AUTONOMIE ET APPRENTISSAGE
DANS LA SOCIETE
DE LA CONNAISSANCE.
LE ROLE DES PARCOURS ASSOCIATIFS DANS LA PRODUCTION DES SAVOIRS.

Dan Ferrand Bechmann
en collaboration avec Françoise Dedieu

The role of activities undertaken in a non-profit organization[1] in the generation of knowledge:
Methodology and analysis chart

Final french report. April 2002

Traduction Erika Cooper

Terrains
Axelle Brodiez François Dedieu   Dominique Labbé Mihalo Papes Carole Ressy
Cécile Wandoren Patrick Morlet Elisabeth Laverne.

AVEC L'AIDE D'ATTILA CHEYSSIAL.

---

[1] Translator's Note: The word "association" used in the French text is a "catch all term" widely used in France to designate non-profit organizations ranging from large scale charities to local clubs and art centers. The term is based on the 1901 law (loi des associations de 1901) concerning the right for citizens to group together in the form of an association based on statutes and goals with a non-lucrative objective. I have thus decided to use several different terms as I translated the French word "association" so as to best render the meaning in English. At times I have left the word association for lack of a better broad term.

CONTENTS

I.1.1.	Presentation and analysis**.**

"The project deals with the problematic concerning **self-development** in view of better defining the **link between autonomy and learning**. It lies within the scope of the context of a society based on knowledge, which is characterized by the acceleration and the increased complexification of the objects of this complex knowledge by adults who are not only learning for quantitative reasons (financial) but for qualitative (social, political, cultural) ones as well. Along these lines, it gives greater importance to the **examination of reflexive learning** (learning to learn)." (Excerpt from the project presented to the European Commission).

Above and beyond the concept of learning, the appropriation of knowledge by the learner as the artisan of his/her own intellectual (from *intelligere,* understand) development constitutes the central point of the discussion, with emphasis on the subject him/herself.

However, being dealt with here is the complementarity between personal dynamics and the social and group setting in which the processes of self-development take place and it is these conditions, which place a person into a learning situation, that are to be examined.

Thus, by propounding a link between autonomy and learning, the project aims at establishing prospective investigation concerning self-development by examining the conditions and types of personal implication in the learning processes, and concerning the ability to be the actor of self as an adult learner.

First, we must admit that the way in which the problem has been stated seemed confusing to us and even seemed to contain too much "jargon".

Considering that our PhDs in Sociology and our assignments as Educational Science professors didn't allow us to comfortably navigate in the sea of vocabulary and concepts from the Cognitive Sciences, we deemed it necessary to submit the project to specialists. The "experts" were themselves surprised.

Then by working in the field, and determined to use a conceptual chart, we appropriated the issue at hand.

During this time, we also participated in other programs and being more familiar with, as well as having more experience with the texts and concepts stemming from the Socrates program, we got a better grasp of the meaning, stakes, and aims as well as the interest and importance of this research: here we are trying to make observations that are complementary to other ones and to explore new territory… We are familiar with the establishments and organizations, the university structures and the downstream distribution of knowledge scheme, we are however not very familiar with the more autonomous processes for acquiring knowledge.

The self-development topic is not new, however "associations" (i.e. non-profit organizations, clubs, and other centers) have not been studied under this angle nor observed from this point of view. The motivations for and effects of participation in such structures have been studied, however little work has been done concerning the positive effects on individual development. Yet these are important phenomena.

Moreover, the issue of self-evaluation and the measurement of knowledge proves to be fundamental in endowing the learning process with all the efficiency and enhancement that is inherent to it. Thus, it was essential to develop indicators and identify referentials in order to formulate methodology concerning self-development as a whole.

I.1.2. Reformulation.

Various meetings with in the field experts and researchers allowed us to define a set of problems that is in coherence with the aim of the commission.

Based on the observation that the goal is not to deal with the learner as an "appointee" i.e. as in obligated to learn, that is to say subject to or dependent on the term, but rather as a self-appointed learner to the position of acquiring knowledge and autonomy, we thus decided to exclude from our research and study, the traditional forms of the transmission of knowledge and know-how as provided for by "schools", and other "establishments", whether public or private, and which are included in the traditional system for the transmission of knowledge.

Based on the specificity of learning experiences acquired through "volunteer" or non-profit work, we have outlined the main points of the reference scheme in which the French team evolved in order to conduct the research:

"**Learning through experience** propounds a different model to which an individual does or does not adhere and in which the individual develops him/herself by learning through experience, which allows him/her to be more autonomous. A person who is involved in a non-profit organization learns through participation. His/her desire to learn runs parallel to his/her motivation to partake in and render services, or to take on responsibilities.

The desire to act leads to the desire to learn.

Even if for a long time, learning was primarily focused on a specific goal i.e. to be productive for years of paid activity, and that it has been one of the means towards employment, a trade or rank, this state has undergone, so it seems, an important and radically new transformation.

The change in lifecycles, now biologically longer and with less time spent in paid work, leads to the examination of **learning for non-profit work** and **learning through non-profit work.**

Preparing oneself to work for the non-profit sector means deciding to acquire knowledge and know-how in order to be an active citizen with diverse aims, which primarily concern ethics and community work. Indeed, these aims deal with anything from ethics to wanting to be occupied and socializing,

however also include the appropriation of knowledge that can be converted into money within the framework of one's occupation.

Self-development through non-profit work means learning through practical experience with a non-lucrative aim.

We are in an anomic and paradoxical educational system where learning is primarily defined and financed with regard to a professional objective, whereas people already spend more of their time in non-profit work than in the formal educational system. These people must learn to manage, make choices, be able to direct themselves, and be autonomous.

Values are not the same in a productive environment and in a non-profit environment where solidarity is in opposition to competitiveness.

The context of learning has undergone change from within; it has been drastically modified whereas the mechanisms and establishment actors have not yet completely evolved.

The validity and efficiency of educational establishments (schools, both primary and secondary, adult education) raise questions not concerning the methods used, but rather concerning the appropriateness in regard to context and ethics as well as to the value system of the societies in which they are included.

Recognition of learning is no longer only based on diplomas, which delimit the various professional fields, and which in turn define these limits.

To learn is to become learned. To be learned is **to have the ability to act.** To be able to act is to gain power.

Included in this idea are both the problematic and concepts that are dear to the Education Populaire movement[2] of the Dumazedier years and the more American theories (from the Anglo-Saxon, French, and Latin Americas), i.e. those stemming from the concept of social development as defined by Saul Alinsky. The concept of empowerment partially fulfills this idea. Used in Canada, it describes the power of non-profit organizational actors and users to act. It does not emphasize enough the need for autonomy of those involved.

In an organization, it is easier to act because one is part of a group and possibly even in a social trend. However, this same person must be able to act without the support of this group or even within another group.

This is why learning is important, even vital in a way: that of autonomy and of power"[3].

---

[2] The "Education Populaire" movement (end 19th century - present) was initiated by the League de l'Enseignement and the Ecole d'Uriage. It is an ideological trend aimed at developing a sense of citizenship and at promoting culture, sports, etc. for the masses, but not necessarily through the traditional educational system.
[3] Excerpt from the contribution made by Dan Ferrand Bechmann *Autonomie et apprentissage dans la formation (Autonomy and development through learning)* for a conference at the Université de la Communication in Hourtin, August 2000

I.2.   Our proposals

I.2.1.   The choice concerning fields of study.

        Seeing that non-profit organizations often claim to be political or charitable arenas to which people are committed and involved in, it can be noted that the effects of these organizations on their members are not mentioned when these organizations and their members are discussed.

Our hypothesis concerning the production of knowledge (i.e. the educational role) of organizations as well as the autonomisation of their members is backed by observation. This role is often hidden, passed over in silence, even as far as the sector of the Education Populaire movement is concerned. We are therefor dealing with the concept of "shadow learning" as Ivan Illich defines this notion. What could be the reason behind this repression?

A second hypothesis can be advanced.

The educational role, i.e. the production of knowledge, of organizations is contrary to the logic of our public and formal educational system. It disrupts the pre-established schemes of the downstream distribution of knowledge. Perhaps it even violates the very social order of status based on diplomas and not on know-how and knowledge.

Yet, many of the most active actors in these structures are in their "real" professional lives, public servants, teachers, educationalists, trainers, etc.

This is why, considering self-development as a cognitive process and for many as a form of citizenship, the French team decided to retain the **non-profit sector** as the object of observation, and more precisely the one nearest the ideal targeted by the **Education Populaire** movement. Indeed, as Patrick Morlet wrote:

"... this is the recognized field of personal development through participation in group activity. Undertaken by numerous citizens, stimulated by numerous volunteers, furthered by public authorities, it is the motor of community development and the factor of personal autonomy in the learning of differences and of critical awareness. It allows for individuals who are not individualistic to emerge and furthers citizen participation and militancy of the social, cultural or political scene."[4]

Thus, the French team decided to conduct studies on people who are de facto members, active members, responsible officials or even militants of diverse organizations based on this movement or at least closely linked to it.

Diverse fields of investigation were taken into consideration:

✓ Six organizations that take direct action, of the Educational Populaire type, in cultural and social sectors.

---

[4] Patrick Morlet. *Généalogie de la recherche (The genealogy of research).* CESOL, mid-term report, July 2000.

- ✓ A large charity organization and a more recent organization that also fights against deep-rooted exclusion: the exclusion of women.
- ✓ Other women's organizations, in this case mediators and relays
- ✓ Two associations which offer the exchange of know-how
- ✓ A local association of allotments gardens

We studied educational organizations (type no. 1) in their primary goal, others that have an educational role among other objectives (type no. 2) and lastly, other associations that help with social integration and socialization (type no. 3). Each of these types is an ideal model, set-up for the needs of this demonstration.

I.2.2. The choice concerning the public.

In the first year, the team chose to primarily focus on a **male population and then worked with both "sexes".**
Indeed, whereas the participation of women in social life, outside of professional situations and established traditional schemes, has been indisputable and widely analyzed, the participation of men, up to now, has been less focused upon by researchers.
Research conducted in urban disadvantaged neighborhoods has demonstrated this[5]. It can even be said that the men are sometimes left on the roadside, whereas the women tend to take control in neighborhood organizations. Let us also mention work conducted by Catherine Delcroix and Daniel Bertaux for the CNAF[6].
Examination of this issue thus seemed to us to open a new field of investigation. It appears to be worthy of study within the framework of European research and even more so because the equality between men and women is a priority for the Socrates programs, and should thus be the same for equality between women and men.
Even if it is obvious that all contributions to this program should describe the inequalities that disadvantage women and should benefit programs that tend to reduce this inequality, it must also work on avoiding going to the other extreme.
During the second year of research, we did not focus on a male-only sampling. On the contrary, through meetings with the organization that we have named "Caravan", we returned to more familiar grounds[7].

---

[5] In the evaluation of public funding in Papeete (2000), and in Port on the Reunion Island (1998), refer to the analyses by Dan Ferrand-Bechmann.
[6] Work concerning the desertion of fathers, published by the CNAF (National Family Allowances Fund)
[7] Having started research at CESOL concerning people who are greatly excluded from society, we met these women and they seemed to illustrate the role of organizations as an educational one.

I.2.3.   The choice concerning methodology.

Our team chose a **qualitative approach method**. It was based on little: statistical work takes more time and CESOL members have the necessary competencies for this work, however we had just finished a case study with 1500 subjects[8] … In reference to Howard Becker[9], sometimes we would like to change certain aspects of our profession.

Thus, within the limits of this project, we decided to thoroughly analyze the motivation, representations, opinions, attitudes, etc. Also in tune with what Daniel Bertaux has written, considering that:

"Taking into account the humanity contained in every account of one's real life experience, does indeed alienate Sociology from the model of Exact Sciences, however does bring it closer to History and Anthropology all the while reinforcing its democratic calling[10], we conducted a compilation of interviews of the comprehensive, non directive type, by allowing ourselves to move in closer to real life accounts; this is why we have portrayed several individuals. Our team, which is influenced by the first Chicago school of Sociology as well as by work by Thomas and Znaniecki, adheres to the tradition of analyzing individual accounts and what these accounts tell us about social dynamics and the "stakes" processes. Indeed, we have also, in addition to the discourse, referred to "establishmental" works, which in the case of non-profit organizations are sometimes idealistic, that's to say when the organization's project is restated and reiterated even when the practical work is no longer in harmony with this ideal.

Issues concerning education and learning, which are often quite original when they are tied in with personal life accounts, are fundamental in discovering the parts of life stories, which in turn give an account of the learning process and its worth.

Complementary to the quantitative studies conducted by our Spanish and Italian partners, this type of methodology seemed to us to be especially well adapted to the theme of our research as we envisaged it, sort of permitting, within "normal" limits, **the freedom of speech concerning the account** given by individuals who were led to make the **links between specific elements stemming from learning and their entire life. In the last interviews, the accounts were more "categorized" in a chart that became necessary little by little and which made the work a bit easier for researchers with little experience.** The links between learning and personal history in its progression and the integration of the person seem completely evident and essential. They appeared throughout the interviews as little glimpses that helped us to advance towards comprehending these phenomena.

Learning and autonomisation of subjects are two closely linked processes and concepts.

---

[8] AFEV (Foundation of Students concerned for the City) study on students who volunteer to help children with schoolwork, CESOL 2000.
[9] Howard Becker, *Les Ficelles du Métier*, La Découverte Repère, Paris, 2002.
[10] Daniel Bertaux. *Les récits de vie.* Paris : Nathan, 1997

The Romanian team, after completing work with a different aim and methodology, used our interview and analysis chart, and focused on the same organization as the Italian team.

However, concerning the eventual continuation of the project, we could possibly use the questionnaires again and interview a bigger sampling: by catching numerous fish in our net, we would have a larger view of the phenomenon which, without a doubt, coincides even more directly with that of our Spanish colleagues. It could enrich other observations for example those concerning the validation of knowledge obtained through experience.

II. STAGE OF ACTION.

II.1.   Organization of the interviews

II.1.1.   Amount, distribution and interview process

The team conducted **40** interviews.

Most of them took place from the end of the year 2000 up until March 2002. Their duration varied from ½ hour to 1½ hours, depending on the situation. They took place once a confidential relationship was established which seemed necessary in order to facilitate meetings with the "interviewees". We had to use classical methods of participating ethnology. The use of a tape recorder was the rule for everyone. Nevertheless, it must be highlighted that **difficulties concerning listening and transcription were encountered,** which made it hard on all of us, especially when several persons were met in a café or other noisy place!

As a group, we established an **interview chart** after several trials and errors. It was **modified** according to situations and depending on the persons dealt with. It should be noted that it was more important to us that this chart be useful and practical for the interviewer and that this far outweighed the importance of "charting" the questions and answers dealt with in the interview; it was thus modified at times and was even transformed into simple guidelines for the interviewer… It does however allow for an efficient comparison at the:

-French level

-European level

Interviews of the comprehensive type or life accounts, as demonstrated by J.C. Kaufmann [11], often deal with very broad questions concerning the life of individuals and which sometimes seem to go beyond the set of problems defined by the research itself.

---

[11]   J.C. Kaufmann, *L'Entretien Compréhensif*, Paris, Nathan, 1996.

However, even if digressions sometimes seemed long, the **richness** of these interviews and the **quality** of the "data" gathered in this manner are undeniable.

These digressions are due to hesitations, detours and changes in the self-exploration of each interviewee who advanced in the understanding of him/herself and thus on he paths of his/her knowledge and autonomy.

"In this way, autonomy is formed in an ongoing quest of the subject to "be him/herself" in comparison to all possible identifications, messages, speech and transmissions that make him/her[12].

II.1.2.   Selection criteria concerning interviewees

Besides working at first only with men, before questioning women during the second year, we established a few selection criteria for individuals that were dependent on their status in the organization in which they worked. This makes up the primary guidelines for our sampling - which of course remain intuitive at this stage in the research -.

So, interviews were held partly with **users/active members i.e. members** of the organizations being dealt with, and partly with **volunteers** who are committed, and militants at various levels and who correspond to the 4 categories defined in function of the time they devote to their commitment[13]:

- Occasional volunteers (one or two hours per week)
- Active volunteers (three or four hours per week)
- Devoted volunteers (between six and ten hours per week)
- Tireless volunteers (over eleven hours per week)

These categories are roughly the same as those in the last study commissioned by the Fondation de France concerning donations[14].

It also should be noted that the discourse held by militants from the Education Populaire movement is often pre-shaped by an organizational militancy that has become an institution in itself.

In regard to these militants, it can already be said that the autonomy of their learning and their experience may be limited by the conformity that they have adopted in regard to their organizational activities. Those who want to keep their work, whether volunteer or paid, and still militant, must remain in what is considered as a "normal" position, i.e. in the norm. Freedom is kept within the limits of the organization's community in which these individuals evolve and within that of the Education Populaire movement in general.

Autonomy is built on one's own desire and through resistance to others. Autonomy remains a social relation and a relation to establishments.

Axelle Brodiez analyses this in the following way in her report[15]:

---

[12] V.de Gaulejac, *L'Histoire en Héritage,* Paris, Decléee de Brouwer, 1999.
[13] Dan Ferrand-Ferrand. *Le métier de bénévole.* Paris, Anthropos, 2000.
[14] Fondation de France, research concerning the act of donating (money, time, etc.), 2000.

"Through the specificity of its operation and the values which make up its foundation, an organization thus shapes an individual who is much more sociable, social and citizenly; less self-centered and less individualistic; more conscious of the value of others, of working with others and/or through interaction, of complementarity and exchange. It thus constitutes a powerful factor of adaptability, of personal development and lastly, even though paradoxical, of autonomisation: the individual, by adopting the value of a group, also evaluates his/her own worth.

II.2.   Presentation of the fields and interviewees.

II.2.1.   <u>Networks for the Exchange of Knowledge</u>.

(ex. the one in Saint Denis, Seine Saint Denis department)

Patrick Viveret describes Networks for the Exchange of Knowledge as: "playing a pioneer role by inventing a new social and educational link rather than an economic one", just as they "partake in a renewed vision of citizenship, the creation of a new political link is just as important as that of a new social link."[16]

The principle behind this is to promote the contribution and exchange of individual know-how, whoever the individuals may be, and thus without discrimination with regard to sex, age, level of education, cultural and/or ethnic origins, etc.

The self-help phenomenon "à la française" can be outlined using the example of Alcoholics Anonymous and AIDES[17].

Within these groups a social hierarchy remains present and that of knowledge in particular, however Networks for the Exchange of Knowledge are a very pertinent example of the democratization of knowledge and learning.

In theory, neither the hierarchisation nor the quantification of knowledge exists, only the principle of exchange and thus of reciprocity is to prevail whatever the nature of the knowledge may be.

Here, the concept of service does not exist; it is more of a voluntary desire to participate in a group by offering knowledge or know-how to other members in the network.

The Saint-Denis network is in the form of an "association" set-up in 1997 according to the 1901 law concerning the right to associate.

This organization belongs to the national movement of Networks for the Reciprocal Exchange of Knowledge. Its aim, as written up in the organization's statutes, is "**To fight against exclusion from knowledge and learning within an intercultural and intergenerational framework of group creation".**

---

[15] See individual report by Axelle Brodiez
[16] Patrick Viveret. *Des monnaies plurielles pour une économie plurielle*.
[17] AIDES (AIDS prevention organization); Dan Ferrand-Bechmann, Bénévolat et Solidarité, Syros, La Découverte, 1992 and 1995

Premises for the network are provided by an organization that is in charge of social integration and which is financed by the local government.

We interviewed 5 people from this organization:

✓ A cabinet designer who is over 55 years old and who became familiar with the existence of non-profit organizations and clubs when he discovered the network for the exchange of knowledge

✓ A 40 year old clinical psychologist, who works for the Institut Médico-Educatif (IME) (Medical-Educational Institute), and who is very involved in non-profit work: aside from his participation in the creation of the IME, he founded a theatre company for a day hospital in 1992.

✓ A municipal worker in one of the regional towns, forty some years old, who has been involved in community work since he was a teenager.

✓ A 50 year old Public Housing Office employee from one of the regional towns, secretary of the network for the exchange of knowledge, extremely active in the organization and who partakes in other important cultural events.

✓ A 40 year old man who is looking for work, just recently back in France after having spent a long time in Northern Europe, very active in another network for the exchange of knowledge and who is a political militant.

II.2.2.   The organization " Les mille et un savoirs " (A thousand and one 'know-hows')

This organization, also located in Saint-Denis, is of the para-municipal type. It was founded in the 1990's under the impulse of a paid professional working in another local organization for social integration and which is called " Objectif Emploi " (Our Goal = Jobs).

Its aim is to create an environment for a "friendly, people's meeting place, by organizing cultural exchange and events" [18].

In this way, it allows individuals, both men and women of all ages, to participate in activities, which they themselves promote so as to break away from solitude and to make new contacts.

Different workshops have been set up: music, foreign language learning (e.g. Esperanto), sewing, computers, etc.

It is also a place where one can be heard "without prejudices" [19]. People who come are welcomed onto the premises and are in no way obligated to sign up for an activity.

Two volunteers each participated in a long interview:

✓ One of them is Moroccan, 50-some years old, a researcher, who came to France to do a Ph.D. in climatology. A community militant in his country, he has continued in France and has worked in several very different organizations, e.g. " Anciens de la Sorbonne " (Sorbonne Alumni). He is unemployed at present.

---

[18] We have used the words and expressions voiced by the different people we met.
[19] Id.

✓ The other person is a young 25-year-old man. He has always lived in Public Housing neighborhoods. He had a difficult time at school and after having completed several internships, he now works as a computer technician. He has been working for the past 2 years.

II.2.3.   The " Association des Travailleurs Migrants en France. " (ATMF)

(Organization of Migrant Workers in France) (ex: one chapter in the Parisian area)

This national organization was founded thirty years ago, for and by Moroccan workers.

Up until May 2000, its name was "Association des travailleurs marocains de France " (Organization of Moroccan workers in France). This change in name is due to the organization's expanding activities to include all of Africa, the activities directed towards Morocco and Moroccans now only represent 20% of all activities.

The organization has chapters in 130 towns in France.

The chapter we studied is known, in particular, for its competencies in law and the actions it takes in defending emigrants' rights.

It regroups people from divers socio-professional backgrounds, however mainly labor workers who want to obtain the necessary legal tools they need to defend themselves.

Two interviews were conducted with:

✓ A man, a Moroccan national, who came to France to study science. At ATMF, he has been in charge of workshops and support groups for the past 7 years.

✓ Another man, a Moroccan national as well, 50 years old, raised in Algeria, who arrived in France at the age of 18 without any kind of qualification. He partook in a training program to become a metal worker, and has become a militant at ATMF. While unemployed he obtained a "licence - maitrise" (BA degree) in "urban social development" thanks to the validated experience he acquired as a militant. He is presently the coordinator at ATMF.

II.2.4.   " La Société de Gestion des Jardins Ouvriers de Stains "

(The Allotment Garden Society of Stains) (Seine Saint Denis department, Ile de France)

This local organization was founded in 1932 and is part of the allotment garden movement of the start of the century, the primary vocation of which is to provide working-class families with the possibility of providing for their basic food needs and to prevent the men from "loosing their health in the local cafés"…

This association is independent, i.e. non-affiliated with a national federation of allotment associations, which provides it with its own specific and incomparable character (gardens are not standardized nor made uniform).

Today, the organization regroups roughly 800 plots situated for the most part in the East of Stains. It thus implicates roughly 800 families in the town.

With an average surface area of 250m², these plots are allotted to families who become members of the organization for an annual fee of 100FF and an annual participation of 1FF per m².

Amongst the gardeners, cultural mélange is important and numerous communities are represented.

Most of the gardeners have had a garden for over 10 years, some for even 20 years.

"The organization makes a point of being at all demonstrations that take place within the department and in Ile de France"[20].

Its members widely participate in the gardening competition, the party honoring Saint Fiacre (their patron saint), etc. and partake in local life in general.

We interviewed six different individuals:

- ✓ The club's 86 year old chairman (chairman for the last 40 years). He comes from the country side, from a family of the "gens de bois" (lumberjacks); he is a professional roofer, specialized in repairing slate church towers, however after the war he was a punch card operator for the Military. He is very involved in non-profit organizations (Association des anciens combattants - Association of war veterans - , etc.)
- ✓ A 64 year old gardener who had a very chaotic life (professional, personal, etc.). The local government has allowed him to use his shed as a house for the last 10 years. As of recently, he has been responsible for a "section" of 100-some gardens within the framework of the organization.
- ✓ A fifty-some year old gardener who has mastered numerous professional techniques. He is presently a mechanic for lorries.
- ✓ A gardener, who is a professional fireman, fifty-some years old.
- ✓ A member of the Board of Directors, 53 years old; he was a computer executive for 20 years, then unemployed, and now works as a night guard.
- ✓ A 74-year-old man, the son of a Spanish emigrant. He has had several jobs and has been a non-profit militant for over 50 years (in particular in the sports and activities for youth sector). He is also a former town counselor.

II.2.5.   " Le Réseau Normand des Maisons des Jeunes et de la Culture " (The Norman Network of Youth Clubs and Arts Centers)

This organization was founded in 1998 and regroups Youth Clubs and Arts Centers as well as socio-cultural organizations from the two Norman regions (fifteen some organizations). It is affiliated with the "Confédération des MJC"[21] of France (Federation of Youth Clubs and Arts Centers).

It is in line with the wide scope of the Education Populaire movement, and helps the local authorities in the local and inter-communal development process.

It coordinates all of the actions undertaken by its member organizations.

It works in cooperation with local establishments to train volunteer and professional coordinators.

---

[20] Here we quote what the Chairman has told us.

It furthers the break-through and development of innovative projects.

Two people were interviewed:

- ✓ A 53-year-old man, who is the chairman of a MJC. He was a technician for the French navy, following which he held numerous jobs as a technician. He studied business. Today, he works for a labor co-op.
- ✓ Another man, 25 years old, from a mixed background - farmer/laborer. He studied ecology and founded a local youth organization. He is presently participating in the organization of a Celtic festival (Artseine).

II.2.6. " RC2 " (local pedagogical radio station in the Rouen area)

This local radio broadcasts for children and teachers.

It is part of the "Centre Départemental de l'Enfance" (Departmental Center for Childhood) and is located in Canteleu near Rouen (Normandy).

It was founded almost 20 years ago and has benefited from a fresh start since the arrival of the new announcer and coordinator 8 years ago.

It broadcasts pedagogical and cultural programs around the clock for schools, teachers and children.

It works in conjunction with several partners for the production of its programs.

Its team visits schools to report on both general and thematical topics.

It informs and gives accounts of local life concerning both cultural and social affairs.

It offers training in communication techniques to young school children and to troubled youngsters, as well as to university students.

Its activities are coordinated by volunteers and a government worker assigned by the Department of Education.

- ✓ One of the people whom we interviewed is a 39-year-old teacher for the handicapped. He became a radio "specialist" through various experiences and asked the Department of Education to assign him to this radio station where he initiated and developed the present project.

II.2.7. " L'Union Africaine de Grand-Couronne "

   (The African Union in Grand-Couronne) (near Rouen in Normandy)

This organization was founded in 1990 by the local Senegalese community and is open to all French speaking Africans who live in the Rouen area.

Its aim is to integrate the African community, mainly the children, into the French "community scene", all the while highlighting their original cultural identity and the know-how of these people.

It organizes cultural events and thematic exhibits in a "harmonious atmosphere" between France and Africa, whatever the age and social status of the various people may be.

---

[21] Maisons des Jeunes et de la Culture. (Youth Clubs and Arts Centers)

✓ We interviewed a 46-year-old man who, along with his wife, set-up this organization. He was born in Senegal, and went to school to the age of 16. He has been naturalized. In France he worked as a gas station attendant and has studied Law. He is presently in training for the DEFA (State diploma for community social work) and has been assigned as the project manager to a small town.

II.2.8. " Peuple et Culture "(People and Culture)

"Peuple et Culture" bears a certain weight, which remains symbolic, in the socio-cultural world and in the Education Populaire movement. This organization's history dates back to both the "Ecole des cadres" (school to train youth counselors) in Uriage (which during the German occupation was in charge of training people to be in charge of youth projects) and the underground Resistance network which was joined by a small group of counselors, who were in conflict with the Pétain regime.

This organization was founded in 1947 by Joffre Dumazedier, who was joined by numerous intellectuals and people from the working class such as Bénigno Cacéres.

✓ A former 60-year old school teacher was interviewed. He was a permanent member and worked for the organization from 1960 to 1975. His thesis paper dealt with the sexual behavior of the French and he is the co-founder of the "Planning Familial" (Planned Parenthood) in France. He also co-founded the "Institut Régional de Travail Social" (Regional Institute for Social Work) in Canteleu, Normandy. Political militant, he was both a town and regional counselor and remains a non-profit organization militant who firmly supports the Education Populaire movement.

II.2.9. The "Le Secours Populaire " ("People's Salvation"[22])

The French " Secours populaire " is a significant non-profit organization in the French volunteer organization sector (900,000 donors and 72,000 volunteers) recognized as being a great public charity and certified by the Education Populaire movement. Formerly the French chapter of the "Secours Rouge International" ("International Red Organization"[23]) dated 1926, refounded in 1936 and again in 1946. As of the 1960's, this organization drifted little by little away from the Communist Party, and now affirms a non-political stand. One of the organizations foundations is to (re)present itself as being the "general practitioner for solidarity": present in both France and abroad, it acts on an emergency basis as well as on development projects - thus trying to simultaneously and in a complementary way deal with the different needs of people in need.

In addition to emergency aid, which prevailed up until the 1970/80's, the desire to provide not only palliative, but also curative help progressively took hold. The "Secours populaire" thus has various activities - and which vary depending on local establishments - ranging from food and clothing supplies to helping to obtain lawful rights and integration, literacy and academic support, legal assistance, holidays for disadvantaged children and families, and more recently access to culture… In

---

[22] Translator's Note: For lack of an official translation, I have provided an approximative translation.

opposition to the charitable, or philanthropical ideas of the Anglo-Saxon world[24], this organization has always claimed horizontal solidarity, respectful of its beneficiaries; for the past few years, it has been seeking methods to completely restore full "citizenship".

The idea of combining emergency aid and development is present in its international operations: intervention in the event of large-scale natural catastrophes and armed conflicts, and a strong desire to remain in the field to help with reconstruction; promoting development in poor countries, etc.

II.2.10. Des Associations d'hommes et femmes relais.

(Organizations of men and women acting as relays)

In the 1990's, in the working class suburbs of France, first-generation migrant women set-up local organizations in order to, as a group, help each other with everyday problems that certain families encountered. Since then, Town Policy has focused on citizen participation, which has demonstrated that social solidarity does indeed exist within the different communities that live in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Various local initiatives (school, town hall, health department, social workers, handicap education) spurred the creation of women's groups, and later men's groups based on neighborhood perimeters.

PROMES[25] XIXE (active in the 19th Arrondissement of Paris) took over what the IFE[26] was doing at the end of 1999 and is located in premises provided by the parish of Notre-dame des Foyers. It implements "social and cultural mediation activities with the goal of improving the understanding and communication between users and the various services to which they need access". Six salaried workers co-ordinate activities along with a volunteer from Armenia who speaks Russian and who acts as a mediator.

Relais XXe (20th Arrondissement Relay), founded in 1996 as a self-standing organization, provides "social and cultural mediation between "disadvantaged" people and government establishments". Nine people work for this structure (one coordinator and eight mediators).

II.2.11. Two organizations in a community center.

AFWA (Association de femmes du quartier Watteau - Women from the Watteau neighborhood) is a women's group with the goal of helping each other; they reflect and act upon development projects for their neighborhood by fighting against exclusion and isolation and the problems that women who live there may encounter. They meet a real need: communication, management of every day activities, meetings with other women, etc. Thus, AFWA organizes various activities to encourage people to meet together and exchange in the Henri Watteau neighborhood community center. This organization

---

[23] Ibid.

[24] For a summary of these notions, refer to the article by Jean-Louis Laville, "Une association est-elle aussi un agent économique ?", *in* "Le foisonnement associatif", Annales de la recherche urbaine, n° 89, juin 2001.

[25] PROMES : PROmouvoir la MEdiation Socioculturelle est une association (loi 1901). (PROmote Sociocultural Mediation, association under the associative law of 1901)

[26] IFE: Insertion Formation Emploi (organisme de formation). (Job Training for Integration)

would also like to promote training programs for local activity programs; to do so, some of the members have been sent into training. Lastly, they provide information on and try to enforce respect for the surrounding environment and community.

Another organization called "Univers-Cités" (Universe-Cities) would like to promote and act upon improving the living conditions and well-being of the people living in public housing. Numerous activities are organized, e.g. cultural, social and sporting activities. People from the neighborhood can thus go to the theatre, concerts or visit chateaux. "Open air" outings allow for them to discover the fauna and flora of the forest or recreational parks, which also gives the people a change in scenery. Univers-Cités sets up meeting places for the people in the neighborhood by organizing thematic dinners e.g. dishes from a certain country or region of France. The second goal of this organization is to defend tenant rights.

II.2.12. " La Caravane " (The Caravan)

In June 1990, the "BDF" (official acronym for "Bus de Femmes" - Women's Bus), the main goal of which is to help people who are prostituting themselves with health issues as well as on a larger social scale, became a self-standing, autonomous structure and called itself " La caravane ".

It is focusing on setting up a community health program based on the following principle: actions that are undertaken for the women in the community (primarily prostitutes) are coordinated by the women who belong to this community, so that they are themselves the actors of their own lives.

The team is made up of 13 salaried workers, who operate from two specific locations:

> *The "Caravane" vehicle.*

The organization owns a vehicle with which it goes on rounds throughout the entire town (both during the afternoon and at night) so as to meet up with the women in the neighborhoods where they work.

Small teams made up of two coordinators and a professional counselor offer an itinerant structure that appears on a regular basis. Thus the women who want to can establish a simple contact or reinforce a relation that has already been established with the organization, or if need be obtain precise information or make requests.

> *The "Caravane" shelter.*

The organization has a small place in the heart of one of Paris' "problem" neighborhoods. In addition to its vehicle, this location allows for specific services to be offered (personal meetings, information and orientation for medical care, social and/or legal assistance is provided in collaboration with "Droit d'Urgence" - "Emergency Rights", and job assistance in partnership with the ANPE - unemployment office) and/or to provide for a more in-depth consultation and follow-up.

III. STAGE of ANALYSIS

III.1.   The qualitative analysis chart

III.1.1. Elaboration and content

Our analysis chart was elaborated in different stages during group work periods that were full of exchange and different conflicting viewpoints.

We finalized our analysis chart that over time became essential by its necessity and through its effectiveness.

Once out of the theoretical rut, we were able to start an intercultural comparison.

III.1.2. Difficulties encountered

The greatest difficulties for the team during the content analysis stage were of the following order:

✓ Agreeing on a precise definition concerning concepts and words used in order to allow for a sufficiently rigorous classification of discourse fragments (for example, differentiating between knowledge and know-how, capability and knowledge, etc.). The issue wasn't to find the definition of specific words, but rather to find a common meaning for their use.

At what moment does know-how become knowledge and above all when is it a capability? <u>Does one not have to be capable before knowing</u>? For this the concept of empowerment is a help: to know is knowing that you are able to know.

✓ By rereading the interviews several times, we tested the meaning of words and forcefully made them fit into that which does not fit into perfect logic. It all seems to work like pieces of a puzzle or Legos that are too small or too wide or cut in such a way that they don't fit together, or as if the pieces were floating and can't be clipped together.

✓ We had to find a way to make a chart that was sufficiently:

- Large in scope so as to suit all the different discourses we gathered, in their diverse approaches.

- Precise without at the same time succumbing to the exaggerated concern neither for detail nor maniacal precision that would no longer have allowed us to move forward.

III.1.3. The analysis chart.

<u>MOTIVATIONS</u>
TRIGGERING ELEMENTS
PERSONAL MOTIVATIONS
<u>POSSIBLE KNOWLEDGE</u>
KNOWLEDGE
Through traditional establishments (schools, universities, adult education programs, etc.)
Through information (media)

KNOWLEDGE

Through observation

Through experience

Through exchange

ABILITY to:

Take risks

Question self (think)

Take on responsibility

Measure consequences

Manage

Evaluate

Exchange/create links

Participate

Anticipate

Create consensus

Invest oneself

EFFECTS

COMPETENCIES

Know-how to do

Know how to be (i.e. tolerance, listening, adaptability and flexibility)

Know how to act

Know how to learn

SELF POWER (Autonomy)

Concerning what others suggest

Concerning oneself, one's life (i.e. overcoming difficulties, placing problems into perspective)

MOBILITY

Access to new functions

Access to another social status

Change in way of working

Becoming autonomous, etc.

POLITICAL AND ETHICAL STAKES

PRODUCTION OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

EFFECTS ON LOCAL COMMUNITY

PRODUCTION OF GROUP WORTH

SOCIAL MOVEMENT

III.2.   Interview analysis

III.2.1. Process

After the group brainstorming session, interview analysis was individually conducted.

Analysis work and the elaboration of a chart then followed through a process of constant back and forth between the analyzed material and the chart, with the concern of "adhering" as best as possible to the diversity found in the discourses while finding common themes.

Fieldwork, through non-directive interviews, made us search deeper and thus re-precise the meaning of words or elements such as motivations or capabilities. However there is a fine line between that which is considered as acquired knowledge and that of ability, and is thus difficult to delimit. Knowledge provides competencies or lends them as shown by the work on prestige.

III.2.2. Remarks.

Even if the analysis chart allowed us to "sort" discourse elements, this did not necessarily facilitate the work. Amongst the difficulties encountered, we would like to highlight in particular that it was necessary:

✓ To "breakup" global discourse without altering the meaning.

✓ To avoid redundancies and double or triple classification of a same discourse element.

✓ To be able to extract from the discourse, issues concerning learning that are not necessarily approached as such in an explicit way, especially when dealing with the fields of socialization, citizenship, etc. (here we touch on the issue of the readability of discourse).

✓ To take into consideration personal interpretations linked to the representation of self, to values and stereotypes[27] that everyone has, hidden behind language that was considered as being common.

✓ To adhere to the chart that was agreed upon as being the reference:

    In fact, almost systematically for each interview, it was deemed necessary to make one or more change(s), in order to make sure that important elements were not missed in our analysis and thus disappear completely from the final analysis.

    This is the case - especially at this stage of the research and having to deal with highly diverse fields that were studied by different apprentice researchers; it was better to exclude few data rather than risk loosing elements that could enrich the analysis and final synthesis.

    That which seemed at first to be contingent later appeared as important.

    That which seemed important sometimes appeared as minor and above all corresponded to a prejudice or a stereotype that was refuted by reality. Organizations on the whole are rich with preconstructed discourse

since they adhere to certain group discourse which risks being led astray from the reason for their existence and from that in which they believe. The risk is to provide an ideal image of reality, which is never ideal.

When an organization is said to favor encounters between people or is said to enrich the social fabric, is this indeed the reality or rather just what is written up in its statutes?

When dealing with the object of our research that is the hidden function of organizations (learning to learn, helping to acquire knowledge and know-how, better understanding), discourse shows the near-sightedness of members and even of the persons in charge and of militants.

✓ We had to succeed in highlighting hidden topics that cross through discourse in the different stages of learning and training that were noted.

III.3.   The main themes of the analysis.

Using indicators that are as detailed as possible and which are applied to each interview using the chart, we will in this chapter present "the results" of our analysis by highlighting the essential elements that correspond to the specificity of this study and to our hypothesis.

> ***Moreover, using short excerpts form discourses that were particularly explicit, we have decided to illustrate the different points approached through these fragments of personal history.***

III.3.1. Motivations, determining elements.

> ***Motivation, which is considered as that which pushes one to act or not act, was widely dealt with in all of the interviews and thus* de facto *make up the driving element of individual commitment in the dynamics of learning.***
> ***We have pinpointed what we considered as trigger elements in the source of motivation and those which are more directly linked to motivation itself.***

✓ *Trigger elements.*

Here we primarily deal with specific events that act as stimulating elements for an individual, which in most cases consist of an encounter with a particular person or even a drastic change in one's life.

As for our meetings, that which is most talked about is encounters with other people who are responsible for a project or who are themselves involved in an organization which they promote and praise.

---

[27] Which tend to be numerous in the Education Populaire movement and even more so … in university environments.

Statistics prove this: commitment to non-profit work is made by word of mouth, especially in France. We have made the same observations in other research projects conducted by CESOL such as the one concerning the AFEV[28].

A drastic change in one's life is often a time when people are involved in self-criticism and self-analysis which may lead the person to make new choices and above all to find other networks in which to socialize. These changes in one's life may include:

- Professional change / failure (unemployment).

- Emotional/personal change / failure (separation, divorce).

- Health problems.

- Break from cultural origins.

✓ *Personal motivations*

These motivations may express a set of needs felt by the persons we met, regardless of the structure or type of organization to which they belong.

The primary motivations for non-profit commitment and for volunteers are found here. They seem to represent a common basis for individuals who wish to get involved in an organization and which can be expressed in the following manner:

- The need for encounter and exchange

The search for social bonds, which break solitude, is present in practically every single interview.

- The curiosity and the desire to discover other horizons

The desire for contact is often expressed in the form of an opening up to others, the desire to meet new people, ways and customs that are different from those already familiar with.

- The need to be active

Beyond the issue of contact and bonds, commitment to a non-profit organization also fulfills a need that is linked for example to being inactive.

- The need to help

The desire to be useful and help others who are in difficulty, sometimes expressed already as a child, is often one of the major motivations to get involved in non-profit work.

---

[28] See footnote above.

We have at last reached the heart of the goal of our investigation.

- The need to learn for oneself and possibly to teach others.

The acquisition of knowledge as such and the possible transmission of this knowledge make up essential elements that are clearly set forth. This is in particular present within Networks for the Exchange of Knowledge and in the Education Populaire sector. For that which concerns Allotment Gardens, if motivation is less clearly expressed, the learning and knowledge that are at stake are indeed considerable.

Non-profit organizations are educational and learning environments. Below, we talk about a more scientific concept: osmosis. The spontaneous expression "learning through all pores", used by one of the people we quoted, is very graphic.

- The search for a haven of liberty

The search for a physical space of liberty is at stake here, not as an end in itself, but rather as a tool to escape from everyday life, a haven chosen by oneself, for oneself.

Here, both issues linked to a certain type of confinement (public housing, for example) as well as constraints linked to professional or family life were mentioned.

- The search for other ways of functioning in society, other reference systems

Individuals frequently mentioned establishing authentic relationships on an egalitarian and not hierarchical basis, outside of any process including competition, performance or any other market system combined with the desire for personal autonomy.

Furthermore, relationships qualified as being "community" relations were often referred to, which surmises that everyone knows everyone, that mutual acceptance exists and that these individuals are willing to function in a different way than "everyone on his/her own".

The "associative" structure is in the non-lucrative and non-competitive sector. The desire to modify set ideas concerning the hierarchisation of professions perceived as "noble" and those which are less or not at all noble, also constitutes some of the concerns of the people we met with.

- The search for citizen commitment and responsibility.

Setting up projects, solidarity, involvement in local life and performing actions that focus on others are among the fundamental motivations behind the commitment of actors and in particular of non-profit organization volunteers.

For individuals, this represents the need to get out, in the broad meaning of the term, i.e. find a place where they can be heard, respected and valued.

III.3.2. Modes of learning and developed capabilities.

It clearly appears that the knowledge identified by the individuals themselves is acquired according to different processes that are permanently linked and which thus provide all their meaning. As M.J Bardot and G. Camattari wrote: *"The learning experience consists, in reality, in an on-going osmosis between that which is outside and that which is inside the subject-learner, however with consideration for the internal dimension which is the one that determines the success of the learning process, since it is that which is internal, subjectivity, that determine, in an autonomous way what meaning to attribute to external prompting"* [29].

Let us first highlight the importance of imitation and identification in the learning process. Indeed, it is the interest in the experience of others through consideration of their functioning, the view of this experience, and the reflections that follow which constitute one of the fundamental motors of individual learning.

Moreover, it seems that the most important part of the learning process is conducted according to three models and three complementary modes:

✓ <u>Through observation</u>

✓ <u>"Hands-on", through experimentation/experience</u>

This is: *"the desire to do that leads to the desire to learn"* [30]. It is through the desire to act and the will that accompanies it, through confrontation with that which is concrete, through taking actions and the involvement required, that a person learns.

Here we are not dealing with the concept of learning, just for the sake of learning, but rather with learning for the sake of immediately using. It is the use of it (that what is taught) that makes learning and not vice versa; a process that is, in general, exactly the opposite of the learning process in schools.

Furthermore, knowledge acquired in this way is perceived by individuals as that which is to be handed over to other members of the organization.

✓ <u>Through the implementation of social relations based on exchange</u>

The issue concerning the type of relations that are at stake in these processes of self-development is at the heart of the debate and represents one of the key points of their specificity in comparison to "classical" and formal educational systems. *"Another characteristic of formal training and educational systems is that they function using downstream distribution. The learner is taught; he/she does not choose nor select the program. He/She receives."* [31] Within an organization, however, the system is horizontal and often mutual. The learner

[29] M.J Barbot and G. Camatarri. *Autonomie et apprentissage. L'innovation dans la formation (Autonomy and learning. Innovation in training.)*. Paris: PUF, 1999.

[30] Excerpt from the contribution made by Dan Ferrand Bechmann *Autonomie et apprentissage dans la formation (Autonomy and development through learning/training)* for a conference at the Université de la Communication in Hourtin, August 2000.

[31] Dan Ferrand-Bechmann. *Op. cit.*

"teaches him/herself" by being in contact with another person so as to acquire knowledge. Relations and contacts are at the service of learning and thus knowledge and know-how.

It all takes place as if, in regard to each other, the persons were in fact the "passers" and mediators of knowledge… Belonging to a group, evolving in a group setting *"provides a network for learning that favors the exchange of know-how, information and mutual help during the learning process [32]*.

From the reports of the people we met, we were able to note that non-profit work reveals and/or develops within these people, diverse capabilities that are used at different levels.

Like women who leave their kitchens and partake in non-profit work so as to enter the workplace[33], men learn new skills and acquire competencies based on new capabilities. We have grouped them into three categories as follows:

Capabilities for exchange: giving, receiving and creating a bond.

Capabilities for assuming responsibility: becoming involved, taking risks, and measuring consequences.

Capabilities for developing strategy: anticipating, innovating and/or being able to adapt.

III.3.3. Know-how to do and know-how to be: the competencies at stake

It is the experimental situations in organizations that allow for these capabilities to become competencies that can possibly be transferred and applied to other sectors (professional, personal, and even organizational…).

It became apparent that the competencies that individuals did indeed use were expressed in two complementary fields, that of know-how to do on the one hand, and on the other that of know-how to be, and which overlap and intertwine all the time in the reality of everyday life. They work in different ways.

✓ Know-how to do.

• Technical know-how.

Some people acquire, within the organizational framework, "technical" know-how that they did not have before.

Sometimes this represents recognized techniques, such as computer expertise:

Sometimes, it's just "tricks" that show imagination, so as to be more efficient:

It is also a set of diversified knowledge that can constitute a certain type of competency that can be transferred to another area:

---

[32] Summary of the report from the Spanish team for the Socrates project. 2000.

[33] Dan Ferrand-Bechmann, L'Utilité Sociale des Femmes au Foyer (The social utility of women in the home), conference at the Association Belge des Femmes au Foyer, 1994, and conference for the review Raison Présente on « les Femmes à l'Assaut des Associations » (Women who are storming associations).

- Taking on responsibilities.

Commitment, the feeling of involvement within a group are factors that are favorable to the taking on of responsibilities. Moreover, stimulation from other organizational members constitutes a trigger element that is often determining:

However, if personal stakes and organizational stakes are *de facto* intertwined in non-profit, volunteer work, they are not necessarily easy to manage, and do not always go together well.

At the organization level, resorting to different operational dynamics can stimulate the motivation of some. Being the person in charge, knowing how to suggest something new can sometimes be beneficial.

Moreover, the non-profit sector is not spared from the issue concerning the search for power:

Conflicts concerning associative rules and operational modalities aren't any better for that matter! The art of negotiation can in this case be a very precious tool:

- ✓ Know-how to be

- Conviviality

The non-profit sector is above all a meeting place and a place for conviviality where social relations are just as important (or even more so) than the aim of the organization itself. Even if, the individuals interviewed mentioned talking with their neighbors and associates, they often highlighted other reasons than the simple pleasure of meeting with others: meeting people from diverse horizons… and they sometimes even feel a bit guilty: "we didn't even do anything!"

Others see something useful in their meetings: the possibility of finding a job.

- Solidarity

Solidarity is at the heart of non-profit work. People group together within and for the context of helping each other. This is obviously expressed in the form of material help:

But it can also take the shape of relational support that is particularly important in difficult situations:

- The act of giving and giving in return

Exchanging money is "looked down upon" by members of the organizations with whom we met. The "gratis" nature of services "rendered" seems to be important in expressing the meaning of relationships that deal with the act of giving and giving in return that takes place.

Gratuity and the non-monetary nature of acts are important in a society where everything can be bought and sold. However the issue of personal worth and of recognition are also hidden behind these acts of giving and giving in return. There are few establishments that provide the opportunity to express this.

The example of Networks for the Exchange of Knowledge is the most typical, however the act of giving and giving in return are put into practice using the same modes in other organizations.

For that which concerns the production and the acquisition of knowledge, exchange allows one to be reassured in regard to one's shortcomings and capabilities.

III.3.4. Autonomy and social mobility.

It is obvious, taking into consideration the analysis elements presented above, that experience in the non-profit sector has repercussions on a person's entire life, at the strictly professional level, at the emotional level, as well as at the citizenship level, etc. Globally speaking, this self-development process within the framework of a non-profit environment indeed converges towards the autonomy of an individual and thus allows him/her, to different degrees, to gain power over his/her life, to be the subject and not the object, the actor and not the user, and this, outside of the organization to which he/she belongs.

Non-profit work has hidden effects on self-development. The person that benefits from this does not always see the immediate advantages. Of course, he/she can immediately put them to use, however he/she can also transfer them to another facet of his/her life or to another organization in which he/she takes part.

✓ Sociability

For individuals who find themselves in a totally dependent situation in regard to their family environment, for example, getting involved in social life by building up a network of acquaintances and friends is one of the first steps towards autonomy:

The Allotment Garden example is very interesting because activities that can mobilize humans to such a degree are rare, aside from sports and the management of sporting clubs. For one thing, gardening and cultivating vegetables for oneself and one's family, is a typically male activity, especially in France, in urban or semi-urban areas (this is not the case for farmers, nor the case in Africa) and thus can be assumed with all the dignity that is necessary for the male status! Secondly, this activity shows production (in fact gardening for the inexperienced gardener can be quite expensive) and it can be justified in regard to one's close relations and even one's wife. It is not a useless and idle pastime; it is a work-pastime, an active pastime, free work. As for learning, it provides the knowledge for "gardening", however it may also sow other seeds of knowledge and may initiate patience, order, exactness, respect for nature, etc. Gardening in a way requires standards that can be compared to any other work and above all to production line work, for that which concerns the organization of tasks: forgetting to water, haphaplessly conducting tasks, using the wrong type of fertilizer or soil, can all have negative consequences. However, it is mainly the gardener himself and only himself who is at stake. He sanctions himself when he makes a mistake. Gardening in this way thus provides the gardener with the contrary of what was required by the ardent followers of Taylorism: activity is conducted from one

end to the other by the gardener himself, in an autonomous and independent manner. One can, within narrow limits, imagine, innovate, create and organize as one pleases, choose plants and cuttings. This is an activity and a learning situation that can be compared to grammar and poetry, both strict and free without contradiction. The only uncertainty is the weather which rules over the garden just like the mood of the boss and the stock exchange over the factory and the world of work. It is in this battle against bad weather and the uncertainty of the microclimate that the gardener must show that he is the master of his garden and thus develop and adapt his knowledge and know-how.

✓ Independence

Through non-profit work, an individual acquires the tools for comprehension (of him/herself as well as of others) and the means to act that will allow him to better anticipate new situations and to be able to face them with more self-assurance and independence:

✓ Social mobility

This process of self-development may be accompanied by the desire of providing him/herself with other prospects at the professional level, which better corresponds to the use of all of his/her knowledge and which increases the value of his/her new acquisitions, by for example attaining another status:

It is interesting to note that non-profit work is taken into account by certain professional sectors, including those that have strong trade unions.
The different identities of an individual influence each other and give him/her a social status.
Schools are not the only places that produce knowledge.

✓ Accomplishing personal projects

Lastly, this type of self-development is without a doubt reassuring for an individual. While providing a better understanding of oneself, it also allows for an individual to better define his/her projects and furthers their achievement. It proves once again that he/she is capable.

IV. CONCLUSION.

IV.1. Political stakes and the production of local development

If non-profit work obviously has positive effects on the individuals that experience it, it also has other "virtues" and effects, concerning, on a larger scale, local development. Indeed, the involvement of individuals often exceeds the internal framework of the organization itself and becomes part of the political and citizen dimensions of active participation in local life. *"Exchanges, networks, communities, can be found everywhere,*

there where the concrete has isolated its citizens. Desperate attempts can be observed: urbanites trying to find roots and develop community action".[34]

As for the people we met, we can note that the step towards non-profit involvement is more or less directly linked to a cause that they wish to fight for. It is guided by the desire to open up to others, by solidarity, etc.

"Associations" are considered as an integral part of local life, which has a specific place in regard to establishments (school or church, for example) and which produce a social bond often lacking or too establishmental or intertwined in a jumble of relations from which one wants to escape. Through the self-development process, which they support directly or indirectly, local organizations thus always partake in the development of individuals and groups and often of new social dynamics in the city or town.

Thus, another type of "added value" knowledge can be highlighted: know-how to socialize.

IV.2.   "Associations" as educational actors

"It is thus clear that the acquired capabilities and knowledge expressed by the people we met with are diffuse and confused. They denote the acquisition of new power. They know how to better innovate, imagine, transgress, produce statements of accounts or previsions, decide and allow themselves to make decisions, understand and listen to or accept others, find means for recognition, confront attitudes and opinions, take on responsibilities, make claims… non-categorized knowledge.

Real life experiences and those told to us allow the individuals to build another story: history (his/her own story). They are located in other reflections because the people interviewed reflect their lives in another mirror, that of their responsibilities within an organization or an informal group. They are less confronted with their family or familiar, married or solitary past, than in their formal educational path.

Commitment to an organization allows one to more freely choose and maybe even to be able to step away from one's own identity.

Reproduction does not function in the same way in that which we can call organizational careers.

The acceleration of knowledge and at the same time its rapid obsolescence create anxieties and negative images of self: don't know how to use the latest VCR, can't recall the map of Africa or Eastern Europe, don't understand how an airplane motor works… or don't understand the pathogenic effects of transgenetic corn.

Placing oneself in a self-development situation in regard to information allows one to become part of a process that is more self-enhancing. One uses that which is useful.

Out of all the possible knowledge, one extracts that which can be efficient.

Intellectual consumption isn't wasted, only that which is immediately applicable is learned.

One is involved in that which is applicable.

The relationship with knowledge is often affective and relational in organizations and thus more reassuring.

---

[34] Dan Ferrand-Bechmann. *Entraide, participation et solidarité dans l'habitat (Mutual help, participation and solidarity within the habitat).* Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992.

Approval operates in action and autonomy in action.

Know-how and know-how to act result from learning and the approval of this knowledge. One appropriates and alienates knowledge. Knowledge is appropriated by sharing it.

This appropriation of knowledge through organizations and the autonomisation of individuals demands that an effort be made concerning learning and the validation of knowledge acquired in an organizational framework".