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# Proposals for an Approach to Training Issues in Vulnerable Areas: Networks of Actors, Identities, Culture and Sustainable Development

Christian Bourret

Maître de conférence en Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication

[bourret@univ-mlv.fr](mailto:bourret@univ-mlv.fr),

Université Paris Est - EA 4420 DICEN / CNAM (Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers)  
IFIS – Bâtiment Erasme – 5, boulevard Descartes – Champs sur Marne – 77454 Marne-la-Vallée Cedex 2 – France

**Summary:** Culture is one of the pillars of Territorial Intelligence. Through case studies, we propose to consider culture in its relations with the training. Training constitutes a major lever for sustainable development, especially for vulnerable areas. We discuss the issue in a constructivist approach from "training situations". After the case of the cooperative Spanish Basque group Mondragón, we analyze issues specific to vulnerable areas in France such as suburbs by emphasizing the importance of networking among stakeholders and that of alternative training.

**Résumé :** La culture constitue un des piliers de l'Intelligence Territoriale. Nous proposons de l'étudier dans ses relations avec la formation. La formation constitue un levier de développement durable majeur, en particulier, pour les zones fragilisées. Nous aborderons la question dans une approche constructiviste à partir de « situations de formation ». Après l'exemple du groupe coopératif basque espagnol Mondragón, nous analyserons les enjeux spécifiques pour les zones fragilisées en France notamment de banlieues en insistant sur l'importance de la mise en réseau des acteurs et sur le levier des formations en apprentissage.

**Keywords:** training issues, vulnerable areas, networks of actors, culture, sustainable development.

**Mots clés :** formation en alternance, zones fragilisées, réseaux d'acteurs, culture, développement durable.

# Proposals for an Approach to Training Issues in Vulnerable Areas: Networks of Actors, Identities, Culture and Sustainable Development

## Introduction

Jean-Jacques Girardot (ENTI Conference in Salerno, November 2009) emphasized that culture is one of the major pillars of Territorial Intelligence. It can be analyzed in different levels: heritage, memory, traditions, identity, attitudes, training ... It can both act as a brake when it is absent and as a lever for development when it is present (eg combination of a strong local identity or local culture such as heritage, industrial or commercial cultures). In this paper, through some case studies, we propose to consider culture in its relations with training and especially sandwiches courses. Training constitutes a major lever for sustainable development, especially for vulnerable areas.

We will approach the issue from a constructivist perspective around "training situations", corresponding mainly for us to situations of information and communication in a dynamic of interactions in an approach both within systemic thinking and complex approach as the "Situational Semiotic" (A. Mucchielli).

We will discuss successively the close relationship between education (in a perspective of sustainable development of territories) and Territorial Intelligence using the example of the cooperative Spanish Basque group Mondragón. We then analyze issues specific to areas weakened by insisting on the lever of alternative training (*apprentissage*), taking some examples within the University Paris Est Marne-la-Vallée (UPEMLV).

## I - Issues of training and Territorial Intelligence

Our approach is an example of a global or systemic approach within the understanding of the complexity or complex thought (Avenier, Morin, Le Moigne) and constructivist epistemologies.

More than ever, especially in the case of persons in difficulty, particularly young people, the building of a personal project and appropriate training creates a dynamic, a key lever for the reconstruction of the person in restoring meaning to the existence around new skills (recovering self-esteem and a form of recognition by others). The synergy between the project of reconstruction of the person through work (Lefebvre, 2005) and the main goals of organizations is at the heart of the problem of "integration enterprises" (*entreprises d'insertion*). This is particularly the case of the network *Jardins de Cocagne* (100 federating structures throughout France combining production and distribution of products from organic farming to members-subscribers).

We analyze specific training situations envisaged mainly around the interdiscipline information and communication. Alex Mucchielli presents the "Situational Semiotic" (*sémiotique situationnelle*) as a methodology to outline meanings for actors in a situation (in our case training situations). For actors, the situation can be divided in different levels of analysis: issues, contexts, positions, standards, quality of relationships, values, understood in a systemic perspective. We thus meet Philippe Jonnaert (2006, p. 77) in his analysis of the relationship between skills and constructivism, for whom "situations are sources of expertise ... In that situation the subject constructs his knowledge ... Skills and knowledge are constructed in close interaction and are temporarily viable situation" ... We are thus well in line with the central idea of constructivism all that "knowledge is constructed and based on the context and situations that challenge the subject."

Our position of involved researcher (interviews with stakeholders in the field, participant observation, but also involvement in field projects in social engineering, corresponds to "engaging communication" (*communication engageante*) defined for interdiscipline ICS (Information and Communication Science) by Françoise Bernard (2009) as closely articulating 3 concepts: actions, knowledge and values. The researcher's commitment contributes to the construction of knowledge in synergy with its position on the ground, shared knowledge and validated by field workers with the "primacy of the relationship" and "living connected" (*vivre reliés*) pointed by Daniel Bougnoux (2006, p. 18 et 88) in a systemic perspective.

Training situations in which we are involved in alternative and professional courses built with enterprises, meet the notions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainable development, their success or failure depends very much on the dynamics of social networks on a territory. These issues of "sustainable education", articulating skills of players are based on situations of dual training for the joint development of the territories concerned. It is also the approach of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (see ACFCI Website). For us Training and Territorial Intelligence are inseparable.

## **II - An example of linkage between education and sustainable development of territories: the Mondragón cooperative group**

In the sector of social economy and particularly in that of the cooperatives, the cooperative Spanish Basque group Mondragón is an example highly valued. Its success largely relied on a synergy training and economic development.

For its founder, Basque priest Jose Maria Arizmendiarieta:

*"Nothing distinguishes more men and peoples as their respective attitudes towards the circumstances they live. Those who choose to make history and change the course of events have an advantage over those who decide to wait passively for the outcome of change. "*

This quote is a hymn to the will, action, intelligence and territorial sustainable development. It summarizes the state of mind, the specific culture and ambitions of the Mondragón cooperative group.

The adventure of the Mondragón cooperative group began in 1943 with the foundation of a vocational school at the initiative of a priest, seeking a development model in a relatively isolated valley of Spanish Basque Country. The Spanish Basque Country is a land of traditions, with high specificity (with its own language), combining both maritime culture, rural culture and industrial culture (steel) even in remote valleys. The Basques are both very attached to their land of Euskadi on both sides of the Pyrenees and open to the world. This was the lieutenant of Magellan, El Kano, who finished the first maritime round of the world in 1522. Many Basques have emigrated, especially in Latin America. Around 1950, former students of this vocational school took a firm in difficulty which will become Fagor (cooperative enterprise in domestic appliances). Today, the Mondragón cooperative group is the 5th Spanish group, with 80 000 employees or *socios* (cooperators) in the world with important brands: Fagor or Brandt (bought in France) for domestic appliances, Eroski supermarkets, Caja Laboral Bank, Orbea cycles, luxury cars Irisar ... The role of training will remain essential. The Mondragón group has its own university which receives every year 4000 students and with whom the University of Paris Est Marne-la-Vallee has established cooperations (exchange of students and teachers).

The success of the Mondragón cooperative group deserves to be reported as based on meeting the challenges of training, sustainable development and strategy of social economy. This success can be analyzed as the meeting of the mentality and traditions of Basque industrial culture with a dynamic training for local development in a remote valley, but certainly culturally specific and with strong values of work and solidarity. But if the "Mondragón model" has worked in economic development phase of the 1960s in the very specific area of Spanish Basque Country, is it transferable nowadays, for example in areas of deindustrialization? And how can it overcome the current crisis which he can not escape? The corporate culture is more fluid and adherence to fundamental values is diluted. The Mondragón group is particularly faced with the duality of its membership which now shares equally (50%) between *socios* (owners of shares Social Capital Group) and single employees, not involved in the democratic life of the cooperative group.

Read through the analytical framework of Situational Semiotic, the success of the Mondragón group and level of development (80 000 employees) correspond to specific context, situations, positioning, values of actors and qualities of good relationships specific to a time (that of the "Thirty Glorious") and to the very specific area of the Spanish Basque country in the years 1950-1960, not very easily replicable elsewhere today, in our time of both globalization and deindustrialization of Western Europe.

## **III - Specific issues for vulnerable areas, including suburbs**

The issues and situations of vocational training in vulnerable areas are very different from those of the Spanish Basque Country at the time of the rise of "Mondragon model".

The vulnerable areas have very different typologies. It may be predominantly rural areas rather isolated, elderly population, agriculture in crisis, where small towns that have long served as a fixation point for population and economic aspects, are losing their jobs and where the tourism, when possible, is hard to become a major lever of development. This is particularly the case of Couserans in the French Pyrenees (presented at conferences CAENTI 2007 and 2008). It may also include areas in strong deindustrialization, with high unemployment rates: coalfield region Nord-Pas de Calais in France, Wallonia in Belgium (Charleroi, Seraing ...). Finally, also exists a third case, the suburbs of major cities, sleeping areas with low economic activity, where a young population, few graduate, has difficulty to find meaning in his life. It is on this latter that we focus more specifically.

Hervé Azoulay (in Duval, 2008, p. 119) has proposed to apply social intelligence, or better societal intelligence (considered as a new area of Economic Intelligence), to suburbs in stressing the importance of social networks to overcome the deep crisis which resulted in France, specially in Paris region with the riots of late 2005. The policy of the city (*politique de la ville*) has invested 40 billion euros in the suburbs in 15 years but without much

results. We must invent something else. For H. Azoulay, unemployment, not poverty, is the major factor (but is it possible to separate the two?): for him, young people revolted not because they are poor but because they have no work, no hope and they feel alien in the world where they want to live. The crisis in the suburbs, as our contemporary society as a whole, is primarily a crisis of meaning.

For H. Azoulay, in recent years, the balance seems broken and conflicts are not resolved. Nobody supports the community. The rich are getting richer but they do not want to mix more with others. The society may be split into two: those who have everything and those who have nothing and, between them, the hatred. The explosion, according to him, is very near.

Employment is fundamental to the social contract. For those whose only wealth is work, its loss means irreparably exclusion and deprivation. For H. Azoulay, there can exist work, but differently. The subsidies have not produced the desired results. We must therefore seek alternative ways. He suggests, in analogy with cell growth, to develop economically viable projects. There are many talents in the suburbs and young people succeed in creating economic activity and employment in these difficult areas where they have their solidarity and that are a major part of their identities. It is also our personal experience.

H. Azoulay insists on the need for a "multi-dimensional knowledge and overall system". For us it corresponds to a systemic or global approach of the thought of complexity. He warns against an approach too Cartesian and too technocratic. We should know from the bottom to create a learning organization in a process of "daily and ordinary innovation" pointed by Norbert Alter: a "bottom-up" approach to give meaning and not a "top-down" and technocratic one.

H. Azoulay - and we fit in this perspective – points out the building of networks linking the initiatives of all the actors: executives of firms, associations and local authorities, reconciling economic issues and social issues. By working on the ground, primarily they must transform local needs into concrete proposals for economic activities adapted to local realities. This is to optimize financial resources and communication interfaces. He stressed the importance of network organizations: flexible, open, adaptable, interactive. They promote creative disorder and risk taking. For him, the cornerstone of this dynamic new development is partnership: the interface meeting to communicate is crucial. Respect each other and trust are the glue of social relationships and even more vulnerable areas.

For him, the company is a "machine to integrate." With the abolition of military service in France and the crisis of the school system who is asked too much, the companies became the main way for integration. The company creates a community but it also has its constraints. H. Azoulay refers to a report by the *Institut Montaigne* (February 2006) on "social enterprise". He stressed the importance of the concept of "*social entrepreneur*" and progressive learning. The report proposed the creation of specific function referring to integration or partnership with an enterprise integration. It is well to combine all the skills, all good intentions: to create a network (grid) of companies, associations and communities to conquer the market for human and create a new economic dynamic in the vulnerable territories: to create networks of ideas / actions. H. Azoulay also stresses the importance of regional economic development which is the main area of intervention. He stresses the importance of volunteerism, including "seniors" newly retired from the business world. The network share ideas in these territories, will select projects based on societal needs.

Studying "sports intelligence" (in Duval, 2008, p. 149), Marie Brigaud also links the issues of education and development in disadvantaged areas as suburbs. She denounced the "walls" or "curtains" related to cutting skills, issues of power and corporatism, resulting in retention of information and misuse of resources. She highlights a pilot training for the professional integration of young people to obtain a qualifying certificate in the Essonne department (91). For her, sharing information contributes to the collective intelligence. This issue of knowledge management is for her the principal mission of officers of Youth and Sports (*Jeunesse et Sports*). But we should start with better readability and better consistency of too many devices to manage.

#### **IV - The lever of training in interaction with the field, including learning**

Our experience at the University Paris Est / Marne-la-Vallee joined the prospects outlined by H. Azoulay and M. Brigaud. Training is a lever for sustainable development in troubled areas such as the suburbs in the Paris region. So IUT (*Institut Universitaire de Technologie*) of Marne-la-Vallée relayed an initiative of the IUT of Melun-Senart around a DU (university degree) as a creator of economic activity by young people with the support of the regional council of Ile-de-France (*conseil régional*). This training is based on a partnership of local agencies and associations involved in the field. The first training started in 2006 in the north of department of Val de Marne (94) and in the south of the Seine Saint Denis (93) one's. It was renewed in 2008 and replicated in the twentieth arrondissement of Paris. Three courses have already been completed and two are pending. They provide training practices, articulated in draft entrepreneurship youth trainees. They helped to create a number of local activities: computer repair, manufacture and sale of clothing textiles, fair trade, security firm, home services to assist the person, public writer, food ... These very concrete trainings have demonstrated the challenges of a dynamic

change around an activity: give new meaning and motivation for the reconstruction of identity and personal around a dynamic project (Boutinet) in restoring confidence through personal monitoring and constant support (Lefebvre). Personal development project and reconstruction of identity meet to create a dynamic of local development participating in the social cohesion of a distressed area.

Vocational trainings as Apprenticeship trainings (*formations en apprentissage*) are another key lever for promoting a culture of development in disadvantaged areas. This is primarily to develop new interactive pedagogies coming from local level around exemplary partnerships with companies and involving troubled young people.

The University is not only Research and Training to Master level. It also has a major social role to play, in particular to improve access to vocational training for youth in difficulty.

At the University of Paris Est Marne-la-Vallée, IUT, IFIS (Ile-de-France Institute of Services Engineering) and CFA (Center of Training Apprentices) Descartes Marne-la-Vallée, are associating with the CNAM (*Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers*) and local schools in the area La Courneuve - Montfermeil - Clichy-sous-Bois (Seine / Saint Denis department) to offer vocational training courses for young people without vocational insertion sponsored by companies and in particular the Insurance Group AXA, in a perspective of corporate social responsibility (CSR). These projects correspond to situations of information widely within the "primacy of the relationship" (D. Bounoux) and dynamic of interactions.

Support for ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) may prove decisive: both to provide educational support as well as monitoring individual (the apprentice book online) to better identify and immediately breaks difficulties.

The analysis of the identity of these young (analysis of a complex multi-identity) and their representations in the context of an alternative pedagogy is also an interesting research axe that can be studied under different frameworks of the "Situational Semiotic" proposed by Alex Mucchielli (stakes, standards, positions, values, quality of relations). These young people often have very different attitudes from their place of work (where they generally fit well) and place of training (school or university) where they can cause behavioral problems, often find it difficult to focus on intellectual activities if they are too disconnected from the concrete.

More broadly, the sandwich courses are powerful levers for integration of young people, especially those from disadvantaged suburbs and / or problem areas.

The case of vocational bachelors (*licences professionnelles*) Chargé d'Affaires and Economist in Indoor Architecture (*Agencement*) involving respectively since 2001, IUT de Marne-la-Vallée, Ecole Boule (Paris), Lycée François Mansart (Val de Marne), the CFA Descartes and the French Chamber of Indoor Architecture or *Chambre Française de l'Agencement* (under the French Federation of Building) is interesting. Many of these young people are first apprentice (*apprentis*) then integrate dynamic companies with both a major economic role in provincial towns: small towns (St. Nabor in the Vosges department, Souillac in the Lot, Saint Pee sur Nivelles in Atlantic Pyrenees, Vic-Fézensac in the Gers department ...) or in larger towns: Brive (Corrèze department) Mégnac (Gironde) and Beauvais (Oise). They maintain local employment by seeking markets abroad (Spain, Russia and even China or Arab emirates). Including training and integration of vocational experience (from low professional levels (CAP) to the bachelor's level) is a key to their success. In their case, ICT can enable a "sustainable education" that combine training in alternance and training throughout vocational life in the company: the importance of e-learning to complete the initial training and continuous updating of knowledge and personal skills in conjunction with the coaching and the dynamics of social networks.

## Conclusion

In training and dynamic projects presented, our position as a researcher and committed observer corresponds to the prospects of "engaging communication" proposed by Françoise Bernard. The training issues discussed there are both Territorial Intelligence and Economic Intelligence in its societal dimension (P. Clerc and H. Azoulay in Duval, 2008).

It is based on a dynamic social networking and partnerships on a territory: companies, associations, local authorities, but also state services. As we have noted, the universities, specially their components more vocational (IUT ...) and with over organizations such as CFA (Centers for Training Apprentices) have a key role to play.

The "sustainable training" joins "sustainable development". Around the central theme of the training, we have opened ways for thinking on the meeting of basic concepts such as project staff, corporate social responsibility

(CSR), sustainable development of territories, particularly in difficulty, the culture in its different dimensions: attitudes, identities and representations.

It also make sense. In France, the emphasis is too often on the failures of urban policy, the riots and the situation of refusal of a youth without jobs or projects. This paper shows that daily and certainly at a low level, many actors involved in helping young people in disadvantaged areas to take control of their destiny. The experiences and initiatives are also referred to specifically address the meeting of two key concepts of our society of hypermodernity: network and project in a systemic understanding of the complexity with all the opportunities offered by new information and communication technologies.

These experiences and initiatives also reflect a repositioning of the State to a "strategist and partner State" as proposed by Bernard Carayon in 2003 in his report highlighting the role of Economic Intelligence for economic development and contribution to the social cohesion.

**Christian Bourret** is Senior Lecturer in Information and Communication Sciences in the University of Paris Est Marne-la-Vallée (France). He obtained the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales* (HEC) degree in 1978 then a Ph. D. in Human and Social Sciences of the University Paris 7 – Denis Diderot (1991). He is Director of the Ile-de-France Institute of Services Engineering (IFIS). IFIS has 1400 students (bachelors, masters) especially in vocational and alternative trainings (sandwiches courses, *apprentissage* ...).

He belongs to Research Team EA 4420 DICEN (*Dispositifs d'Information et de Communication à l'Ere Numérique*) of the CNAM (*Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers*).

In Research he works on analysis and evaluation of the intermediary networked organisations in social welfare, home medical care... with the approaches of representations and construction of a collective identity. He also works on construction of social logics around ICT (Information and Communication Technology) tools: Information Systems and Electronic Health Records (HER) ... and on Territorial Intelligence and Competitive Intelligence, dynamics of proximity (sustainable development), diagnosis of territory.

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