



Societies in transition

**Social and solidarity economy, the commons,
public action and livelihood**

CALL FOR PAPERS

EMES-Polanyi International Seminar

19th and 20th of May 2016

CNAM – 292 rue Saint Martin, 75003 Paris, France

Co-organisers:

**Karl Polanyi Institute of Political Economy
EMES International Research Network
CNAM Solidarity Economy Chair**

In partnership with: CR 27 AISL - RC 17 ISA – RAMICS – IFRIS - LISE



Following the previous conference of 15th and 16th February 2012, which focused on the economic crisis, the main objective of this international seminar will be to contribute to the analysis of contemporary modalities of the relationship between economy and democracy.

In this regard, social movement theory has not fulfilled expectations because it was influenced by a specific 20th Century thought-pattern that kept economic practices away from political debate, so as to avoid it being overtaken either by the unfettered accumulation of capitalism or by the totalitarian logic of communist regimes. The focus on the cultural aspect of many movements has also hampered the understanding of the convergences between cultural transformation and economic stakes stemming from the “reconstruction of daily life around economic practices” (Castells *et al.*, 2012).

In this context, we propose to review a key question in Polanyi’s work: the relationship between economic and political pluralism. To address this, several themes are selected –

social and solidarity economy; commons; state action; and livelihood – which emphasise the reflection on the economic and political spheres.

1. Context

The Philadelphia Declaration of 1945 symbolised the advent of the post-war socio-economic compromise by stating that economic development was of value only to the extent that it was put at the service of social development. By the end of the 1960s the weakening of this compromise became clear with the emergence of “new” social movements.

The resulting protests were framed by the establishment as factors of disorder, liable to make society uncontrollable. This fear of social order destabilisation opened the way to a new period of liberal thought, where a variety of currents (contemporary Austrian school, rational expectations theory, human capital theory, public choice theory, etc.) were collectively referred to since the 1980s under the generic designation of “neoliberalism”.

In 1989, with the promulgation of the Washington Consensus, structural adjustment policies mixing various tools were put in place in countries of the global South, and subsequently in the North – including fiscal reform, public spending and subsidies reduction, liberalisation of international trade in goods and capital, privatisation, deregulation, transparency of decision-making agencies, the fight against inflation, etc.). Meanwhile, the harsh implementation of neoliberal principles strengthened citizen mobilisation. Recognising that neoliberalism had reached a dead-end, policy-makers’ outlooks changed at the end of the 20th Century with the introduction of the Millennium Development Goals. The devastation of social damage was also recognised by the World Bank and the IMF, which developed poverty reduction strategies.

These are not so much about ending the role of the State as a whole as they are about redrawing the public sphere by bringing in mechanisms inspired by commerce, while encouraging private initiatives to solve society problems. Corporate social responsibility became the hallmark of a concern for social cohesion on the part of large holding companies, while also seeking to attract clients in traditionally non-marketised sectors such as social support, education and health. The social-democratic balance, based upon a strict separation between commercial and non-commercial activities, is thus made obsolete.

All in all, the situation is deeply ambivalent. Active mobilisation and ordinary citizens’ actions demonstrate an increase in, a political project based on associations’ actions as a vector of democratisation. Against this trend, the blurring of the frontier with business is reinforced by civil society organisations’ shift towards more commercial strategies and practices inspired by for-profit businesses (social impact bonds, social business, venture philanthropy, etc.) while the institutional framework shifts towards marketization of social policies. Some believe that what is in the process of appearing is a new capitalism with social aims (Yunus, 2008).

2. Seminar thematic axes

Communications may in particular address the following four areas:

Axis 1 - Social and solidarity economy, social enterprise, and associations

Instead of focusing socioeconomic logics around for-profit companies and the State, many initiatives take a different path to address the economy/solidarity nexus. These organisations are referred to in several countries under the generic term of “social and solidarity economy”.

Whereas social economy, which has its roots in the 19th Century, focuses on private non-capitalist organisation and on principles that are supposed to inspire specific working modalities (autonomous management, ultimate aim to provide a service rather than a financial benefit), the solidarity economy seeks to blend the principles of the market, of redistribution, of reciprocity and of domestic sharing. It also puts into question the public dimension of initiatives.

Moreover, since the end of the 20th Century, we note the emergence of previously unused concepts, such as social entrepreneurship and social enterprise. Government and non-profit leaders as well as private sector actors, all in their own way, discover or rediscover new possibilities to promote entrepreneurship approaches and social aims at the same time. Do these concepts involve innovative approaches that mix economic principles and solidarity? Or do they amount to attempts to depoliticise and “moralise” capitalism by reducing the approaches to adjuncts for public service and by imposing a form of management inspired by private sector models? What is the relationship between these concepts and practices, in countries that have a long solidarity and social economy tradition?

Communications are invited about this debate between social and solidarity economy and social enterprise, and about the various underlying approaches to the relationship between solidarity and economy.

Axis 2 - Analyses of the commons

Against the folding of the discussions focused around the market and the state, research initiated by Ostrom and her colleagues called for recognition of collective actions that allow for governing the commons. These ranged from management systems for natural resources to the management of knowledge. A whole school of thought currently claims the commons in opposition to a second wave of "enclosures" according to the Polanyian term, such as in the struggle against the monopolization of biodiversity or free software. Some even see a political project based on an institution of the commons. Numerous recent publications (Audier, 2015; Coriat, 2015; Dardot, Laval, 2014; Hardt, Negri, 2013) suggest that this debate is currently at a critical crossroads.

Communications are encouraged on the dialogue between social and solidarity economy and the commons, particularly on the different modalities of institutional diversity and in particular on the relationship between public goods and the role of public administrations.

Axis 3 – Reconfigurations of public action

As Habermas says, the quality of democratic life is suspended in the constitution of autonomous public spaces, linked with collective actions implemented by free and equal citizens referring to a common good. The concept of associationism "enables the possibility of relationships that are spontaneously generated and free from domination in a non-contractualist way " (Habermas, 1989, p. 44). Therefore, Habermas joins Offe in emphasizing the connection between the association and the "eminent position of associations in civil society around which autonomous public spaces may crystallize, which justifies the attention given to voluntary association and associative life as a crucial way to define public commitments" (Habermas, 1992, p. 186). Nevertheless, in his civic-republican model, epistemological obstacles remain in terms of taking into account associations. To overcome them, the first inspiration comes from the second School of Frankfurt whose internal debates on the work of Habermas deliver stimulating controversies. Thus, Fraser offers ways to turn to complementary and relevant contributions in terms of "a critique of truly existing democracy" (Fraser, 2005, p. 107-144). In addition, for Dewey, problems of contemporary democracy can only be solved by additional democracy through the fight against the eclipse of the public and political apathy. "Self-determination of the citizen community is not considered through the exercise of popular sovereignty, through the legitimate production of norms, including the law. Rather, it is housed in public collective experience, supposedly able to orient and to guide itself through the formation of values" (Bidet, Quéré, Truc, 2011, p. 62). What matters is the exercise of collective intelligence which alone restores a public consistency because "there cannot be a public without a full publicity with regard to all the consequences that concern it" (op. cit. p. 264).

Communications are sought exploring issues related to new institutional frameworks (laws, public policies...) and their articulation with practices stemming from civil society.

Axis 4 - Steps toward *buen vivir*

Socio anthropologic approaches influenced by Mauss are complemented by Polanyi's decisive distinction made between formal and substantive economy. The term "livelihood" is not limited to a subsistence identified with material reproduction, but also includes a symbolic reproduction, (and also contemporary - particularly Neo-Aristotelian - conceptualisations of 'well-being'), or *buen vivir* to use formulation mobilized by the new constitutions of the Andean countries (Bolivia, Ecuador). This attention to reproduction with relation to production approaches perspectives of care, highlighting, for example, ambiguities inherent in the domains of domestic giving and sharing.

Communications are encouraged around the explanation and discussion of *buen vivir* and livelihood, and Polanyian-inspired reflections on similarly related concepts. We particularly welcome contributions offering a joint reflection on production and reproduction such as those developed recently at the nexus of feminism and the solidarity economy.

3. Seminar aim

This international seminar aims to achieve a complementarity among the above mentioned axes. Overall if one aggregates the proposals of all authors cited, they recombine three analytical categories that neoliberalism seeks to eliminate: the teleological perspective, deliberation, and the diversity of economic principles.

- Ostrom mobilizes the **teleological perspective** of the common good by connecting it to a collective attempt to reach a problematization of 'the common' whereby goals are linked to the means used to achieve them. This perspective is reinforced by the use of public spaces and actions in Habermas and Dewey as well as by the reference to the diversity of economic principles in Polanyi and Mauss.
- Habermas focuses on the criticism to the relevance of the aggregative paradigm of individual preferences and substitutes it with the paradigm of **deliberation**. Dewey shows that it is not simply a matter of forming opinions: deliberation can be mobilized in the very course of action of a given public.
- As for Polanyi and Mauss, they oppose the reduction of the economy to the market, something which Habermas was not able to leave behind. They reject the conceptual anachronism of 'catallactics', that is to say, the spontaneous market order proposed by Hayek. Their search for economic democracy can in turn be based on democratic elements identified by Habermas and Dewey, as well as on the resistance to commodification that does not lapse into statism thanks to Ostrom.

This complementarity among the cited authors and others in their understanding of contemporary practices deserves further study with a view to clarifying both the obstacles encountered as well as and the progress that it allows.

4. Seminar committees

The Seminar is co-chaired by Marthe Nyssens (Catholic University Louvain, Belgium) and Jean-Louis Laville (CNAM, France and Karl Polanyi Institute of Political Economy).

The members of the Seminar scientific committee include:

- Rigas Arvanatis, sociologist, economist, IFRIS, France
- Rogerio Roque Amaro, economist, Lisbon, University, Portugal
- Serge Audier, philosopher, Université Paris-Sorbonne, France
- Vicky Birchfield, historian, Georgia Tech, United States
- Jérôme Blanc, economist, Sciences Po Lyon, France
- Loïc Blondiaux, political analyst, DEST-IFSTTAR, France
- Fabienne Brugère, philosopher, Université Paris VIII, France
- Elisabetta Bucolo, sociologist, CNAM, France
- Michele Cangiani, sociologist, Università Ca' Foscari, Italy
- Jose Luis Coraggio, economist, Universidad Nacional General Sarmiento, Argentina
- Benjamin Coriat, economist, Université Paris XIII, France
- Ana Dubeux, sociologist, Universidad federal de Pernambuco, Brazil
- Jordi Estivill, sociologist, University of Barcelone, Spain

- Nancy Fraser, philosopher, The New School for Social Research, United States
- Sílvia Ferreira, sociologist, Coimbra University, Portugal
- Lars Hulgård, sociologist, Roskilde University, Denmark
- Pierre-Benoît Joly, economist, sociologist, INRA, France
- Margie Mendell, economist, Concordia University, Canada
- Jean-Michel Fourniau, sociologist, DEST-IFSTTAR, France
- Isabelle Hillenkamp, economist, Institut de recherche et de développement, France
- Chris Holmes, economist, University of Warwick, United Kingdom
- Chistian Laval, sociologist, Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense, France
- Guillaume Le Blanc, philosopher, Université Paris XII, France
- Kari Polanyi-Levitt, economist, McGill University, Canada
- Jérôme Maucourant, economist, laboratoire HISOMA, France
- Antonella Noya, policy analyst, OECD, France
- Geoffrey Pleyers, sociologist, Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium
- Michael Roy, sociologist, Glasgow Caledonian University, Scotland, United Kingdom
- Anne Salmon, sociologist, Université de Lorraine, France
- Jean-Michel Servet, economist, Graduate Institute, Switzerland
- Joan Subirats, sociologist, University of Barcelone, Spain

The Seminar organising committee is composed of Marie-Catherine Henry, CNAM and Rocío Nogales, EMES.

5. Fees and registration

There are different fees available according to whether participants are EMES members or not:

	EMES member	Non-EMES member
Regular registration	200€	350€
Student registration	100 €	150 €

Please submit your abstracts by February 1st, 2016 via email to marie-catherine.henry@cnam.fr

The evaluations of the scientific committee will be communicated to authors on February 29th, 2016.

Registration will open on April 1st, 2016.

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