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Edith Archambault, Lionel Prouteau

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France: A large and diverse civil society faced with significant concerns

By Edith Archambault and Lionel Prouteau

Civil society overview

Historical context

In France, it is the 1901 Act on contracts of association that enshrined the freedom of association in law. Since then, the dynamic of civil society organisations is related to the evolution of the social, economic and political contexts. For example, introduction of paid holidays (in 1936-1937) encouraged the foundation of associations in the sports and leisure activities after the Second World War. From the 1960s onwards, the development of social security and the social legislation relating to disability stimulated the expansion of non-profit organisations in the health, social and welfare services. From the seventies, in conjunction with the development of the so-called new social movements, numerous associations were founded to champion causes as environment, feminism, the fight against social exclusion and so on (Archambault, 1996; Belorgey, 2000).

Today, CSOs are important providers of services in certain areas such as home care services and residential care homes for the disabled persons and for the elderly. They have a quasi-monopoly in the residential facilities for emergency cases. They provide the main part of sports services and they are prevalent in leisure, arts and culture activities. The bulk of CSOs are associations regulated under the 1901 act. There are far fewer CSOs that are foundations or endowment funds. Distributive foundations and endowment funds finance projects implemented by other organisations while operating foundations manage directly their activities with paid staff.

Civil society in numbers

In 2017, there were about 1,500,000 registered associations (Tchernonog and Prouteau, 2019). Only 159,000 of them, namely 16.6%, employed waged workers. Therefore, the vast majority of associations rely only on volunteers (Table 1). Approximately two thirds of associations are involved in recreational activities such as sports, culture and leisure. But this share is higher (70%) among associations that are staffed only by volunteers than among associations with paid employees (60%). The opposite is true for health and social services.

Table 1: Number of associations regulated under the 1901 Act in 2017 by field of activity

Field of activity	Associations only volunteer-staffed	Association with paid staff	Total
Sports	320,000	43,700	363,700
Leisure activities	307,700	12,600	320,300
Culture	305.700	38,600	344,300
Defence of causes and rights	163,000	9,300	172.300
Management of economic services and local development	32,600	7,000	39,600
Education, training and employment integration	36,700	11,600	48,300
Health and social services*	120,300	30,200	150,500
Humanitarian or charitable action	55,000	6,000	61,000
Total	1,341,000	159,000	1,500,000

** including residential nursing and care facilities*
Source: Tchernonog and Prouteau, 2019.

In 2018, there were 4,202 foundations and endowment funds (Observatoire de la philanthropie, 2019). Their number has been multiplied by almost four since 2001. The development of endowment funds explains a substantial part of this increase (1,651 in 2018). In 2017, 19% of foundations were operating and 81% were distributive foundations.

Regarding the fields of activity, in 2017, 24% of foundations were active in social services, 18% in health and medical research, 17% in arts and culture and 9% in higher education and continuing training. Endowment funds were relatively more active in arts and culture (27 %) than in social services (17%) or health and medical research (17%).

The economic dimension of CSOs

The economic power of CSOs can be grasped in terms of resources. In 2017, for associations regulated under the 1901 Act, these resources amounted to about €113 billion of which almost 90% was held by organisations with paid staff and the rest by associations only staffed by volunteers. Therefore, resources are very concentrated in a minority of associations. The origin of these resources differs depending on whether associations have employees or not (table 2).

Indeed, the resources of public origin (subsidies and contracts) account for almost the half of the total resources of associations with staff while this share is only one fifth for associations without employees. On the other hand, subscriptions amount to more than a quarter of the budgetary resources of only-staffed associations but only to 7% for those that have paid staff.

In addition, the level and structure of resources available to associations differ by field of activity. For example, in the sports field, 35% of the resources of associations came from subscriptions and 22% were of public origin but, in the education, formation and employment integration field, these shares were respectively 4% and 55%. Public funding is also very important in the health and social services.

Table 2. The structure of the resources of associations regulated under the 1901 Act in 2017

Nature of the budgetary resources	Organizations without waged employees	Organizations with waged employees	Total
Public subsidies	15%	21%	20%
Contracts with public bodies	5%	27%	24%
Fees and commercial sales	47%	41%	42%
Subscriptions	26%	7%	9%
Donations and sponsorship	7%	4%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Tchernonog and Prouteau, 2019.

Concerning paid labour, the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) put the number of employees in associations regulated under the 1901 Act at 1.85 million in 2015, which represented 8.1% of all French employees. Measured in terms of full-time equivalents (FTEs), the number of jobs was a little more than 1.57 million FTEs, namely 7.6% of all paid employment in France. There are not more recent official statistics on employment in associations but partial data from other sources suggest that the current state of affairs is roughly the same. In terms of added value, the contribution of associations to Gross Domestic Product is estimated at 3.3% (Tchernonog and Prouteau, 2019).

The economic power of foundations and endowment funds is significantly lower than that of associations despite their strong growth since 2013. In 2018, there were 127,000 employees in these types of CSOs. In 2017, the total amount of expenditure was €10 billion euros for the foundations and from 220 to 270 million euros for the endowment funds (Observatoire de la philanthropie, 2019). That same year, the former had €26.5 billion in assets and the endowment funds had from 1.3 to 1.6 billion. These assets are highly concentrated since 3% of foundations had 62% of total assets. The same is true for expenses. Indeed, operating foundations accounted for 75% of total expenses. 47% of foundation expenses were allocated to health and medical care and 29% to social services.

With regard to resources, there was a substantial difference between operating foundations and the distributive ones. Up to 67% of the resources of the former came from public funding (subsidies and contracts) while 72% of the resources of the latter derived from private donations. Endowment funds were also largely based on private donations (63%).

Association membership and volunteering

From a national survey conducted in 2017, the rate of individual membership of associations was estimated at 48% of the population aged 18 and over (Prouteau, 2020). This equates to more than 24 million members. This rate of membership was fairly stable over the last 20 years.

The same survey showed that 43% of respondents volunteered in organisations the vast majority of which were associations. However, volunteers were not always members of associations in

which they worked for free. Such a rate of participation equates to a little less than 22 million volunteers (Prouteau, 2020). Unlike the rate of membership, the rate of participation in voluntary work has increased in the last decades. If, for convenience's sake, FTE is taken as the unit of measurement, the total volume of voluntary work in 2017 was estimated to be between 1,320,000 and 1,450,000 FTEs, the overwhelming majority of which was carried out in associations (between 1,275,000 and 1,410,000 FTEs). Calculated by field of activity, the three fields of a recreational nature (sport, arts and culture and leisure activities) accounted for 43% of the total volume of time given (Table 3). Social, humanitarian and charitable activity accounted for more than a quarter and the defence of rights, causes and interests for almost one fifth.

Table 3. Distribution of the volume of voluntary work by field of activity (%)

Field of activity	Volume of voluntary work
Arts and culture	10.5%
Sports	20.2%
Leisure activities	12.2%
Social – humanitarian and charitable activity	28.1%
Health	3.5%
Defence of causes, rights and interests	17.9%
Education and training	5.1%
Other	2.5%
Total	100.0%

Source: Prouteau, 2018.

The only form of volunteering measured here is that done within an organization, that is to say formal volunteering. There are no precise statistics concerning informal volunteering whose contribution to civil society is not negligible.

Legal framework and political conditions

Legal status of CSOs

To found an association regulated under the 1901 act, neither administrative authorisation nor declaration is required. The act distinguishes three types of associations. The first comprises the unregistered associations that are perfectly legal but have no legal capacity. The second type consists of registered associations. They have a limited legal capacity. In particular, their assets are restricted to the buildings that are strictly necessary to fulfil the purpose for which they have been founded. They cannot receive donations or bequests. The third type is made up of the so-called public-interest associations. They are recognised as such by public authorities after a lengthy administrative process. They have an extended legal capacity and can receive donations and bequests but they are subject to controls and requirements from the public authorities.

Partner relationships between associations and public authorities can take different forms. For example, associations can be approved. An approval is a unilateral measure taken by the public

authorities when they want to maintain special relations with the organisations concerned by this measure. These latter have to meet certain conditions, particularly relating to their internal operations. Public service delegation contract can be another form of public non-profits relationship: CSOs are given authority to carry out a civil service function or to run a public service. This type of partnership is frequent at local level.

With respect to foundations, for most of the twentieth century there were only a few of them in France unlike in other European countries such as Germany, Sweden, Denmark or UK (Archambault et al., 1999; Archambault, 2003, 2020). It was not until 1987 that foundations were given a legal definition. Nevertheless, over the last 20 years, public authorities have supported their development by several legislative measures. Today, there are three general forms of foundation and four specialized forms. Among general forms, public utility foundations are the oldest. Their establishment is long, complicated and requires state authorisation although this establishment process has been simplified by the 2003 Patronage Act. The corporate foundation is the second form: introduced in 1990, it may be used by companies for their sponsorship and charitable actions. The third form is the sheltered foundation that does not have a legal status distinct from the organizations that shelter it, which may be another or even a public institution (such as the *Institut de France*). The four specialized forms of foundations are: scientific cooperation foundations, partnership foundations, university foundations and hospital foundations.

Endowments funds were established by law in 2008. These are non-profit organisations that receive resources given to them freely and irrevocably to serve purposes of general interest. They are easier to set up than foundations and require no prior authorisation from any authority whatsoever.

Associations regulated under the 1901 Act and foundations are exempted from business taxes under the following conditions. These organisations have to be really non-profit distributing. They must not be in competition with for-profit enterprises. They must not provide the same product with the same price and with the same publicity than for-profits. With respect to tax incentives for donors' contribution, France has a particularly generous system but its efficiency is debatable (Fack and Landais, 2010).

Political conditions

In the last twenty years, CSOs have experienced serious changes in the relations with the state and the mode of public financing. The decentralization of public action that began in the early 1980s has reinforced since that time, with new competences transferred from central government to lower-level authorities. The latter have become increasingly important financial partners of CSOs. It is especially the case of the departments that have inherited the responsibility of social action. Their share in the public funding of CSOs has increased while the share of central Government has decreased.

The consequences of decentralisation on relations between the public authorities and CSOs are ambivalent. On the one hand, the greater proximity between these partners may lead to the strengthening of participatory democracy promoted by CSOs (Demoustier, 2005). On the other hand, however, these close links may be used by local public authorities to subject CSOs to a close

watch that restrict the autonomy of the latter, with the risk that they are considered as downright instruments, that is to say only as service providers. This risk of instrumentalisation has increased with the changes in the modes of public funding. Indeed, in line with the guidelines advocated by the New Public Management movement and also as result of EU legislation on state aid and competition, the public authorities have favoured contracts over subsidies as source of funding for CSOs. The share of subsidies in public funding for CSOs decreased from 66% in 2005 to 45% in 2017 (Tchernonog and Prouteau, 2019). In the same time, the growth rate of total public funding was slowing down, which leads CSOs to search new resources.

Such a context has increased the competition for access to public or private resources between CSOs as well as between them and for-profit enterprises which are now operating in certain areas of activity that were traditionally the preserves of non-profits, for instance home care services. In parallel, public regulation has been tightened in terms of procedural requirements, dashboards, reporting systems and evaluation of projects and outcomes. This is especially true in the social and medico-social area. Because the criteria of efficiency on which this public regulation is based are interpreted through the prism of those in force in the for-profit sector, CSOs are incited to import management tools from that sector. So, they are exposed to the risk of 'managerialism' (Avare and Sponem, 2003).

Several initiatives of the public authorities have contributed to modify the political environment of CSOs. The NOTRe Act adopted in 2015 has changed the borders of the regions. From now onwards each of the local governments has fields of intervention assigned by the law[1].

At the end of 2017, Government decided to dramatically reduce the number of subsidized jobs. These contracts are aimed to make easier the social and vocational integration of people furthest removed from the labour market. CSOs are traditionally significant users of such jobs.

At a more general level, several recent pieces of legislation have led CSOs to ponder about the future of their socio-economic model. In 2014, the social and solidarity economy act was passed by Parliament. In France, the popular concept of social economy refers to organisations that adopt certain principles of functioning. In concrete terms, until the 2014 act, social economy was made up of associations regulated under the 1901 act, cooperatives, mutual societies and foundations. The 2014 act widened the scope of this sector by adding commercial companies that pursue an objective of social utility and meet certain conditions (CNCRES, 2014). In 2019 the Pact act was adopted. It concerned the growth and transformation of companies. Among other things, this act created a special status (the so-called "Société à mission") that companies may adopt if they pursue one or more social or environmental objectives.

Although these new legislative measures pertaining to social entrepreneurship are only applicable to companies that meet particular requirements, they are perceived by CSOs as a threat for their identity because they blur the boundaries between the for-profit sector and the non-profit one (Haut conseil de la vie associative, 2019; Bidet et al., 2019).

[1] This law enlarges the regions to a more comparable size to the European and especially German ones. The competences of the 13 new regions are increased.

In recent years, Government largely neglected the role of intermediary bodies, including CSOs. Such a situation explains partially that certain sections of the population express their discontent through spontaneous social movement. This was particularly the case with the “yellow jackets” movement in winter 2018-2019.

Financial challenges and uneasy political relationships swept away by covid-19

France according to social origins theory belonged to the statist pattern of civil society over 19th and first half of 20th century, but after WW2 its civil society grew faster and accelerated in the 1980s because of a closer relationship with government at all levels and now France has caught up the welfare partnership pattern, the club of western European countries, in a rather high position (Salamon et al., 2017). However, the associated growth in employment has stopped since the 2007 economic crisis while foundations stepped into the breach thanks to a favourable 2003 law.

Therefore, the interviews deal with these two kinds of organisations, but they were done in strange conditions. Leaders of both types of CSOs were called by phone during the lockdown from March 23 till April 10, 2020, thus the verbatim record is approximate and the initial sample was biased because many CSOs were closed without a following connection. All of the answering interviewees have talked of their unprecedented situation facing confinement as well as their past challenges. Therefore, CSOs position during covid-19 pandemic is an additional issue to the challenges they have met over the two or three past years.

Declining and change in public financing are the main issues of past years

In 2018 and 2019, government support at national, regional and municipal levels continued to decline and had differential impacts on associations according to their activity. Grassroots voluntary associations are not really concerned. Education, health and social services large CSOs, the core of welfare partnership, were protected by multi-annual contracts, thus their public funding depends on their activity. However public funding is often late and that means cash-flow problems as CSOs have a difficult access to bank loans due to their low guarantees. In opposition sports, culture, advocacy, human rights and small social CSOs were strongly impacted by the reduction of subsidies. In addition to public funding retrenchment, the long-term trend to the replacement of grants by competitive bidding contracts eliminates small associations that cannot tender because of the lack of qualified staff. Operating foundations are dependent on public money like associations in the same field and distributing foundations are independent. Among distributing foundations, the situation of corporate foundations is specific:

> “our quasi unique source of revenue is the annual grant of our founding corporation, same during five years. But its renewal depends on expected prosperity of our founder and percentage of grant’s tax deducibility that might be reduced.” (Interview FR11)

Human resources and governance challenges

Employment in associations was slightly declining in the past two years while it was growing from 1950 to 2008 and steady since this date. In opposition, employment in foundations grew fast: foundations multiply and some large fundraising associations became foundations as well.

> “there is no problem to hire employees because our mission makes sense to younger people, the bulk of our staff; but the turn-over is high because our wages are lower than the labour market thus the best trained are leaving.” (Interview FR1)

Volunteering has grown continuously since its first measurement in 1990. Young volunteers are more numerous than one decade ago, but they are unstable because of professional or family

mobility (Interview FR3). At the opposite, volunteer boards may be mainly composed of elderly, often founders of small CSOs created a few decades ago: it is the case for a family foundation (Interview FR 12) and a voluntary association (Interview FR 6), thus the renewal of their governance is their main challenge. For larger associations, the heavy burden of the chair person and its legal liability can be an obstacle to find an active person in replacement of the former president and even retirees are reluctant to handle such a workload.

Unfavourable political and destabilizing social changes

In 2017, one of the first decisions of Macron's government was to suppress subsidized jobs, considered ineffective to enable the long term unemployed to join the mainstream labour market. As 130 000 subsidized jobs took place in associations, paid mainly by government, their progressive loss impacted especially sports and social CSOs:

> "in 2018, we have lost three well trained subsidized jobs. It was impossible to replace them by volunteers and we cannot pay qualified employees with diploma. In addition, school rhythms have changed with the change of government. Therefore, we reduced our peri-school sailing activities." (Interview FR3)

The reduction of the wealth tax base which gives a tax exemption of 75% of donations was followed in 2018 by reduced donations of the richest donors up to 50%.

Another mid-term political change is the implementation of 2015 NOTRe Act. For CSOs, it means changing and more distant interlocutors to build new partnerships. For national federations, this law implies a loss of their political role to their regional empowered counterparts (Interview FR10).

Social CSOs highlight a change among the most vulnerable population:

> "our beneficiaries are younger, more single, they are more often migrants or refugees, they come less from Eastern Europe and more from sub-Saharan Africa, they are more often Muslim. This change is sometimes difficult for older volunteers, especially if the persons who are welcomed don't speak French." (Interview FR4)

However, all these mid-term challenges were dominated in interviews by coronavirus pandemic, the confinement obligation and forecasted consequences for the asked CSO and civil society at large.

Very different situations of CSOs during lockdown and the challenge of volunteers and employees

During nearly two months from March 17 till May 11, most CSOs were closed, as well as enterprises the activities of which were considered as "non-essential". Those running schools and third education establishments had to close in the same time as public schools and universities. However, charitable organisations offering food and services to the homeless and other vulnerable populations were considered as essential activities such as nursing homes (EHPAD[2]) and other residential care services for persons in situation of handicap, familial or social difficulty or refugees as well. These CSOs with accommodation continued to work night and day, with a reduced staff and no or few protections for their employees and residents in the first weeks. In

[2] Establishment for dependent elderly.

EHPAD, deaths were awfully numerous during confinement, among residents mainly, but much fewer in other establishments where residents are younger.

Volunteers of all CSOs confined, thus those providing food and services to the needy[3] did a selective call to young or mid-age volunteers for meals and food distribution or shopping for seniors. Those volunteers were either a host of newcomers, previous volunteers in culture, sports and recreation associations or students whose schools and universities were closed.

Confined employees might be protected by partial unemployment[4] in sports, recreation, training, local development, social services without accommodation CSOs and WISEs[5] as well:

> "our growing association collects, repairs and sells waste textile items and it is also a WISE to train 43 long-term unemployed to environment activities. We opened a subsidiary in another town on March 9 and it was shut eight days later with the lockdown! Thus, I asked the benefit of partial unemployment for all the staff, temporary and permanent as well." (Interview FR13)

But in performing arts associations hit by the cancellation of summer festivals, short labour contracts were over and employees were unemployed often without any benefit.

Most executives of all kind of CSOs, teachers of education CSOs, think tanks and distributive foundations staff are teleworking at home. Websites of advocacy organisations and federations give up-to-date information. In some foundations board meetings were held by teleconference to quickly award grants to selected associations (Interview FR12). Annual general meetings of associations, usually in Spring, may have taken place under the same conditions, with digital votes (Interview FR9).

Of course, for the staff of CSOs providing food and shelter to population in need, this is more work than usual and volunteers are welcome.

> "there is a specific problem of homeless people; most of them have been temporarily housed in deserted hotels. But many are totally destitute because they usually are living from begging or moonlighting. Thus, we keep open with reduced hours some services such as free laundromats and luggage storage in addition to meals distribution. However, they miss the association welcoming them every day, a place of socialisation and advocacy for their rights, run by elderly volunteers who can participate no longer." (Interview FR7)

In residential care services for the elderly and disabled and other social services with accommodation, it was also more work than usual because the staff was partly absent. Visits were forbidden at the beginning of confinement and in case of contamination, all residents were confined in their room. These conditions were eased after a few weeks. Private non-profit hospitals have also provided submerged public hospitals with their resuscitation beds.

[3] Activity considered as essential.

[4] Partial unemployment means that you cannot work for external reasons (e.g., freezing for construction workers; in this case the company continues to pay its employee almost completely). In the case of covid-19, State replaces employers to pay the wages during lockdown.

[5] Work Integration Social Enterprises.

To conclude, CSOs are in very different positions according to their main activity. They forecast a diminution in resources, funding and capacities to continue to offer their services. They fear a deep economic crisis after confinement and a substantial loss in financial support of government and philanthropy as well.

Solutions: innovative solutions to mid-term and current problems

Resilience and adaptability to diverse population and moving circumstances are recognised characteristics of associations. Therefore, they found more or less innovative solutions to their mid-term financial, human resource and political problems. Some of them were experimented previously and some were really new. Of course, when facing covid-19 pandemic it was really necessary to be innovative to address an unprecedented situation and a humanitarian disaster. Social distancing is especially difficult in warm and friendly organisations, however it was quickly adopted.

Facing public funding retrenchment, a rise and diversification of private resources

As the reduction of subsidies and the rise of public procurement through tenders began in the years 2000 through influence of New public management, CSOs have learned to bid and sometimes to share the tenders:

> "there are three nautical clubs in our large seaside town; all are associations. We propose initiation activities for school age municipal tenders; the two other clubs bid for college and high school age tenders. And we usually win!" (Interview FR3)

Facing the reduction of public funding, most CSOs tried to increase their private resources and to diversify them. Raising membership dues is the first movement for small and middle-sized organisations especially in the fields of culture, sports and recreation, environment and local development. To balance the consequences of this rise for disadvantaged families, they can adopt a variable rate based on household taxable income. Raising the commercial part of resources is another way: an association increases the proportion of direct second-hand sales, more profitable than selling to recovery partners (Interview FR13). Other CSOs ask for foundations grants or awards (Interviews FR1, FR7, FR14) with the result that foundations see their bureaucracy increase with the influx of grant applications and have difficulty to follow up the awarded grants (Interview FR11).

> "since the beginning of our scientific cooperation foundation, devoted to inquiry-based science education methods for school age, we have benefited of public grants up to nearly 100%. In 2018, the main grant was stopped and we obtained 33% of our budget from some large corporate foundations last year. The growing international dissemination of our activity was an opportunity to get grants from interested large European and American foundations such as Siemens foundation and the Smithsonian Institute." (Interview FR14)

To cope with cash flow difficulties, CSOs must raise their own funds by maintaining their surpluses (Interview FR1). According to a recent survey[6], the average cash-flow of associations covers three

[6]Le Mouvement associatif, Covid-19 et associations : Du diagnostic aux mesures d'urgence, 20 avril 2020, https://lemouvementassociatif.org/covid-19-associations-du-diagnostic-aux-mesures-durgences/ accessed May 2020

months of their activity. It is higher in distributive foundations: two years of activity for example in a familial foundation that subsidises and monitors five small associations, mainly in the Third World and wants to keep the regularity of its grants whatever the changes in its income (Interview FR12). Sheltered foundations are protected from cash risk by the sheltering foundation that usually invests their cash: they may also use short-term loans between sheltered foundations (Interview FR8).

If these solutions are insufficient, CSOs must reduce or defer some activities or programmes to reduce their costs. As they are labour-using industries, they prefer to avoid firing full-time employees and they suppress temporary staff such as interns or short-term contracts (Interview FR1).

Retention of employees and volunteers and rejuvenation of governance

To cope with human resources issues, when raising wages is difficult if CSOs are short of money, they have to retain their employees by pleasant work conditions and interesting tasks and more responsibilities (Melnik and al, 2010). If CEOs and other executives leave the organisations to get more money or advancement in their career, they are often hired by a larger CSO in the same field; therefore, the two organisations can benefit from this exchange of skills and relationships Associations that hired a large part of their employees in the years after 1980 and the first decentralization act must attract young people to replace the 700,000 retirees in coming years: there are now in universities and other third education establishments many specialized curricula in management of non-profit organisations or social and solidarity economy enterprises

To retain volunteers, working conditions and conviviality as well are important. It is also crucial to transform occasional volunteers into regular volunteers. Delegating more responsibility and avoiding routine tasks is one way. A CSO proposes an agreement of mutual commitment between volunteers and association, but some volunteers don't sign this agreement because it is too similar to an employment contract (Interview FR13).

Another issue is the rejuvenation of the board or bureau of associations.

> "our voluntary association has replaced a preceding one after its dissolution, which was asleep because its president and treasurer were too old. We have the same mission of developing education and health facilities in two villages in Madagascar. It was thirteen years ago and now we are old. Maybe we have to perform hara-kiri to be replaced by a younger association!" (Interview FR6)

Of course, that radical solution is easy because of the bureaucratic lightness and near zero cost of creating an association regulated by 1901 Act. The life cycle of associations and their renewal has to be used: 70 000 associations are created every year and only half survive five years later; these new associations embody the concerns of young people to a large extent. The ephemeral nature of associations is indeed a quality which allows them to adapt to social change (Bloch-Lainé,1994). To lighten the burden on the president of large organizations, some CSOs suggested diversifying the skills of board members and delegating more responsibilities or evoke a collective presidency of two or three persons in fruitful cooperation (Interviews FR10, FR2).

Pooling the political changes risks through networking and lobbying

Territorial poles of economic cooperation (PTCE) appeared in the last decade. They are groupings, in a given territory, of social and solidarity organisations associated with socially responsible small and medium enterprises and university research teams:

> "in a deserted and dilapidated 14th Century monastery, our association devoted to the preservation of heritage decided to rebuild these beautiful ruins in partnership with a regional public agency that founds a WISE to train young unemployed with no skills to heritage rehabilitation. In the rebuilt parts of the monastery artists are hosted in residence and shows are regularly provided to the public especially in Summer. In addition, we can rent some parts of the monastery for professional and familial events. The local construction small and medium enterprises (SME) working on restoration site often hire interns or trained unemployed. It is a win-win project and a real attraction for tourists in our Northern region." (Interview FR2).

Federations of CSOs by sector of activity or by legal form have existed for many decades to enter into relations with public authorities at various levels and influence their policies. They have a coordination function as well (Interview FR10). Intertwining associations dealing with the same vulnerable population to negotiate lasting relationships with public funders is another innovating solution:

> "Our CSO provides breakfasts and recreation for the homeless. It is a friendly place thanks to some thirty rather old volunteers. Cultural activities, shows, movies, visits of museums are proposed to the most interested. A social worker helps them two times a week. Three years ago, we have remarked that they had to carry everywhere their poor belongings and we decided recently to organise in the same street luggage storage in a disused public day-care centre given by the municipality and rehabilitated at its own expense. It is now open from 7 to 9 am and pm and it is run only by new volunteers, younger, on their pre-work and post-work time. There is storage for 55 persons' belongings and it is full. We receive a small but regular subsidy from the municipality" (Interviews FR7 and FR8)

To cope with the diminution of high donations linked to the diminution of wealth tax and therefore of the number and level of donations deducible from this tax, foundations made personal calls to major donors to ask them to keep the same level of donations as before the change. Therefore, donations went up in 2019 (Interview FR12).

Of course, the lockdown challenges were partially solved by the end of confinement obligation. However, the future of civil society depends on the duration of the solidarity movement that appeared during these two months and of the depth of the subsequent economic and social crisis.

Conclusion

Though French civil society was repressed during most part of 19th Century, it is now of the same order of magnitude as its European neighbours' ones. Its vibrant growth is particularly evidenced by the sharp increase in the number of associations founded each year, between about 65,000 and 70,000, and the expansion of voluntary work. This vitality of civil society deserves to be

emphasized in a country where the state has long been regarded as an omnipotent institution in defining the general interest and providing public goods. However, such a situation should not conceal some questions as to the future of civil society. These questions pertain to three dimensions of civil society, namely the economic, social and civic-political dimensions.

From an economic point of view, it has been noted in this chapter that CSOs, essentially those with paid staff, play an important role of service providers in certain fields of activity. Some challenges they face have been highlighted: increased competition for financial resources, marketisation of these resources and trend towards managerialism that favours an institutional isomorphism and finally concern about the future of their socioeconomic model as well as their "raison d'être". Such challenges explain that, unlike volunteer associations, the number of associations with employees no longer increases.

Will these challenges intensify in the near future? Will the public policy toward CSOs change? In view of the demographic, social and economic perspectives, the needs that CSOs can meet are numerous: local services and retirement homes for an increasing ageing population; day-care, nursery schools, summer camps and other facilities for children; the rise of poverty and unemployment levels after the Covid-19 crisis; improvement of the resilience of local territories the necessity of which has been stressed during the Covid-19 crisis To cope with these needs, CSOs action in cooperation with public authorities is particularly adapted and for this purpose the former can take advantage of two opportunities. The first one is the recent growth of foundations after two favourable laws; it affords venture money and monitoring for innovative associations that want to experiment new services or participative social policies. The second and main opportunity is the 2014 Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) Act; the ambition of this law is to help solidarity among SSE organisations of different legal status, cooperatives, mutual societies, associations and foundations, to facilitate a scaling up of the whole SSE. It affords them more public money as well for competitive investment projects. And finally, it intends to promote a more diverse economy than the financially driven capitalism. Such SSE laws are currently disseminated all over the world (Caire and Tadjudje, 2019).

With respect to the social role of civil society, the extensive network of CSOs, particularly small grassroots associations, offers numerous opportunities for people to sustain a rich sociability of everyday life. As a result, it might be expected that this social capital leads to a high level of collective trust and social cohesion. However, in this respect, France is in a rather paradoxical situation. Indeed, despite its large network of associations, the level of collective trust is low compared with its European neighbours' ones as several surveys show. For example, from the most recent European Value Study survey, it appears that less than 30% of French respondents trust others compared with three fourths of respondents in Denmark and Norway, and between, 40% and 50% in Germany, United Kingdom, Spain or Austria[7]. French society is fragmented. Fourquet (2019) refers to an archipelago-type structure". The causes of such a fragmentation are multiple and its reduction cannot be an issue for civil society alone. Nevertheless, CSOs can help to tackle this significant problem, for example, by widening the recruitment base of their members.

[7] Galland O. and Grunberg G. (2020), « La France en manque de confiance, déprime », *Slate.fr*, http://www.slate.fr/story/190929/grande-deprime-francais-exception-confiance-interpersonnelle-defiance-institutions (accessed 21 June 2020). See also (Algan et al., 2019).

Indeed, too often, participation in associations is socially selective. The higher the level of economic and cultural capital is, the higher the rate of membership.

Regarding the civic and political dimension of civil society, CSOs play a role in both the local and national public spheres. They advocate legislative measures to promote their causes. So, the fight of feminist associations advocacy incited government to raise the number of women in Parliament and other elected assemblies and recommend more women in corporations boards during the two last decades and less gender difference in wages. If the 2013 "marriage for all" Act, including homosexual people, was passed, it is thanks to the LGBT movement's advocacy and Gay Prides for years. Human Rights CSOs have to deal with the defence of new rights such as the right of the whistle-blowers who denounce bad corporate behaviours or tax-havens. The right of privacy against intrusion of web giants in their personal data is another issue. Robotics and artificial intelligence will also give rise to new human rights to promote and advocate.

However, despite such an activism, the role attributed to civil society in the French democratic life remains limited while this country experiences a crisis of trust in democracy. This crisis, probably more serious than for its European neighbours, concerns the representative political system. It takes the form of increasing abstention rates in elections and a high degree of mistrust of political institutions, politicians and elected representatives excepted mayors and elected municipal officials. A recent poll finds that 70% of respondents do not trust government, 65% National Assembly, 62% the Senate[8]. These rates are higher than those observed in UK and Germany. More worrying, more 4 out of 10 respondents consider that in democracy no progress is made and it would be better less democracy but more efficiency. This state of affairs is fraught with danger for democracy and civil society. The solution to this crisis implies more participatory and deliberative democracy, which leads to put more emphasis on the role of civil society and its organisations.

[8]Sciences Po – Cevipof, *En qu(o)i les Français ont-ils confiance aujourd'hui ?* Le baromètre de la confiance politique – Vague 11 - https://www.google.fr/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjim5fWru3pAhWO3oUKHaBlCGAQFjAAegQIARAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.sciencespo.fr%2Fcevipof%2Ffr%2Fcontent%2Fle-barometre-de-la-confiance-politique&usg=AOvVaw1TaQesr6wmrsBbggC_L5f7 (accessed 21 June 2020).

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List of interviews

Interview FR1: National think tank, medium association, chair person

Interview FR2: Local culture and Heritage preservation association, large, deputy director

Interview FR3: Local sport association, medium, chair person

Interview FR4: National social services, faith-based association, large, board member

Interview FR5: National and international Public utility foundation, large, board member

Interview FR6: Third world development, voluntary association, small, chair person

Interview FR7: Local day reception for the homeless, voluntary association, small, chair person

Interview FR8: Local social service voluntary association, small, founder and chair person

Interview FR9: National Support to fundraising CSOs association, medium, CEO

Interview FR10: National Federation of health and social CSOs, medium, board member

Interview FR11: National corporate foundation, medium, chair person

Interview FR12: Family foundation, sheltered by FR5, small, chair person

Interview FR13: Environment association and WISE, large, chair person

Interview FR14: National and International scientific education foundation, large, founder president

Interview FR15: National multipurpose grant-making foundation, large, board member