

From Pactes Locaux To European P'Actes.

European Launch & Forum organised in the context of 2010 European Year of the Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion

The Pactes Locaux : a collective of people and organisations since 1998

The original collective of the Pactes Locaux has become a genuine hub. The group is in contact with many different social networks and themes at different levels, through the acquired hands-on expertise of its members. United through their shared learning experience of territorial social cohesion, they have naturally extended their field of action to include the cross-cutting promotion of "forms of co-operation that aim to anchor change in a territorial and human environment" (article 2 of the statutes).

Since 2007 they have been actively involved in mutualising positive experiences through a European working platform.

A history of commitment to achieving social cohesion.

Social cohesion was first promised by Jacques Chirac in 1995, when running for the French Presidency. The law only came into effect in 1997 when he decided to call a national election. There was a change of parliamentary majority. Political priorities swung to supporting young people and reducing the working week. Just before Christmas 1997, a protest movement by the unemployed caused much disquiet. The Prime Minister called for an inquiry¹. "Emergency measures should not replace solving the underlying issues. To avoid compromising the future, the alternatives facing our society need to be clearly outlined". The promised public discussion never took place. An emergency fund was created on the 9th of January 1998, and the parliamentary calendar moved forward. The law on "the fight against exclusion" was enacted that summer. It remained based on a logic of social categories, and failed to propose any concrete measures for implementation at territorial level. The game of party politics led to the Right not voting in favour of a law that had formed a central part of their electoral campaign. In spite of the importance of the issue, the National Assembly was almost empty for the vote, as even the Left knew what the outcome would be.

This is the context that led to the creation of the Pactes Locaux². Their initial work was based on a Declaration, aimed at the newly elected members of the French parliament in September 1998.

As of 1998, the Pactes Locaux considered that the seriousness of the situation called for a "deep and radical reform of the institutional attitudes and practice in France as well as throughout Europe" Since that declaration was made, social cohesion has become the leitmotiv of many speeches and a whole series of programmes, and we are still looking for solutions.

And worse again!

The European Union is now plunged into the deepest financial, economic, social and ecological since the 1920s: there are 8 million poor in France alone! In an 8-month period in 2009, 7 million Europeans lost their jobs, bringing the number of unemployed to 23 million. Homes were repossessed by the banks, and an increasing number of companies went bankrupt...

The global recession pushed between 55 and 90 million people below the poverty threshold in 2009. The number of people suffering from hunger climbed to over a billion, reduced all the progress of the fight against malnutrition to nothing. This underlines how urgent it is to invest in sustainable peasant agriculture.

¹ In 1998, the Prime Minister Lionel Jospin requested Marie-Thérèse Join-Lambert carry out this enquiry.

² Collective discussions, initiated by the FPH in 1996 & 1998 *Politiques publiques et citoyenneté face aux nouvelles formes d'exclusion*. Éditions Charles Léopold Mayer, 1996. http://www.eclm.fr/bdf/tri_chronologique-1996.html

The 1998 Declaration by the Pactes Locaux identified two paths to progress.

We need “ the support of a legal framework that allows local actors to reach beyond experimental or compulsory measures”.

...and to “ensure local action is taken, as this is the level where the dynamics of empowerment and concrete solidarity take place. It is essential to involve the unemployed and the marginalised, the NGOs, social workers, companies, trade unions and elected representatives and all the social actors”...

“To construct genuine dynamics of partnership, a local pact implies jointly analysing the situation, setting shared objectives and implementing projects that are both rigourous and flexible”.

In the 1980s and '90s, collective mobilisation led to many different organisational and socio-economic innovations, implemented by those social actors who were open to the territorial and local approach (including the signatories of the 1998 Declaration). Their achievements provide viable answers to today's key problems, with transposable tools and tried and tested methods. They took daring actions in the field of economics. Many activities, services, and jobs that they created are still alive and well today, form part of the local economy and provide answers to the major challenges facing European society. “Changing from a traditional pattern can be a voluntary decision, rather than something imposed. Those who experiment are launching themselves on a path towards sustainable development”.³

In spite of the convincing progress made, and its usefulness in terms of social and territorial cohesion, the “third sector” has not managed to impact global systems.

The lion's share of finance is reserved for making foreign investments appear attractive, and overlooks the negative impacts of this model. The Lisbon Strategy illustrates this progressive hardening of political line. “Ultimately, the dominant economic model, by introducing the idea of competitiveness has appropriated the factors and dynamics of territorial intellectual capital, or, in some cases has even led to the commodification of relationships that are convivial and that provide collective well-being”⁴.

Taking advantage of the context to change the game in 2010.

This crisis has no precedent. It calls for unconventional solutions. The European platform created by the Pactes Locaux wishes to seize the opportunity of the European Year of the Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion to “illustrate, discuss and propose” based on realities and cumulative experience of over twenty years and to renew the perspectives for action. The institutional changes that marked the European Union in 2009 encourage us to commit to this. The Green Paper on territorial cohesion has met with great success, and the Treaty of Lisbon provides the third pillar to the European Union's policy on cohesion. The White Paper that was adopted by the Committee of the Regions considers “multi-level governance” as the principle for action. And the report on the reform of the policy on cohesion, that the Commissioner Danuta Hübner⁵ requested from Fabrizio Barca dedicates a structuring role to the territorial approach aimed at “giving all places the opportunity to make use of their potential (efficiency) and all people the opportunity to be socially included independently of where they live (social inclusion)”

We wish to seize the opportunity to become actively involved, to the best of our abilities.

³ Jouen, M., 2000, Diversité européenne, mode d'emploi, Preface by Jacques Delors, Ed. Charles Léopold Mayer and Descartes et Cie, p 44.

⁴ Jouen, M., December 2007, Pourquoi le développement endogène reste-t-il le parent pauvre des stratégies de développement en Europe ? « Grand prix de la réflexion pertinente et impertinente » du Cercle des entrepreneurs du futur.

⁵ An Agenda for a reformed cohesion policy
(http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/future/pdf/report_barca_v0306.pdf)

In 2010 the European platform moderated by the Pactes Locaux & based on their achievements, is renewing discussion on the 1998 Declaration.

We have the experience of twenty years work on social cohesion as a political project and essence of our territorial practice; we also have the cumulative results of the work done between 2007-09, and a rigorous method that allows us to propose a fresh discussion to share our results and increase their impact.

We began this approach prior to the Lux'09 Forum (organised by RIPESS Europe) that brought together 800 participants from all over the world to Luxemburg in April 2009, for the 4th Globalisation of Solidarity meeting. The Pactes Locaux joined the preparatory European steering committee in 2007. They put together an itinerant approach to mutualise and prepare a cross-cutting workshop "Democratic participation and territorial anchoring" with five *in situ* meetings each on different themes, but using the same analytical criteria : work and employment (Poitou-Charentes), responsible tourism (Auvergne), local development and solidarity economy (Luxemburg), social cohesion and well-being for all in an urban environment (Fontenay-sous-Bois in the Greater Paris region), and rural-urban solidarity in a context of metropolisation (Nord-Pas-de-Calais).

Each of these "Learning Journeys" mobilised 50-80 participants: elected representatives, entrepreneurs, local citizens, trade-unionists, civil services, NGOs, researchers. Through their activities and their mandates they are involved on a daily basis in how an open territorial economy operates, ranging from commercial activities, public services, third sector, to the voluntary services to people. "The concrete products have been identified: job-creation, financial turn-over, consumer goods, essentially services. The economic form varies: there are different numbers of people involved, different logics of action, interests and issues. The added value is to increase empowerment, to develop the ability to find new ways to progress within existing roles and functions, practice and professions as well as in the interface, the ways and means of co-ordinating. But this implies creating individual and collective competences that progress and grow, and plans that can be transposed and disseminated. The priority is to acquire the requisite know-how to move towards a collective "better" and "more", i.e. to learn to work together within a territorial approach"⁶.

The results demonstrate that many projects have moved from prototype to small-scale production phase, but that there are still challenges that need to be overcome before they can be mainstreamed. This stops them from achieving their full potential. This is why it is necessary to use existing examples as proof of what is possible and to argue in their favour, if we are to impact the vertical decision-making and regulatory frameworks via territorial horizontality, and to adapt national and European regulations. This is the objective of the open dialogue on the future perspectives.

Using outcomes as a lever for the future: a solid basis for the action programme for 2010-13

On April 25th 2009, the conclusions of Workshop 7 of Lux'09 were unanimous. If we are to balance or complete thematic approaches, the participants agreed that the territorial approach to local and regional initiatives should be included. This question will be placed at the top of the agenda for the 5th meeting of Globalisation of Solidarity in Asia in 2013. The Pactes Locaux have accepted the responsibility to develop this approach with the organisers of the Forum.

The meeting to disseminate the results on December 1st 2009 marked the end of the Lux'09 cycle. Making a Pact implies both renewing the post-war social contract and renegotiating with the Authorities on the basis of our commitments. We have learnt how to promote new forms of organisational solidarity at territorial level. This is now tried and tested and provides genuine economic answers to the crisis.

The members of the European platform of the Pactes Locaux intend to carry the proposal forward in a European project aimed at territorial cohesion and multi-level governance. Themes will be determined by the participating territories and actors.

⁶ L'expérience forme et prend forme, Synthèse de la capitalisation by Alain Laurent, March 2009.