Voluntary Action Research*) are certainly the best examples.

2 This was the chief objective of an international research project under the auspices of CIRIEC coordinated by J. Defoumy and J.L. Monzon Campos (1992) covering nine European countries and North America. Another example is the *Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project* established by the American Johns Hopkins University, which has covered the Third Sector in a dozen countries in its first stage (Salamon and Anheier, 1996 and 1998).

The main purpose of this work, undertaken by around 15 researchers over a four-year period, was to record on a comparative, international basis (using a sample of nine countries) the new responses of the voluntary organisations and the co-operative movement to the crisis in employment and the welfare state, starting from an approach to employability in which voluntary sector and co-operative projects have multiplied over the last two decades: the social and occupational integration of people excluded from the traditional routes into employment.

However, our approach has not been governed by the question of integration through work[3] alone. This area was chosen, on the contrary, as illustrative of the new generation of voluntary organisations and cooperatives, an area that would expose the problems faced by society as a whole and raise questions regarding enterprises within the social economy as a whole. This is why, after outlining the challenges posed by unemployment and the increase of exclusion, and sketching the main public policies aimed at people who have the greatest difficulties in integrating into society, we will set these circumstances in the context of the social economy. In this way we intend not merely to set the scene but to present the whole framework of considerations which form the context of our analysis.

1.1. Unemployment and the Rise of Exclusion

Since the 1970s, western societies have been faced with serious structural unemployment. The countries of the European Union and certain others, such as Canada, have been especially severely hit by this phenomenon: most of these countries experienced a dramatic rise of their unemployment rate, from 3 or 4% 30 years ago to more than 10% through the 1980s and the 1990s. Although a declining trend may be observed for the very last years, unemployment was still above 11 % for countries like France and Italy and above 9% for Germany in mid-1999. In the whole European Union, there were still more than 15 million people who were officially registered as unemployed,[4] without counting all these people who would like to work but are excluded from unemployment statistics for various reasons.

A great deal has already been written in analysis of the causes of this massive unemployment in Europe. The hypotheses most often advanced to explain the situation suggest slow growth accompanied by a weak increase in jobs, and very high salary costs particularly for low-skill work. Others, on the other hand, draw attention to inadequate public measures for the regulation of the labour market. However most researchers agree, whatever the causes advanced, in emphasising the need to address exclusion and persistent long-term unemployment. Without entering into this debate, let us stress at once the extent of this fact: for the European Union as a whole, the proportion of long-term unemployed (without work for more than a year) has consistently remained above 40% throughout the last ten years. Today the figure has passed 50%, while it has barely reached 12% in the United States and 15% in Japan. Of the European jobless, 30% have been without work for over two years.

However, the destabilisation of paid employment is not a peculiarly European phenomenon. The United States, for example, is also extensively affected by the growing insecurity of many jobs

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3 In French-speaking countries, the expressions " integration through work" and " integration through economic activity" both sometimes predominate. In this text they are both used and assumed to be equivalent terms.

4 Variations between countries may be considerable. For example, in July 1999 Spain had 16% unemployment as against less than 5% in the Netherlands, Austria and Denmark.

that is a feature of our economies in the context of the globalisation of trade and increasingly keen international competition. This insecurity is characterised by the widespread use of fixed-term contracts, the increase in non-typical kinds of work, the rise of non-voluntary part-time working, a progressive deterioration in working conditions, etc. We can observe at the same time a reduction in the social conditions of an increasingly large part of the population and the swelling numbers of those social groups that are progressively excluded from the traditional routes into work.

The development of public policy in response to exclusion and the increased risk of exclusion is revealed in somewhat symptomatic terms that refer increasingly to the unemployed who are "hard to place"[5].This kind of approach is not really new; since the Second World War, many industrialised countries have targeted the physically or mentally disabled in a similar way and have developed policies organising them into work in more or less "sheltered" or adapted environments. Today's excluded workers are rather implicitly defined by a kind of social and occupational handicap that keeps them below the "employability threshold". To make matters worse, this failure to meet the demands of the labour market is self-sustaining: the longer people are out of work, the more their professional abilities deteriorate (the "human capital" in economists' terms) and the weaker their motivation to, seek work becomes. In the same way we may fear that applying the institutionalising label of "people in difficulties" may itself be a source of stigma and confirm potential employers in the idea that some parts of the active population are in objective terms unemployable.[6]

According to, Erhel *et al.*,[7] the statistics show that the hard core of unemployed people fall into three major categories. The easiest group to identify is that of the long-term unemployed (over one or two years according to the classification system adopted). A second category lumps together various heterogeneous groups of individuals who experience recurrent unemployment punctuated by brief spells in work and who have at the same time other particular problems (drug addiction, especially poor educational levels, serious family problems, etc.). The third group consists of those covered by social security or minimum income schemes although they are fit for work.

The existence of such groups of citizens, and in particular the increase in these groups, presents society with the challenge of employability, because in a society in which social integration is primarily achieved through paid work, unemployment is not solely an economic problem but also a socio-political issue.[8] Certainly various analyses have diagnosed a downgrading of the position of paid work and its importance in society, stressing the reduction of the amount of time devoted to economic activity in human life.[9] It has also been possible to identify the different ways in which people distance themselves from work, including a new involvement in the realm of private life and an increasing emphasis on leisure activities.[10] However, having a job remains

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5 Erhel *et al.* (1996).
6 Elbaum (1994).
7 Erhel *et al.* (1996).
8 The massive experience of unemployment has led us to realise once more that a job is not just a way to "earn a living", an income from labour, but also confers status and with it social recognition. From this point of view integration seeks as far as possible to restore work, income, status and recognition.
9 Perret and Roustang (1995); De Foucauld and Piveteau (1995).
10 Perret (1995).

no less an essential condition for independence and social identity. Conversely, the massive long-term exclusion of individuals brings into focus the issue of employability and the working of society as a whole: not only is it a very difficult situation for those concerned, but the macro-economic and macro-social consequences may be very heavy in terms of the wastage of human resources and social cohesion with increasing poverty and the erosion of social bonds.

For some, the waged society is crumbling to an extent which calls into question the very foundations of social organisation.[11] This is because the decline in regular, full time, permanent work is accompanied by a decentralisation of professional contacts and a rise in the importance of small businesses, breaking with the centralisation and the dominant position of large businesses characteristic of collective bargaining during the period of expansion.[12] The crisis in public regulation, both as regards mode of operation and financial means, has led in turn to the shrinking or commercialisation of public services. Finally, many companies are relocating to take advantage of investment opportunities. These, among others, are the strategic causes of a double crisis, in employment and in the social state, each directly impinging on the other.

How can public authorities tackle the problems of employment, which, as the central factor in exclusion and insecurity, now also involves social policy, within its shrinking scope for manoeuvre at the institutional and financial level?

1.2. The Development of Public Employment Policy

Over the last two decades, compensation measures for the unemployed have taken on a growing importance in public employment policy.[13] But the worsening problems have forced these policies to move far beyond compensation. As the groups of people affected by unemployment were increasingly observed to be young, and as those receiving social security included more and more people who were employable, the view spread that it was not possible simply to pay people for remaining inactive. Hence the hypothesis, and subsequently the conviction, that some of this expense must be transferred from “passive” to “active” expenditure.

Side-by-side with a general trend to an increased quantitative flexibility, European governments, which were aware of the limits of measures supporting growth and were improving unemployment benefit and supporting retirements from the labour market, turned to “active labour and employment policies”.

More specifically, during the 1980s, “the system of unemployment benefit was gradually drawn into a new framework of active policies for employment, becoming a tool for active policy and structural adjustment”. The system of benefits was altered to provide incentives to occupational integration. In the United Kingdom, the 16 and 17-year-old unemployed ceased to qualify for benefit payments; but all the unemployed in this age group were entitled to a place on a young people's training programme, and in this case an allowance could be made. “Compensation could also be linked with keeping in work staff threatened with dismissal and with the victims of industrial restructuring. In this case compensation could be paid even before dismissal came into force, if the employer took the appropriate measures to classify the worker as redundant.”.[14]

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11 Castel (1995).

12 Lallement (1996).

13 For an overall view, see Barbier (1997).

14 These quotations are taken from Garonna (1990).

The marked "qualification deficit" in the labour market has made it essential to co-ordinate employment and training policies for improving employability. The link between training and employment is evident in the widespread use of day-release schemes, which combine theoretical, academic training with the acquisition of a qualification in the work place. The success of this formula is clear from the fact that youth unemployment is less high in countries which have vocational training schemes combining apprenticeship in a firm with compulsory attendance at a vocational training institution, and the acquisition of a final qualification. Because of the high number of young people leaving the education system without any vocational training - over 30% of 16 and 17-year-olds in Great Britain and Italy - day-release programmes have been introduced in an attempt to match the effectiveness of the German programmes: 90% succeed in qualifying there under the dual system with 9% remaining unemployed, as compared with 50% and 30% respectively in France.[15] The various worktraining contracts in France, the *contracti formazione lavoro* in Italy, and the content of the Youth Training Schemes in the United Kingdom have been designed in these three countries as elements in a necessary shake-up of the vocational training system. Schemes involving immersion in the work place before the training element are preferred to those in which the course precedes employment. The usual educational logic is reversed: the work situation provides the incentive for undertaking training, instead of training being considered as a preparation for work.

Overall, these active employment policies assume a wide variety of forms which can be classified as follows:[16]

Training support programmes. These programmes generally seek to take account of both the aptitudes and training needs of their target public, and the demands of possible and existing openings in the labour market. Most of the time these training programmes concentrate on bringing basic skills up to scratch and vocational training. In practice, there are many approaches, ranging from face-to-face teaching to work experience in the strict sense, with many mixed systems in between. In favour of on-the job training, some studies have shown that these schemes give better results for people experiencing grave difficulties in integrating. However, the evaluation of measures of this kind can only be properly carried out by following the individuals concerned over a long period. It must also be recognised that the drop-out rates along the way are rather high[17]

Remotivation programmes and job search assistance. This is a matter of providing the unemployed with more effective techniques in their search for work, and increasing their dynamism and self-confidence. Measures of this kind often combine short intensive sessions with interviews and individual follow-up aimed at working out personal reintegration plans. They can give good results at the local level. However, at a macro-economic level the effects may primarily be those of relocation.[18] This kind of monitoring may also be very inadequate to the needs of some people.

Subsidies for recruiting people with serious integrational difficulties. This direct or indirect support aims to make up for the lack of appeal these people have in the eyes of employers, particularly in the private sector. It often consists of a one-off or recurring subsidy, or takes the

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15 According to Dalle and Bounine (1987).

16 See, among others, Demazière (1995); Erhel *et al.* (1996); or Van der Linden (1997).

17 See, for example, Disney (1992).

18 See Bjdrklund and Regner (1996).

form of complete or partial exemption from social security charges. These techniques are very widely used but appear to be rather ineffective since they are generally insufficient to overcome the reluctance of employers.[19]

Overall, as Gazier says,[20] these employment policies are characterised by two features: activism, and a wait-and-see approach, activism initially, since these voluntaristic initiatives on the part of public authorities have multiplied everywhere to check the rise in long-term unemployment; then wait-and-see, because many of these measures have proved disappointing, often with rather hazy results. Hopes have thus been pinned on a medium-term improvement in business competitiveness and the revival of the economy.

However useful they may have been, active employment policies have not ultimately been without their ambiguities. The chief of these lies in the conjunction between the German-style "qualification offensive" and the drop in labour costs that has allowed doubts over the priorities held to persist. No country has escaped the "substitution effect": young people have replaced older workers, or have been preferred to the adult unemployed. To this must be added the effects of anticipation and selection: recruitment has been brought forward to profit from economic advantages, the rejection of people in difficulties has persisted. To sum up, these policies have benefited unemployed people with some resources, but have not really offered any opportunities to the most vulnerable groups. This is why - according to Gazier - they have also moved in the direction of selectivity, because the persistence of high rates of long term unemployment and financial constraints have made it necessary to target the priority groups: the long-term unemployed, and those people experiencing serious difficulties in integrating, including young people lacking their first experience of work.

1.3. Temporary Employment in the Public and Non-profit Sectors[21]

This selective approach is expressed in particular through a raft of measures based on new forms of work linking productive work with social integration, in this case through the creation of temporary jobs in the public and non-profit sectors. The jobs thus created are intended to satisfy unmet needs in the social, cultural, environmental or other spheres. Wage costs are generally born directly, either wholly or in part, by the public authorities.

These measures draw inspiration from a simple observation. On the one hand we have a number of unsatisfied needs; on the other, a significant number of people without work. It thus seems logical to encourage the creation of jobs in the areas meeting these new requirements.

In France, "relief work" programmes, TUCs (*Travaux d'utilité collective*), were set up in 1984 to carry out activities aimed at meeting public needs without competing with existing businesses, recruiting young people aged from 16 to 21 for a period of between three and twelve months. This measure, and its sister programmes (the local integration programme, PIL for adults, the AIG programme for people receiving the minimum integration income (RMI), etc.) reached a growing number of people until its replacement in 1989 by the CES, the employment solidarity contracts. These are contracts for work (unlike TUC contracts that lent vocational trainee status) intended to encourage the occupational integration or re-integration of jobless people through

19 See, for instance, Gautié *et al.* (1994).

20 Gazier (1992).

21 By the " non-profit sector" we mean here all those non-profit organisations that belong neither to the public sector nor to the traditional, profit-oriented private sector

“developing activities in response to unmet public needs”. The state provides a contribution of between 85% and 100% of the wage costs.

In Germany, the ABM work-creation programme (*Arbeits Beschaffung Massnahmen*), which involved almost 400,000 people in 1993, falls into this category of measures for limiting the unemployment rate. As for the CES in France, the German State (via the federal labour office) finances around 80% of wage costs for these workers for one or two year period, on the assumption that at the end of this time, thanks to this help, employers will be able to assume the cost of these jobs entirely.

In Great Britain, the Community Programme of 1982 was a continuation of an earlier programme established in 1975. Positions were for a maximum of one year, paid at the normal hourly rates for the job, with the reimbursement of employers' social security charges and wage costs up.to a guaranteed minimum. Up to 25,000 places were offered under this scheme.

In Belgium, there were programmes such as one for setting the unemployed to work (CMT) from 1963 to 1989, and the special temporary management programme (CST) which ran from 1977 to 1989. In Québec too, “employability bodies” specialised in setting up public programmes along similar lines.

The extent of unemployment thus led countries with a strong welfare state tradition to explore previously unexplored social responses to unemployment. This social approach to unemployment exposes an important change: on the one hand, it attempts to bring together social policy and economic activity, out of a conviction that participation in the economic sphere is a principle source of social integration,[22] on the other, it introduces terms of employment which are positioned between work and welfare.

All the programmes described above represent a break with the norm of full-time, permanent employment. Access to temporary work is considered worthwhile in itself, and is made possible by introducing an intermediate status allowing employers' staff costs to be reduced through public financing. The short cut between new methods of redistribution and an increase in available jobs is achieved at the cost of certain restrictions. The target public is narrowly defined, with jobs being reserved for particularly disadvantaged categories; the field is limited to tasks of public concern that are not fulfilled by private initiatives; the bodies appointed are public-sector establishments, local authorities or voluntary organisations. Without questioning the value of this social approach to unemployment, which has saved many from permanent exclusion, its limitations have become obvious with time.

The first limitation is that the availability of jobs takes precedence over personal career choice, just as too often happens in training. Regardless of an initial concern with quality, the pressure exercised by the volume of unemployment is such that it produces a slide towards quantitative objectives. It is a matter of “running at a profit”. Though strong initial guarantees are given to prevent programmes from replacing regular jobs in the public or private sectors and to ensure that they will lead to genuine occupational integration, they nevertheless find themselves steadily eroded. “In local authorities particularly, where staff numbers are steadily falling, it is hard to prevent certain jobs being taken over by people working in these programmes. This pursuit of public services by other means has led to the birth of a distinctive labour market on the margins

22 Barbier and Gautié (1998).

of the official services in which low-skill jobs are filled on the basis of poorly paid short-term contracts."[23]

Furthermore, since the effects of unemployment are far-reaching, these programmes often seem to benefit qualified workers more than others through the effects of substitution. At the worst, they can drive the poorly qualified even further from traditional labour markets, trapping them in a secondary market where they run the risk of alternating between insecure jobs and unemployment.[24] In any case, even though these measures may perform a useful fonction in terms of reintroducing people to work and providing services, many of them have no significant impact on the likelihood that the least qualified individuals concerned will reintegrate into the traditional labour markets.[25]

Unable to play an effective transitional role between unemployment and permanent employment, they may actually lay the foundations for a second permanent labour market in which the unemployed continue to work on a temporary basis. There is some evidence for this development in Germany: six months after leaving, 43% of people working on such schemes have begun another ABM while 23% are unemployed, in training or otherwise not working. In Great Britain 69% were either undergoing training or not working after passing through the Community Programme. In France "at the end of 1991, the 1989 school-leavers were more likely to be unemployed if they had held a CES place than if they had followed another training route; this held true for all levels of qualification"[26] The adult unemployed fare better from their time under the CES scheme, "but they are most likely to find work in the form of a second CES contract, particularly if they are older, and their chances of finding a job remain low"[27]. In total, of the 611,200 people who completed a CES in 1994, more than one third were immediately unemployed once more .[28] These evaluations coincide with those carried out in Belgium, which shows that the likelihood of finding traditional employment was lower for those leaving an unemployment reduction programme than for the jobless who had not had this advantage.[29]

This state of affairs leads to another limitation, the confusion between integration and new occupations. The measures relating to the social approach to unemployment tend to devalue those activities designed more for the benefit of the people in need of occupational integration than for that of users and clients. This uncertainty over the nature of the objective, reinforced by the incompatibility of temporary jobs and permanent needs, gives rise to recurrent failures in the functioning of these schemes. Mutual frustration results: the representatives of district authorities and administrations who encourage this kind of measure are disappointed with the results they get, while the programme promoters feel that they are being poorly supported. Overall, the increase in low-cost temporary contracts has discouraged a number of activities which everyone regards as "casual work".[30]

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23 Auer (1990).
24 See Nicaise *et al.* (1995).
25 See, for example, Mahy (1994), for Belgium.
26 According to Elbaum (1994).
27 Elbaum (1994).
28 See " Les contrats emploi-solidarité débouchent rarement sur un travail" in *Le Monde*, 27 March 1995
29 Mahy (1994), quoted in the contribution on Belgium.
30 See, for example, the special report on "Emplois stérilisés" in *Le Monde initiatives*, 14 June 1995.

Temporary work programmes, because they rely heavily on non-profit organisations, cause other difficulties, such as contributing to disquiet in the voluntary sector. During the 1980s, the State admitted that it could not act alone in the fight against unemployment. The role of voluntary bodies was therefore recognised.[31] Heavily engaged in the social approach to unemployment, which matched a more professional management approach on their part, the voluntary organisations have now found themselves caught up in the establishment of programmes and other measures to the extent that many are questioning the direction and control of their work.

1.4. A Society in Reaction Against Unemployment

Occupational integration through economic activity has relied on temporary employment programmes, but it cannot be restricted to the context of public measures. Whether in conflict or in dialogue with these programmes, it also bears witness to different way of tackling the issue, which instead of resulting from a top-down movement has emerged from a bottom-up approach. A number of local schemes have succeeded in establishing themselves in the area of integration through economic activity. These experiences have emerged from civic projects which have gradually come together to create a vehicle for change in public policy, although this has all taken place under difficult conditions.

Confronted by the limitations of public policy, particularly in social approaches to unemployment, an economic militancy has emerged looking for new ways of integrating people in difficulty. These structures were set up outside the law, but as their role was recognised they were granted a legal framework.

In Belgium, vocational training companies, EAPs, (recognised in 1987) followed by on-the job training companies, EFTs, (1995) developed in this way. In France, following various innovations, the circular known as “Circular 44” of the Ministry for social affairs established a fund to provide work experience for the “socially disabled” in 1979. The Minister of Labour, in 1985, set up an experimental support programme for enterprises for work-integration through economic activity. In 1987, following the development of voluntary organisations to help the unemployed, a series of laws set out the legal and regulatory framework for intermediate voluntary organisations. These aimed to encourage services corresponding to the hidden needs of individuals, local authorities or businesses while at the same time contributing to the occupational integration of unemployed people who could be offered occasional work. While, in Italy, the 1991 law on social co-operation, prompted by the growth in “social solidarity co-operatives” acknowledged that such co-operation was not restricted to fostering the interests of members and could make a contribution to the interests of society at large. As a result it was accepted that their voluntary members (up to a maximum of 50%) and users made up a part of their membership alongside workers in the fight against exclusion. And in Québec, as well as production enterprises and mutual aid groups, consultative bodies work to bring community organisations together and to give a stimulus to their projects: these are known as “community development corporations” (CDC). Other community organisations, known as “societies for aid for local development” (SADC) or “community economic development corporations” (CDEC) are expanding their membership to include partners from the public and private sectors to strengthen local development.

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31 Baron *et al.* (1998).

The process whereby public authorities have legitimised grass-roots initiatives clearly shows that integration through economic activity, unlike the social approach to unemployment, relies on an entrepreneurial dimension that helps avoid the pitfalls of occupational work schemes. Nevertheless, such a process, by its innovative nature, is a long and complex one. It comes into constant conflict with the boundaries between social, labour and training policies resulting in a selective approach to those initiatives. In Spain, the 300 social integration initiatives have so far received neither legal protection nor public assistance. In Belgium, limiting access to vocational training companies to young people not qualifying for benefit and aged between 18 and 25 has led to the founding of other voluntary organisations aimed at the long-term unemployed, for example the integrated development actions (AID). The evidence thereby provided was necessary for their inclusion in a joint framework combining them with the vocational training enterprises in new the on-the job training companies which can now take on both young people and the long-term unemployed aged over 25.

In France, help for intermediate enterprises was withdrawn in 1986 before being restored in 1989; the reasons behind this were at once political (opposition from employers' representative who complained of unfair competition) and administrative (resistance to the multi-dimensional approach). Furthermore, alongside the community enterprises for occupational integration, initiatives arising from social work have been supported but those put forward by people out of work, or aiming at the creation of lasting jobs have not received the same attention.[32] The wide range of voluntary organisations set up for and by the unemployed have been reduced to a single model, the intermediate voluntary organisation. On the admission of one of those responsible for this law, this was a mistake that has led to “a certain lack of esteem for new skilled activities, described pityingly as “casual work”, and for those who work in them who are too quickly dismissed as “unemployable” in the normal labour market”[33]. Nor is the damaging effect limited to a single country, since the intermediate voluntary organisation model has been imported into Québec in the form of temporary job creation programmes (CIT), adopting this instrument without questioning its effectiveness. We find a similar direction elsewhere, in the setting up of neighbourhood management associations (RQs) in Belgium, where they are regarded as measures appropriate to deprived areas, whereas the National Committee for RQs in France has always insisted on the importance of a close knit residents' association, rejecting the setting up of such voluntary organisations by means of simple measures superimposed on a complex reality.

Nevertheless, despite all these ups and downs, occupational integration through economic activity has made it possible to begin to introduce a new link between public authorities and civic society with the aim of realigning the relationship between economic and social needs[34]

1.5. Co-operative and Voluntary Initiatives

In many countries, occupational integration through economic activity has developed out of the sometimes conflictual interactions between public programmes and local initiatives which are able to bring to bear an essential but often missing ingredient: the experience and energies of a “social enterprise sector”[35]closely linked to the needs and routines of day to day life. Sometimes these local initiatives have actually preceded and played a part in establishing public policies. In

32 See Laville (1991); Chopart *et al.* (1998).
33 Malgorn (1995).
34 Lallement (1999).
35 EMES Network (1999); Borzaga and Santuari (1998).

other cases they have multiplied in response to public programmes which make available the resources to organise occupational integration projects.

In a general way, local initiatives play an important role in the implementation of public policies, very often through “negotiated involvement”, i.e. participation under certain conditions which the authorities try to impose through negotiation. The various measures used are often founded on different principles that are at times in direct contradiction:

(a) consultation and association with public authorities in the context of partnership, or an instrumental approach through sub-contracting;

(b) a decentralised policy in which voluntary organisations and local authorities take on responsibilities which they share with a central government that tries to dictate criteria;

(c) an experimental approach which emphasises the fact the public assistance is not by nature definitive, as against the recognition of the relevance of the voluntary organisations over the long-term.

During the last two decades, occupational integration has thus become the arena for a crucial challenge for both public authorities and people acting through the community (movements, local authorities, etc.): that is finding new modes of intervention which are capable of improving employability and fighting effectively against exclusion and insecurity. Social mobilisation for occupational integration bas been particularly strong since the beginning of the 1980s. It has come about through a variety of kinds of initiatives, including:

(a) employment training initiatives through educational voluntary organisations to foster various apprenticeships linked to the labour market;

(b) sectoral initiatives for social integration through economic activity, within which people generally get some work experience - of variable length - which should in time enable them to find a job in the traditional labour market;

(c) local initiatives for economic and social renewal involving the integration of sections of disadvantaged local communities by bringing together all these involved in integration in a particular location through a multi-activity programme.

Despite their variety, these initiatives have common features due to their co-operative or voluntary sector legal status. In this respect they belong with the post-1968 movement of voluntary bodies and cooperatives. The 1970s and 1980s in particular saw a growth in attempts by qualified manual and white collar workers to use the co-operative structure to create their own employment. In Great Britain, Italy, France and Québec these new co-operatives opened up the co-operative movement to the intellectual and cultural services sectors, among others. In the mid-1980s, co-operatives appearing in the service sector represented 45% of workers' co-operatives in Great Britain, 13.5% in Québec, and 18.1 % in France. To these collectives, voluntarily set up, must be added “forced” co-operatives arising from the wave of employee buy-outs of businesses threatened with closure. In Italy there were more than a thousand of these between the mid1970s and mid-1980s, most of them in the north of the country. In France, the years 1982 and 1983 saw a peak, with 109 and 95 buy-outs respectively, but this surge was checked from 1984 onwards, the average size and number of business buy-outs dropping considerably. As in Germany where there were about 30 attempts during the 1980s, or in Great

Britain during the 1970s with co-operatives that received a very artificial level of support,[36] the dangers faced by buy-outs which were prompted more by political imperatives than by an objective assessment of economic factors, soon materialised. After this tide had ebbed, successes were concentrated in businesses which reflected the historic strengths of the cooperative movement - organisations of limited size whose principle asset is the know-how of their members.

In Spain, besides co-operatives, buy-outs also took the form of public companies that - according to incomplete statistics - accounted for 1300 buy-outs with a minimum of 50,000 workers before 1985.[37] These were defensive operations designed to maintain existing jobs, but with the persistence of mass unemployment there were other initiatives aimed rather at the occupational integration of people excluded from the labour markets or at creating employment in disadvantaged regions. Many adopted the constitution of non-profit organisations, whether as community enterprises in the United Kingdom, employment and training organisations in Germany, on-the job training companies in Belgium, intermediate voluntary organisations, neighbourhood management associations, and work-integration enterprises in France. However, a generation of co-operatives also appeared, with the social co-operatives and social solidarity co-operatives in Italy, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

In other words, the experiences of work integration through economic activity are the product of the confluence of the voluntary and co-operative movements.[38] This is why they take their place within the general framework of the social economy or third sector, giving rise to the hypothesis that a new social economy is emerging, corresponding more or less closely, according to the circumstances, to the "historical" composition of the social economy[39] being made up essentially from the same major distinctive elements:

(a) the *aims*, which are not to serve the interests of capital but to fulfil social functions, in the sense that the activity is intended to ensure economic viability and social usefulness (in the service of individuals and groups in difficulty);

(b) the *people involved and beneficiaries*, from or associated with working-class people experiencing problems in the labour market or in responding to their basic needs;

(c) *structures and regulations* designed to promote participation, and which do not allocate power on the basis of capital held;

(d) *business activities*, in the sense that the production of goods and services develops through conquering markets to ensure a certain degree of self-financing for the business, whilst simultaneously relying on public authority support.

The problem that arises is one of continuity as much as that of differences with earlier versions of the social economy. In order to respond, we should first recall some key elements in the development of the original social economy.

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36 By the Minister for labour at the time, Tony Benn, after whom these were known as "Benn co-operatives".
37 Among many works devoted to initiatives of this kind, see Defourny, 1988, and, for a summary, Laville (1994b), and Paton (1989).
38 Perry and Vidal (1994).
39 Defoumy and Monzon Campos (1992); Vienney (1994); EMES Network (1999); Laville (1994a); Favreau and Levesque (1996).

1.6. The Social Eeonomy - A Historical Perspective

The first salient point which emerges from a century and a half of history of the social economy is as follows: the social economy, and notably its co-operative branch, sprang up amongst the exploited working classes who were struggling to improve their highly insecure living conditions. In other words, as H. Desroche has often stressed, co-operation was initially the “daughter of necessity”, a response to the pressure of needs strongly felt by various populations.[40] This *condition of need* is a first dimension, socio-economic in character, that needs to be incorporated in our overview in order to understand the “new social economy”. Thus we may also identify one of the traditional roles played by the social economy that is heavily stressed in the economic theories of the non-profit organisations: the social economy is born and develops as a response to the failings of the dominant economy, and particularly to those needs that the markets fail to address[41]

Thus consumer co-operatives, for example, were initially the expression of collective efforts to find solutions to certain basic needs: to obtain food, clothing and other basic products at the best possible price, since the means of subsistence were very limited at the time. For their part, workers' manufacturing co-operatives initially represented the response by workers (particularly in the crafts sector) who wished to save their occupations from the threats posed by industrial capitalism and remain masters of their own work rather than letting themselves become locked into wage-earning status, at that time practically a synonym for dispossession. A further element was those who were just thrown out of work by the changing face of capitalism and whose reaction was to try and create their own businesses. The history of the mutual sector can be evoked along the same lines. Mutual aid societies multiplied from the beginning of the 19th century because the state welfare systems were inadequate while the risks of accidents at work and illness were very high. Having very little in the way of financial means to pay the costs of medical treatment and to cover the temporary of permanent loss of income caused by illness or invalidity, a growing number of families came together to set up hardship fonds which would aid them in time of need, paid for by modest but regular subscriptions.

However, this explanation is not in itself adequate. A second socio-political or socio-cultural dimension needs to be taken into account in order to describe the motivations for the social economy. Indeed, need is an insufficient explanation for the social mobilisation that lay behind its manifestations. The *collective identity*, the belonging to a group whose members were aware that they shared a common destiny, is a second rung of the explanation already developed by De Tocqueville,[42] who considered the voluntary organisation to be a condition for democracy through the public engagement that it revealed and maintained. In this sense the dynamism shown by the social economy in the working-class world of the 19th and early 20th centuries was the expression of a craft culture which was threatened by and linked to the requirements of democracy,[43] and the expression of a class culture which was certainly dispossessed but also largely mutually supportive. It is from this associative world that various types of organisation emerged: trade unions, workers' political parties, mutual societies, co-operatives and voluntary organisations.[44] Their members were bound together by work, by a shared popular culture, and by struggles that meant that they lived through what has been termed “integration through

40 See, for example, Desroche (1976)

41 The concept of “market failure” has notably been expounded by Hansmann (1980).

42 De Tocqueville (1991).

43 See the analyses in Sewel (1983).

conflict."[45] There were thus many collective identities - or at least a shared destiny - which tended to generate new institutions representing the roots of the social economy. As such, the social economy was born out of the movements that saw themselves as mechanisms for social change and as affirmations of the possibility of bringing social solidarity to life through economic activities.[46]

A similar analysis can be made for the rural social economy. Thus in Belgium, for example, more than a century ago Flemish smallholders established a co-operative movement of remarkable dynamism, with numerous highly effective rural funds and with co-operatives that today market a large proportion of agricultural production. This co-operative movement was built on the strong but largely unrecognised socio-cultural identity of a population that spoke only Flemish while French was the official language imposed by the nobility and middle classes. By using all available means to market its products and getting its supplies cheaper than the prices imposed by major wholesalers, this rural world was aiming for autonomous economic development whilst at the same time affirming its identity. The same factors can be found in the history of the co-operatives in francophone Canada at the turn of the century. The condition of collective identity is also present in this case: was there not a francophone Catholic identity to be defended against Protestant Anglo-Saxon domination?[47] As for the condition of need, this was as valid for francophone Canada as for Flanders a century ago.[48]

The history of the Mondragon co-operative complex shows that this reading is not only valid for the older forms of social economy. Indeed, the extent to which the affirmation of Basque identity has played a major role in the birth and development of Mondragon can be seen, even though it is combined with other factors likely to promote the emergence of co-operation. Fundamentally, the two conditions are adequately fulfilled: need in terms of the requirement for reconstruction in the aftermath of the Civil War and the Second World War, and collective identity in terms of the reaction of an entire culture - an entire people - to the threat of Castilian domination. These two factors go a long way to explaining the dynamism and the lasting vitality of this co-operative movement.

The same parameters can be found in many Southern countries where a solidarity-based economy[49] is developing in a way that to some extent recalls the development of the social

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44 Thus contributing to thetransformation of the proletariat of the last century (characterised by social marginalisation, insecurity of employment and the absence of rights) through the struggle of the labour movement to the status of "workers" and finally to fully salaried status with full citizens' rights (Dubet and Lapeyronnie, 1992; Castel, 1995).

45 Touraine (1973)

46 This dimension can weaken with time, as can be seen from the evolution of certain traditional co-operatives and mutual societies that, by developing and/or adopting more traditional economic strategies, have become more or less distanced from the social movements that lie at their roots.

47 Religion as a motivating factor in a collective identity that supports a social economy is well covered in the works of E. James (1989). James holds that private non-profit provision of social and educational services is more developed in countries where strong religious groups are present and where they compete among themselves.

48 The articulation of these two conditions, need and collective identity (or shared destiny) was initially presented by Defourny (1995).

49 Larrachea and Nyssens (1994); Defourny *et al.* (1999).

economy in industrialised countries. As just one example amongst many, Villa et Salvador in Peru is a kind of Latin American Mondragon: 300,000 inhabitants of suburban Lima have arranged for spatial layout which combines block by block organisation of neighbourhoods and the organisation of community services clustered around 120 public open spaces and a network of small businesses with connections to the solidarity economy.[50] In this case the shared destiny is undoubtedly founded less on specific cultural identity than on broadly common social conditions and on a precise territorial affiliation, which is also the case for Mondragon.[51] To sum up, co-operation, and indeed the whole of the social economy, springs from necessity and from a collective identity. Made up of economic initiatives set up to respond to vital needs, the social economy is also carried forward by a collective identity or a shared destiny forged by cultural factors (language, religion, shared territory, etc.) or even, in certain cases, by social movements.

1.7. A New Social Economy

If we are to accept this reading, or at the very least if we feel that it throws some light on the subject, the conditions for the renewal of the social economy seem to be an updating of the socio-economic and socio-political dimensions which characterised the initial emergence of the social economy. In the industrialised countries, given the structural crisis of our societies and our economies, the condition of need is far more clearly in evidence than it was in during the post-war economic boom. New fields are thus opening up for social economy initiatives. In particular, the retreat of the welfare state in many areas and the loss of millions of jobs is leading to the emergence of new needs for more and more people who were previously protected. New social demand is appearing, a manifestation of needs which can no longer be properly satisfied by the market or by public intervention. If the social economy of the 19th century was both a reaction. and a functional adaptation to the market economy, then at the end of the 20th century the new social economy is a reaction against the inability of either the market or the State to provide full employment as they had been able to during the period of expansion.

In our societies the condition of collective identity, the stirring up of a community to produce a positive dynamic, is undoubtedly a greater problem than the condition of need. A number of factors are pitted against this collective identity: a prevailing climate of individualism, the breaking of social ties and the weakening of the forces which have traditionally cemented society together (religion, schools, stable neighbourhood communities, trade unionism, the labour movement, etc.). Unemployment too is clearly a force working against the maintenance of the fabric of society, work being a fundamental vehicle for social integration. However, it seems to us that there is still fertile ground where genuine collective dynamics can take root and where many social economy initiatives can spring up. This fertile ground is the voluntary sector that is seething with ideas and comes in many forms throughout western society.[52] It is admittedly rare

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50 On this issue see Favreau and Fréchette (1993); and Rodrigo (1990).

51 Here we are summarising the work of several researchers who explain the launching of social economy initiatives by membership of sectoral or territorial collectives. On this topic see particularly the Canadian (Fairbain, 1991), American (Christenson and Robinson, 1989, Perry and Steward, 1987) and European (Jacquier, 1992) studies. This work has shown that where there is strong social and cultural identity within an enterprise or a collectivity, it is far more likely to protect its specific characteristics, its independence and its ability to act on its own account

52 Lewis (1999); Mertens (1999); Leduc Browne (1996)

that the current proliferation of voluntary organisations is the expression of a united collective identity. However, it testifies to growing collective awareness of the challenges that face us. One of the most striking examples is undoubtedly the growth of civic commitment to the social integration process by social workers, trade unionists and economic decision-makers. It has been said that this rising awareness leads in part to increasing demands put on public authorities. However, it also leads citizens to group together and to develop projects themselves, locally at first and sometimes on a larger scale. In this respect it is a factor in the growth of a shared identity felt by its members with a certain degree of intensity for a certain length of time.

In any case, one of the central hypotheses that pervades the national studies assembled here is that since the voluntary sector sometimes extends into co-operative development, it is the melting pot from which a renewal of the social economy may emerge. The comparative study of nine countries demonstrates some facets of this.

As the experience in these countries over ten or fifteen years shows, local integration initiatives seem to be on the way to becoming a socio-economic network combining market and non-market dimensions within productive activities with an embracing perspective of the social and solidarity economy. These initiatives seek to reinforce social membership of a community, employability, and the creation of jobs, going against the tendency to take “adaptation to the market economy” as the sole factors[53]

In other words, while taking on board some of the constraints imposed by the market economy, these economic activities try to set themselves apart in qualitative terms by bringing together those excluded from the labour market, pursuing both social and economic goals, putting primary emphasis on a voluntary sector form of management, and by using the available capital through social or collective entrepreneurship.

What is the exact scale of this phenomenon in each national context? Is it an expression of neo-philanthropy or a potential source of development of new forms of identity and social utility? Does it bear witness to an instrumentalisation of local projects within the framework of a social approach to unemployment, or to an unprecedented response to local needs and to a contribution to democratic life?

It is these questions which the case studies have attempted to tackle, taking as a starting point the exposition of data (often gathered with some difficulty) in order to enable a comparative assessment in economic and sociological terms of the original contribution made by integration through work, and to reach a conclusion based on an investigation of the social economy in general and the potential scope of these initiatives.

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53 Laville (1994a)

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