

Commissariat général à la stratégie et à la prospective

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE NATIONAL DEBATE



QUELLE
FRANCE
DANS
10 ANS?

SEPT.
2013

Which Republican Model?

In comparison with some of its European neighbours, France remains consistent when it comes to access to resources (public services, social benefits, etc.), the availability of infrastructures and the distribution of income. Furthermore, its social model is perceived positively by the majority of its inhabitants, who generally consider it to be egalitarian. Nevertheless, the founding principles of our republican model could do with being adapted to reflect the changes that have transformed our society and social relations, and altered our relationship with politics and institutions. Economic and cultural globalisation, the construction of Europe and profound demographic changes have resulted in a more complex society, generated fears and created new aspirations. Whilst they are certainly coming up against increasing resistance, persistent social and territorial inequalities, as well as discrimination relating to gender, sexual orientation and origin, are fuelling a feeling of injustice and reduced social cohesion. Furthermore, multiple

individual and collective affiliations and identities are emerging, representing both a sign of freedom for some and of uncertainty for others. Ultimately, involvement in public life is no longer limited to the vote and to support for representative democracy, since other forms of civic involvement are also now emerging. It is important, then, that such changes be supported in a way that helps combat this loss of trust in institutions (government, local authorities, schools, etc.) and in private stakeholders, such as companies. The aim is to eventually guarantee the support of all citizens for a joint project, drawing on the merits and expertise of each individual. The republican model, without any shadow of a doubt, boasts the resources required to adapt to this society with its multiple components and expectations, an adaptation that should go hand in hand with the improvement of our social model (see note entitled 'Which social model will France be implementing in 10 years' time?').

INTRODUCTION

The French republican model was built on the fundamental foundation of equality for all, the neutrality of the State with regard to private affiliations, and universalism. Nationwide solidarity and the desire to foster national support for a joint project involving all individuals and all groups are also among its founding values.

The republican principles, which ensure the construction and preservation of the common good, were originally part of the following context:

- a national body regarded as homogenous;
- participation in public life based primarily on the **vote and representation**, and social inclusion involving **highly structured institutions** (school, army, workplace, family, etc.);
- uniform organisation of public authority throughout the country based on a **centralised state**.

This ideal of republican unity, which was complemented after 1945 by the formation of a welfare state, was **gradually weakened** as a result of major political, demographic, social and economic changes. Indeed, society has become increasingly complex and, in certain respects, more heterogeneous, notably owing to successive waves of immigration, which challenges many conventional points of reference and therefore social links.

Furthermore, combined with the disappearance of the major ideologies around which both public and private lives were once based, we are witnessing a high level of **diversification with regard to individual affiliations** (political party, union, religious community, family, village, neighbourhood, etc.), resulting in both greater individual freedom and new forms of anxiety. As a result, our lives are now lived through a number of different identities, as a worker, a parent, a sportsperson, a citizen or even member of an association. These multiple affiliations, – which can sometimes prove somewhat fragile, – are vehicles of freedom that can nevertheless also lead to ‘disaffiliation’ phenomena. That can lead to withdrawal

from society, particularly for those who are not integrated into the most highly-valued spheres, especially that of employment.

In addition to these long-established trends, we are **also witnessing the weakening of the social link**. Following the economic crisis that was triggered in 2008, inequalities persist or have even widened, both between social categories and between regions, some of which are characterised by significant dynamism whilst others are experiencing more than their fair share of difficulties or are in decline, being drained of their populations and less well served in terms of public services. These differences, combined with significant unemployment and increasing competition with regard to finding employment, are **nourishing the feeling of a divided society and diminishing confidence in the future**.

In such a context, this malaise is maintained by the fact that the State alone can no longer develop public policy and provide all public services. It now has to work in partnership with the relevant local bodies, as well as with social players and private stakeholders, and connect with the European level. The entanglement of responsibilities therefore contributes to a certain **loss of confidence in democratic power**, at a time when the non-resorption of inequalities is increasing expectations with regard to public authority.

Public policy and the principles of public action have, of course, been partially modified over the past thirty years to adapt to such developments, through for example, the devolution and adoption of more specific measures such as equality in politics and participatory democracy. There remains, however, a strong feeling among the population that social cohesion is in decline, encouraging us to **reflect upon our concept of living together** in a rapidly-changing world. Indeed, it is important that we step up to the **challenges to our feeling of belonging to a common destiny**, especially our relations with others in a society that is perceived as less homogeneous and our **civic participation as well as and the relationship between individuals and institutions**.

ASSESSMENTS

INCREASED SENSITIVITY TO INEQUALITIES AND THE AFFIRMATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL ARE WEAKENING THE SOCIAL LINK

Whilst the France of 2013 is more egalitarian than that on which our republican model was based, its population is also more sensitive to the inequalities that do exist.

As a result, whilst France remains, on the whole, an egalitarian country (with a Gini¹ coefficient of around 0.3 in terms of the European average), the vast majority of the population (88%) believe the inequalities within French society to be widening. Of course, this is certainly not a new phenomenon, since the same figure was recorded in 1993. As the French consider inequalities to be one of the key factors affecting social cohesion, this feeling of the fragmentation of the social link is constantly sustained. These inequalities are all the harder for the majority of French citizens to tolerate as they keep the previous to be the result of individual merits and talents.²

It should be noted that the margin between objective inequalities and perceived inequalities can be significant.³ Not all differences are necessarily a factor in the weakening of societal cohesion. However, some of them, depending on the development of dominant values, are indeed perceived by the population as representing a significant threat to the unity of the social system. Over the past decade, the French consequently seem to have become more aware of discrimination phenomena and are more likely to consider them to be intolerable.

Significant spatial disparity is also creating a sense of relegation

Unlike other European countries, France does not suffer from major territorial divides. Indeed, not only is it protected from secessionist and regionalist temptations, but it also enjoys general consistency in terms of standard of living and high-quality infrastructures throughout all of its regions. However, the ideal of territorial unity, which is one of the cornerstones of the republican model, has been faced with, and even challenged by, a number of new dynamics over the past fifty years.

The French regions are experiencing a number of very different demographic dynamics (Charts 1 and 2). In

addition to developments in the number of inhabitants per territory, for example, the number of people aged 60 and over will increase across all regions (and in the overseas territories in particular) by 2040, whilst the number of under 20s will only increase in half of them (notably in Languedoc-Roussillon, Midi-Pyrénées and Brittany). These developments are combined with a number of equally different economic dynamics. In a context of increasing competition between territories both within France and within Europe, some of the most attractive territories are finding it difficult to accept equalisation measures.

CHART 1: AVERAGE ANNUAL GROWTH RATE OF THE POPULATION BY REGION BETWEEN 2007 AND 2040

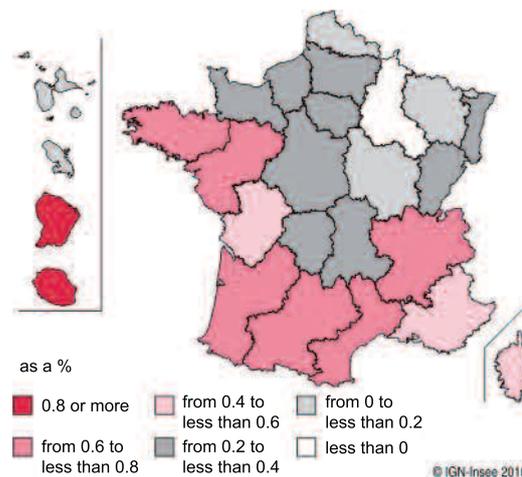
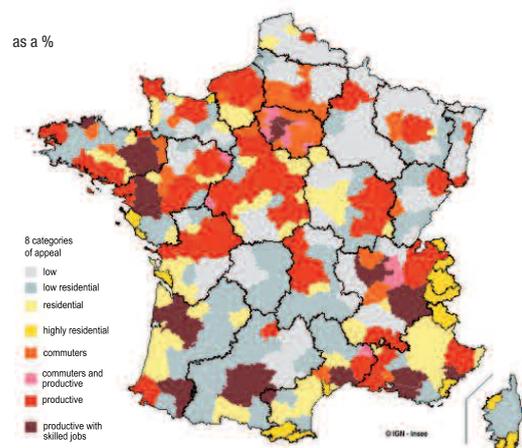


CHART 2: ECONOMIC ATTRACTIVENESS OF TERRITORIES



Source: INSEE.

1. The Gini coefficient is a general indicator used to measure income inequality. It ranges from 0 (situation of perfect equality) to 1 (situation of extreme inequality). The higher the Gini index, the greater the level of inequality.

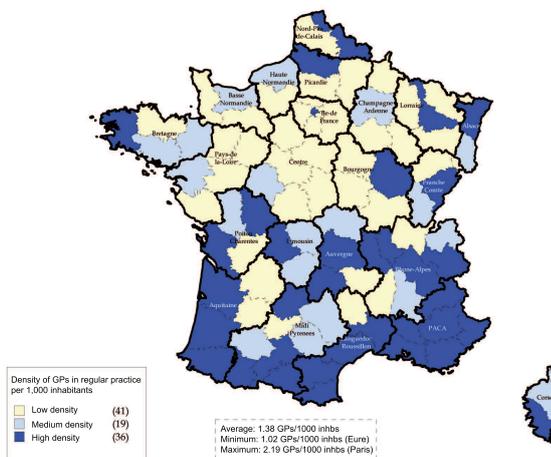
2. Hoibian, S. [2012], "Les Français se sentent intégrés dans une société qu'ils jugent pourtant fragmentée" (The French feel integrated in a society that they nevertheless consider fragmented), CRÉDOC, *Memorandum*, n° 5, October.

3. Forsé, M. and Galland, O. [dir.] [2011], *Les Français face aux inégalités et à la justice sociale (The French faced with inequality and social justice)*, Armand Colin.

Such disparities between major territorial units are accompanied by a number of infraterritorial inequalities or even spatial segregation. Rural areas have lost many of their inhabitants and the resulting urban growth has created a contrast between the peri-urban residential areas – occupied by the middle classes – and the suburbs of larger cities which are home to more disadvantaged populations.

This development has not been fully supported by the public resources available. Individuals are experiencing high levels of inequality in terms of access to public services, depending on the territory in which they live, with said services being withdrawn from rural areas but still not appropriately covering new urbanised areas. With regard to healthcare, for example, the density of physicians varies greatly from one department to another (Chart 3). Likewise, the number of nurses per inhabitant is three times lower in sensitive urban areas than in the reference urban area.⁴

CHART 3: DEPARTMENTAL DENSITY OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS IN REGULAR PRACTICE ON 1st JANUARY 2012



Sources: CNOM and INSEE.

This results in a number of very distinct perceptions on the part of French citizens. Whilst 61% believe that ‘public services work very well or quite well’, a very large majority would like such services to be more personalised (71%) with greater equality in the treatment different citizens receive (67%).⁵

The phenomenon of territorial inequality is facing increasing resistance, fuelling a heightened feeling of relegation⁶, which is further accentuated by the inability on the part of many individuals to move to the territory of their choice, a phenomenon known as forced geographic immobility.

The increasing diversity of the population fosters fear and discrimination

Social cohesion is weakened by the feeling of rejection associated with the increased diversity of French society in such a tense economic context. Indeed, whilst France no longer attracts huge waves of immigrants (since the end of the post-war boom years, incoming flows have stabilised at around 200,000 migrants per year, primarily for family reasons), its history helps maintain its status as a multi-cultural society. Consequently, according to the 2009 census, France is home to some 5.4 million immigrants, some of whom will have obtained French nationality accounting for 8.4% of the population. Around half of these immigrants arrived prior to 1974.⁷ The origins of these waves of immigrants have also gradually changed over the years; in 1999, for example, nearly 45% of migrants were of European origin. Ten years later, this figure had decreased to only 38%. The proportion of citizens of African origin increased from 39% to 43%, whilst the percentage of Asian immigrants increased from 13% to 14.5%.⁸

Furthermore, religious practices have also become increasingly diverse as a result. Among the population of 18 to 50-year-olds living in mainland France, for example, 45% claim to be agnostic or atheist, 43% Catholic and 8% Muslim.⁹ Recent decades have also shown a clear distancing from religion, particularly among the mainstream population and among descendants of mixed-religion couples. In this context, the strong religiosity of immigrants and their children is easily perceived as being heteronomous. With 43% of immigrants claiming to be Muslim,¹⁰ apprehension relates primarily to Islam.

This increasing visible diversity has created a fear of communitarian claims¹¹ and community isolation. In 2011, for example, 51% of people surveyed believed Muslims to be

4. Figures from the *Observatoire National des Zones Urbaines Sensibles* (‘French National Observatory of Sensitive Urban Areas’, ONZUS).

5. 2013 Social Cohesion Barometer, CRÉDOC.

6. Guilluy, C. (2010), *Fractures françaises (French fractures)*, Françoise Bourin.

7. Secretary-General for Immigration and Integration (2013), *Les données de l’immigration professionnelle et étudiante (Data on professional and student immigration)*, Ministry of the Interior.

8. INSEE.

9. Source: INED-INSEE (2008), ‘Trajectoires et Origines’ [Trajectories and Origins].

10. ‘Trajectoires et Origines’ [Trajectories and Origins] survey.

11. Communitarianism is understood as a desire to obtain dispensations from general law in order to accommodate idiosyncrasies (cultural, religious, etc.).

a 'separate' group (as opposed to 44% in 2009), even through surveys contradict the existence of the notion that Muslims in particular 'keep to themselves' when it comes to choosing friends and spouses. Likewise, the wearing of the veil was a problem for 75% of those surveyed in 2012 (as opposed to 68% in 2011).¹² Whilst such malaise is present right throughout Europe, the tension is all the greater in France given that it firmly professes to confine religion to the private sphere. This creates tension with certain religious practices visible in the public sphere.

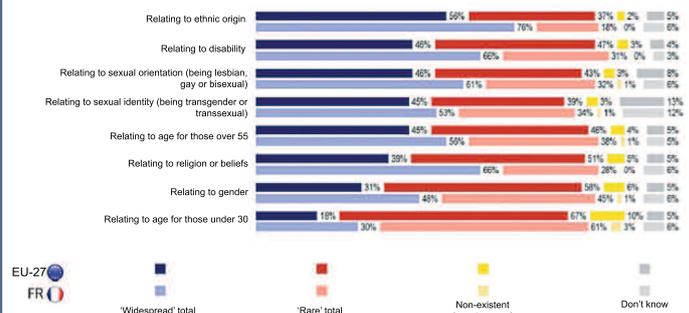
Whilst the fear of communitarianism should not be underestimated, **inequalities and discrimination pose a far greater problem for social cohesion.** The injustice of certain situations results in a distorted image of the concept of "the living together" in the minds of both those who are suffering and those witnessing such situations.¹³ This feeling would appear to be more strongly felt in France in comparison to the European average (Chart 4), and there are numerous examples of forms of discrimination that are being met with increasing intolerance.

More specifically, with regard to qualification equivalence, immigrants from countries outside the European Union experience lower than average activity rates and higher than average levels of unemployment. Such immigrants are also highly concentrated in certain low-level jobs and sectors of activity offering little in the way of prestige. Their difficulties with economic integration are passed on to their descendants, who suffer specific problems in terms of access to housing and academic success, among other things.

Gender inequalities may have decreased over the past forty years, but are increasingly considered to be unacceptable. This relates in particular to differences in salary (according to the INSEE, women still earn less than men, both in the public sector— with a difference of 18% —and in the private sector with— 28%), the imposition of part-time hours, pension levels and even the distribution of personal time (women spend an hour and a half more every day performing domestic and parental tasks than men). **Other forms of discrimination, relating to sexual orientation or disability, are also deemed to be intolerable.** Indeed, increased sensitivity to discrimination with regard to the hiring of senior citizens or towards young people, in terms of access to housing for example, has also been observed.

This feeling is explained by the increase in the legal tools developed to fight discrimination, particularly under the influence of the European Union, and by the increasing role of militancy, among other things.

CHART 4: A SENSE OF VARIOUS FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION



Responses for France and the EU-27 to the question "Please tell me whether, in your opinion, each of the following types of discrimination is very widespread, fairly widespread, quite rare or very rare in your country".

Between individualism and individualisation: a new relationship between the individual and institutions that renders social reality more complex

A movement towards the individuation of aspirations, which has to be interpreted as a manifestation of greater individual freedom, has been observed both in France and in Europe as a whole. As a number of European surveys indicate¹⁴, the individuation of expectations does not necessarily result in increased individualism. Indeed, concern for others does not diminish (uniform increase in voluntary work and concern for the environment, for example).

The sense of affiliation, on the other hand, is more varied and more unpredictable. Individuals define themselves by means of a series of affiliations and identities (sexuality, ethnic origin, regional origin, etc.), a concept that has been reinforced by the rapid growth of the digital sphere and online communities. As a result, the various structures around which society was traditionally built have been transformed (family, political ideologies, etc.) and even, in some cases, weakened (Judeo-Christianity, patriarchy, etc.), challenging the historical undercurrents of societal cohesion. There might also be demand for these multiple identities, and in particular those relating to culture, to be recognised in the public sphere (religious practices in the workplace, promotion of regional culture, etc.), thus weakening the feeling of social unity and consequently jeopardising confidence in political authority.

12. National Advisory Committee on Human Rights (CNCDH), 2012.

13. CRÉDOC (2013), *Les Français en quête de lien social (The French in search of a social link)*. 2013 Social Cohesion Barometer, CRÉDOC.

14. European Values Surveys.

DEMOCRATIC DISENCHANTMENT AND A MISTRUST OF INSTITUTIONS

This malaise surrounding the social link is particularly strongly felt where institutions, both political and social, are concerned. On the political front, there is evidence of a certain loss of interest with regard to traditional forms of participation and a disillusionment with regard to both political action and political personnel. This has resulted in an increase both in absenteeism, notably among young people, and in the extreme vote, particularly among the working classes. In comparison to its European neighbours, France therefore ranks among the countries with the lowest electoral turnout, although there is evidence of a downward trend in participation in the majority of the countries on the continent (Charts 5 and 6).

CHART 5: ELECTORAL TURNOUT AT LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

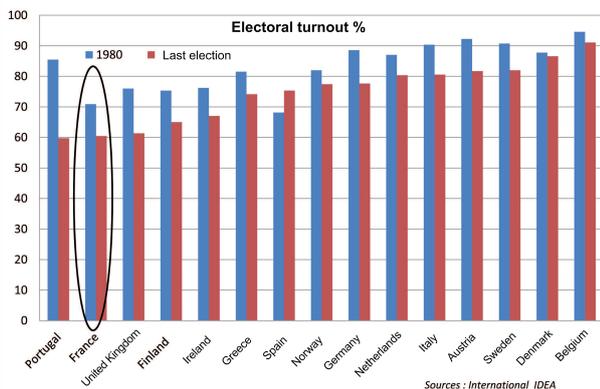
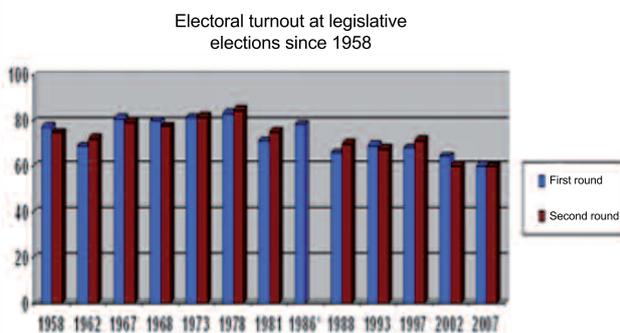


CHART 6: ELECTORAL TURNOUT AT LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS IN FRANCE

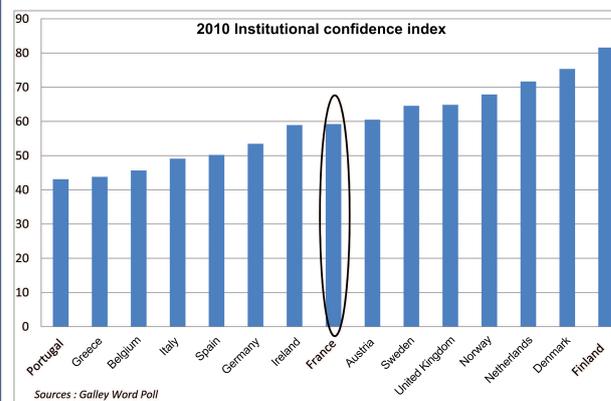


Source: French National Assembly website¹⁵.

Furthermore, abstention correlates with the sociocultural situation of the individual; in the presidential election of 2012, for example, 67% of those without qualifications voted in both rounds as opposed to 83% of those with a higher education qualification¹⁶. This difference notably indicates a significant distancing between political representatives and the working classes.

This mistrust on the part of French citizens towards the elite, elected representatives and the parties was further heightened by the financial and economic crisis of 2008, with questions being raised regarding their ability to take action. Citizens are experiencing a growing feeling of being neglected by political personnel, who they perceive as being very much removed from their day-to-day concerns and governed by transnational economic systems or specific interests (lobbies). It is also worth noting that this mistrust relates more to elected representatives and political parties than to public services and that whilst it is tending to increase, it is still less strongly felt towards institutions and local officials.

CHART 7: INSTITUTIONAL CONFIDENCE INDEX



Source: Galley World Poll, CGSP graph.

Explanatory note: answers to the question «Do you trust
1) the central government; 2) the legal system and the courts;
3) the media? ». Responses are grouped into two categories - 'Yes' and 'No'.

Other institutions on which the republican model was founded are also faced with this feeling of disenchantment. With this in mind, the spheres of education and employment, which were once both fundamental drivers of social integration within the Republic, are now struggling to satisfy French citizens. Despite the expectations

15. http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/histoire/suffrage_universel/suffrage-participation.asp#participation

16. Source: INSEE, 'Participation électorale 2012' (Voter turnout in 2012) survey.

it fosters, the school system is in fact suffering from a crisis of confidence and it is proving increasingly difficult to define the educational project, with French pupils suffering from a significant unease that has been clearly highlighted in international surveys. Indeed, they would appear to be more stressed, more pessimistic and less confident than their European counterparts.

Despite the profound expectations individuals nurture with regard to their work, this unease is also a factor in the professional sphere, highlighting the ambivalence of the individuation process adopted in the workplace between human resource practices and employees' aspirations. Indeed, companies tend to individualise their practices in the field of human resources (payment, assessment, working conditions, conflict management, etc.) to achieve better organisational performance. This trend has more recently been fuelled by the development of the relationship that individuals, and the youngest members of the workforce in particular, maintain with their work. There is evidence, in particular, of a relative detachment with regard to both the job and the company, which stems from both the individualisation of career paths and changes in the organisation of work. This detachment from professional life and the simultaneous promotion of an individual fulfilment-based approach can notably be explained by the increase in unemployment, particularly among young people, that has been observed over the past thirty years, as well as atypical forms of employment and downgrading processes.

This growing mistrust of institutions has not, however, prevented new forms of participation and new forms of solidarity from emerging. Indeed, many individuals would like to commit beyond the vote, or indeed in some other way altogether, and be involved in collective deliberation and decision-making processes aimed at protecting the public interest or the common good. As a result, the propensity to protest has increased over recent years (the proportion of people claiming to be prepared to take part in a demonstration to defend their ideas increased from 51% to 59% between 2009 and 2012) and participation remains highly structured in civil life, notably by means of the associative sphere (41% of those surveyed in 2012 claimed to belong to at least one association).¹⁷

PROSPECTIVE ASSESSMENT

All of these observations, which indicate a lack of social cohesion, illustrate a certain malfunction on the part of the republican model, despite the introduction of a number of policies designed to inject new life into it by meeting the expectations of citizens.

THE PROCESS FOR REVIVING THE UNIVERSALIST APPROACH IS INCOMPLETE

France has attempted to strike a balance between preserving the foundations of the republican model and needing to adapt it. The importance of the principles of secularism and neutrality in public services has been reinforced over recent years by means of stricter regulation (schools, hospitals, etc.). Furthermore, the traditional French-style integration model, which is notably – but not exclusively – based on access to citizenship through the acquisition of nationality, has been largely maintained.

France has nevertheless, to a certain extent, adapted its model. Under European influence in particular, it has adopted various targeted measures designed to both redistribute resources more fairly and promote the recognition of the wealth that stems from diversity. There have consequently been calls for the law to guarantee equal pay for men and women. Furthermore, a number of positive discrimination measures (compulsory percentage of disabled employees within companies, modification of ballot rules to encourage equality, etc.) have been adopted. Such public policies have been accompanied by a number of private initiatives, based on territorial criteria (places for children from priority education zones in certain *grandes écoles*, etc.), or on origin or gender (corporate social responsibility – CSR – policies in major companies, etc.), in order to develop the presence of minorities in such coveted spheres. However, there is still, unfortunately, an element of weakness in the systems designed to fight discrimination related explicitly to origin, notably in connection with a continuing open rejection of 'ethnic statistics'.

17. CEVIPOF Political Trust Barometer wave 4 - January 2013.

France has also sought to **adapt its democratic participation model**, which has traditionally favoured election. In order to respond to a **growing concern with bridging the gap between citizens and their elected representatives**, consultation schemes –**designed to reflect the local context and specific issues –involving the population** (neighbourhood councils, etc.) or **representatives thereof** (associations, unions, etc.) have gradually been adopted in a number of fields, including community life, the environment and urban planning, scientific and technical decisions, the modernisation of public services, etc. **This direct participation on the part of citizens is nevertheless largely absent from the major social and economic issues and, furthermore, needs to be introduced in a wide variety of ways throughout the country.**

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOCAL, NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN AUTHORITIES DOES NOTHING TO SIMPLIFY THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CITIZEN AND THE PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

The Republic has **accelerated the devolution process** in order to adapt to local issues by means of the gradual transfer of a number of State powers to territorial authorities. Furthermore, this movement is part of a **European vision to promote the local aspect**, notably by means of the transfer of Community Structural Fund policies at regional level.

The effectiveness of such a multi-player, multi-level territorial system in terms of both democracy and public finance management is dependent upon the clarity and consistency of the division of powers. **The stages involved in the devolution process have, to some extent, increased the complexity of the system** – each public stakeholder enjoying more or less the same powers as the next –, rendering it **opaque, ineffective and somewhat inefficient in the eyes of the citizen**. Furthermore, the idea of having transferred certain municipal responsibilities to the intercommunal level in order to achieve good public management objectives might be perceived as

being contrary to the aspiration of civic participation, since intercommunities are not elected by direct universal suffrage.

Indeed, no stakeholder can act alone in such a system, and **partnership-based initiatives (State, Europe, territorial authorities, economic leaders, scientists, etc.) have become the norm**. Public responsibilities might therefore give the impression of being diluted across the different levels, which results in a lack of understanding, a loss of legitimacy on the part of public authorities and an increase in ‘weak powers’ at local level. **The clarification and simplification of the territorial system would help improve cooperation between public and private stakeholders and boost confidence in institutions**, since they would be both more understandable and more efficient.

THE ROLE OF MAJOR INSTITUTIONS THAT CONVEY THE CONCEPT OF “THE LIVING TOGETHER” NEEDS TO BE RECONSIDERED

The collective project and the values associated with **republican institutions**, which are also reflected in academic meritocracy and work-related personal fulfilment, have not evolved in a way that encourages social cohesion. The case of the school is an unusual one in that, for many citizens, this institution represents the foundation of the republican model, providing all individuals with equal opportunity to demonstrate and develop their individual merits. As a result, the French still have great expectations of this institution, which they consider to be a cornerstone of this notion of “the living together”. International comparison¹⁸ has shown that those countries in which individuals believe that the school system is fair are also those where the greatest desire to define social status in terms of qualifications has been expressed, and in which the fight for school places is the most fierce. Whilst a strong correlation between academic qualifications and jobs might appear beneficial at individual level, the importance of qualifications in terms of career prospects heightens the exclusion of those who do not hold any qualifications and toughens competition between individuals in the aca-

18. Dubet, F., Duru-Bellat, M., Veretout, A. (2010), *Les sociétés et leur école : emprise du diplôme et cohésion sociale (Societies and their school: the influence of qualification and social cohesion)*, Seuil.

demic sphere, thus weakening social cohesion at an aggregate level. In this respect, the French school system is characterised more by the objective of nurturing academic and social high-flyers than by that of social promotion and the inclusion of all citizens in social life.¹⁹

Furthermore, companies, which once represented an adult's sole place of work for their entire adult life, are increasingly becoming just one of the steps in a more varied career path. The increase in professional transitions inevitably places increased pressure on the link between employees and their company and indeed between employees themselves, a trend that traditional forms of solidarity, such as unionism, now struggle to accommodate. Reinstating this sense of affiliation to the company as a collective project therefore requires new ways of promoting the collective aspect within the company (social and solidarity economy, corporate social responsibility, employee involvement in management, subscription to a 'corporate culture', etc.) to be adopted. This reorganisation, which needs to involve a number of fields, is making limited progress. For this reason, the reconstruction of the common good within the company requires the aspirations of each individual to be reconciled with the need for a collective project and, critically, different forms of social democracy to be revived.

In more general terms, the reconstruction of public institutions (schools, justice, police, etc.) undoubtedly requires an effort to be made to take individuals' expectations into account. This could result in citizens reclaiming ownership of in-depth discussion, the discussion held by representative bodies in general and representatives of each field in particular (such as teachers in the case of the academic sector, for example). Formulating a common destiny requires a collective project for such institutions to be jointly developed. The school crisis, for example, relates not only to the academic sphere, but was in fact brought about by a number of difficulties that need to be discussed by citizens as part of a joint social plan.

PRINCIPAL ALTERNATIVES

TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE PLURALISM OF SOCIETY TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN THE REPUBLICAN FRAMEWORK?

Fighting socio-economic and spatial disparities, which are coming up against increasing resistance in France and pose a threat to the social link, cannot be reduced to a series of standard policies for the entire population or territory; indeed, the universal approach, which is both neutral with regard to differences in gender and social, cultural or territorial origin and indifferent to the barriers such differences create, would not appear to be the most widely adopted today. In the field of public policy, it is important that we move towards introducing an obligation to achieve results and not just means, as is currently the case.

The three options outlined below, which suggest that the historical republican model be adapted to accommodate a pluralist society, are not exclusive; indeed, how relevant they are in practice will depend on the sectors in question. All three are intended to help improve the integration of all citizens by taking greater account of individual paths.

- **Option 1: improve recognition of cultural, linguistic and territorial diversity** by promoting certain cultural elements (traditions, musical, pictorial and literary heritage, etc.) and certain specific skills (such as linguistic skills, for example) within both the academic and professional spheres.²⁰
- **Option 2: introduce a number of mechanisms designed to facilitate, or even guarantee, equal access for all both to general law and to resources** (providing interpreters in certain government bodies and adapting public service locations or opening hours to reflect territorial needs and lifestyles, for example). Such mechanisms would be targeted according to various ethnic, social, cultural, territorial and gender-based criteria.

19. The Pisa survey shows that France has one of the highest levels of social inequality resulting from the school system.

20. Houard, N. and Naves, M.-C. (2011), 'La prise en compte de critères ethniques et culturels dans l'action publique, une approche comparée' [Taking ethnic and cultural criteria into account in public action, a compared approach], *Policy Brief*, n° 220, *Centre d'Analyse Stratégique* ['French Centre for Strategic Analysis'], April.

- **Option 3: consider a number of adjustments, varying in extent with regard to the common rule**, by creating a number of special rights in the form of a series of positive discrimination mechanisms targeting minorities or certain territories or populations (free zones, quotas, etc.). Such mechanisms could be designed explicitly to be temporary and consequently be trialled.

Advantages and disadvantages

Since the 1980s, and at varying rates and to varying extents depending on the country, there has been an increased number of public policies designed to reduce discrimination and violence relating to origin, religion, sexual orientation and gender, which have had positive results. These policies can be categorised into three types:

- ▶ initiatives designed to encourage a move away from equal rights (in law) and towards equality in fact (in practice). Such measures targeted women, as well as so-called visible minorities and sexual minorities; furthermore, a number of measures were introduced to equalise the situation between territories;
- ▶ recognition of new rights, particularly civil rights, which benefited homosexual couples (marriage and filiation);
- ▶ recognition of idiosyncrasies (raising awareness of regional and extra-European cultural traditions, etc.) which aims, under certain conditions, to enable groups (cultural, religious or other) to feel more comfortable within or better integrate into a society whose dominant standards are alien to them.

Far from being mutually exclusive, these three types can in fact go hand in hand.

These targeting measures, which have demonstrated their effectiveness in reducing inequalities, can nevertheless result in stigmatisation, or even be perceived as sources of 'reverse discrimination' or community isolation. There is also a risk of weakening republican cohesion through increased claims relating to specific situations. As a result, recognition of cultural diversity is sometimes contested in countries that have promoted it (North America, the Netherlands, Germany, etc.).

Issues for discussion

- ▶ How can we make schools a place where individual skills (Arabic language, Corsican language, sport, etc.) are developed and pupils are taught about differences, whilst ensuring that everyone achieves better results?

- ▶ How are idiosyncrasies and individual requirements taken into account in terms of the organisation and functioning of public services? How can we improve the way in which the religious aspect is dealt with, particularly in schools and in the workplace?
- ▶ How can we limit the different types of discrimination in the workplace, in the health and housing sectors, etc.?
- ▶ How can we improve the measurement and awareness of diversity, and ethnic diversity in particular?
- ▶ Should we continue to adopt positive discrimination policies that favour women, minorities and disadvantaged populations, and if so, in which fields of public action?
- ▶ Should we extend suburban development policies (access to leisure pursuits, support for returning to work, etc.) to rural areas? If so, how can we involve the economic world and the non-profit sector, particularly organisations operating in the sporting and cultural fields, in such initiatives?
- ▶ Should we make it easier for foreigners to acquire French nationality, and if so, on what conditions?
- ▶ Should we allocate specific resources to certain departments and regions located in peri-urban and rural areas but which are not part of sensitive urban areas, and if so, how?

WHAT POLICIES SHOULD BE ADOPTED TO ENSURE THE INVOLVEMENT OF ALL CITIZENS IN PUBLIC AND SOCIAL LIFE?

Representative or indirect democracy, which there is no need to call into question, no longer appears to be enough to enable all citizens to participate in community life. The current territorial structure, which is somewhat difficult to interpret, does not inspire faith in the effectiveness of public action and sparks only relative interest with regard to local election periods. Abstention and the increase in extreme votes are evidence of a certain mistrust of elected representatives and those in government, as well as, for many individuals, an aspiration to other forms of involvement within civil society itself (local life, the non-profit sector, the world of work, even though the company itself is not a democratic sphere in the same sense as the rest of society). **The various options outlined below should not be considered mutually exclusive;** indeed, in politics, as in the world of work, participatory democracy and, generally-speaking,

the different forms of civil involvement, are not so much an alternative to representative democracy as complementary practices that serve to **fuel representativeness and make it more legitimate**.

- **Option 1: restructure the system of representative democracy whilst clarifying the powers of the various public stakeholders involved.** This option takes the view that representative democracy, both the political and social facets thereof, should continue to form the basis of our decision-making system, even though the associated rules should be redefined in the following ways:
 - ▶ by reforming the way in which the vote/representation is structured (who do we vote for? Mayor, Community Chairman, Chairman of the General Council, Regional Chairman, Deputy, President of the Republic, etc.);
 - ▶ by clarifying the scope of action of public authorities, from local authorities to the European Union (simplification of areas of responsibility, increased visibility of projects funded by the Union, etc.);
 - ▶ by adopting a series of new rules relating to elected representatives (ethical standards, non-cumulation, representativeness, etc.) and the ballot (compulsory vote, blank ballot, proportional, etc.);
 - ▶ by extending the boundaries of citizenship (possibility of extending citizenship to 16 years, giving foreigners the right to vote in local elections, etc.);
 - ▶ by improving social negotiation processes and by redefining the role of employee representatives in the workplace.
- **Option 2: increase participatory democracy.** This option takes the view that involvement in public life should be rekindled by participatory democracy and a joint effort when it comes to making more of the decisions that affect the public (civic panels, involvement on the part of inhabitants, etc.). This renewed form of democracy relates notably to local decisions, as well as to the outlining of a collective project for major public institutions (schools, justice, police, etc.) and the world of work (employee consultation, collective government, employee share ownership, etc.).
- **Option 3: develop alternative forms of involvement.** This option is based on the idea that civic participation is also a question of a more global commitment to social and economic life (civic service, employee involvement in the company, skills mentoring, etc.) and that

it requires new forms of involvement in the social link (voluntary work and cooperation in the public service, thanks to the digital sphere, among others)²¹ to be adopted. This would, of course, serve to diversify relations between the individual and institutions.

Advantages and disadvantages

On the one hand, the introduction of compulsory participation mechanisms (civic service, the right to vote, etc.) would facilitate the inclusion of all members of the population in a participatory approach. However, such an obligation, as currently exists in Belgium, for example, would not necessarily reinforce the sense of support for the representative democracy system.

On the other hand, introducing incentivising civic participation mechanisms would help bridge the gap between institutions and citizens, thus strengthening the social link. Further encouraging the involvement of all individuals in a number of different ways could also provide an opportunity to promote atypical career paths and young people who lack interest or who are failing at school. Such initiatives would, however, undoubtedly involve those individuals who are already the most active in public and social life.

Issues for discussion

- ▶ Should we promote the different forms of associative involvement in academic spheres?
- ▶ Should we make the tools required to jointly make decisions that affect the public more widespread?
- ▶ Should we simplify the strata of territorial authorities whilst combining them with more appropriate forms of civic participation?
- ▶ Should we increase the representativeness of those in government (ensuring that political personnel are a more accurate reflection of the population)?
- ▶ Should we make civic service compulsory?
- ▶ On what basis might we consider fostering a feeling of affiliation to the company as a collective project? How, in particular, can we revive the various forms of social democracy in the business world?
- ▶ Should we extend the right to vote to young people of 16 years of age?
- ▶ Should we grant foreigners the right to vote in local (municipal) elections, or indeed in other elections?

21. Hamel, M.-P. [2013], 'Comment utiliser les technologies numériques pour poursuivre l'amélioration des relations entre l'administration et ses usagers ?' [How to use digital technologies to improve relations between the administration and its users?], *Policy Brief*, n° 317, Centre d'Analyse Stratégique [French Centre for Strategic Analysis], January.

QUELLE FRANCE DANS 10 ANS?

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Commissariat général
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At the governmental seminar held on August 19, 2013, the Head of State wished to begin, without waiting, a widely-concerted process relying on joint efforts to elaborate a 10-year strategy for France.

The definition of such a strategy includes several objectives:

- Establish a path that permits the country to move forward with points of reference and indicators clearly identified.
- Engage in collective choices that regulate the major transitions.
- Adapt policies and instruments according to the objectives set.
- Initiate an extensive dialogue with everyone concerned.

At the end of the seminar, the Prime Minister entrusted the *Commissariat général à la stratégie et à la prospective (CGSP)* with the preparation of this project, identifying notably five major issues: the future of the production model, the reform of the social model, the sustainability of the growth model, the transformations occurring in the French society and the European project.

The CGSP report will be handed over to the Head of State and the Prime Minister at the end of 2013. In particular, this report will have the goals of:

- Clarifying a certain number of prospects for the next ten years through a prospective assessment based on the most common findings.
- Proposing among possible choices a limited number of national priorities.
- Setting concrete and quantitative objectives concerning these priorities in order to mobilise the relevant stakeholders and the society as a whole, beyond a single Parliament's term.

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Created by decree on April 22, 2013 the *Commissariat général à la stratégie et à la prospective (CGSP)* replaced the *Centre d'analyse stratégique*. A place of dialogue and discussion, the CGSP assists the government in determining the main directions for the future of the Nation and the medium and long term objectives for its economic, social, cultural and environmental development. It contributes, moreover, to the preparation of governmental reforms.



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