Social Ties

**A) Failure or dysfunction of institutions responsible for social integration!**

The development of individualism that has accompanied modern society has therefore privileged the values ​​of freedom and work. Since the 1970s, we have seen many ways of doing things, and as Durkheim foresaw, the organic solidarity of our modern society cannot be established and many people are affected by anomie. A loss of reference point and a loosening of the social bond that institutions weakened by the crisis no longer seem able to compensate for.

1**) The labor crisis**

The economy has made work the foundation of society, the individual recognizes himself through his professional activity. And during the XXth century, if the company is often a place of conflict, the strong separation between bosses and workers allows a real integration. Workers display their identity thanks to unions that defend their interests ... From the 1970s, significant changes affected employment. First, we are witnessing a significant drop in industrial jobs which grouped workers around a strong collective conscience ... The globalization of the economy requires an increasing diversification of production. We are now looking for new methods. While these may seem favorable to employees (job rotation, job enrichment, versatility, etc.), they are based on greater flexibility.

Precarious jobs follow permanent contracts, the employee is isolated, cut off from the system. Compared to all employees in a position considered stable, the number of precarious jobs remains low. However, their sharp increase in recent years is indicative of the willingness of companies to face international competition. The fact remains that this type of job cannot in any case allow good integration of individuals into work. Employees in precarious situations are subject to labor market competition and uncertainty. They live most of the time in a situation of insecurity which does not allow them to participate fully in social exchange even if only at the level of the enterprise. They fail to form a social identity at work, essential for the lasting creation of social ties.

Finally ..., these new working methods have been accompanied by a sharp increase in unemployment. The job crisis has made them victims that society cannot ignore.

**2) The crisis of the welfare state**

Durkheim, who sees the state as an institution responsible for guaranteeing social cohesion, is not mistaken when he doubts its effectiveness in a society marked by individualism. Social protection, based on the principle of solidarity, was designed for a period of strong growth. During the “Thirty Glorious Years” it fulfilled its role perfectly, ensuring sufficient income and strong social cohesion for the majority of individuals. But today, the weakness of growth no longer allows a system based largely on the wage bill to fulfill its mission. If the state no longer fulfills its role, the individual will feel isolated, unstructured, left to fend for himself.

3) Changes in the family

Among the traditional institutions, which ensured cohesion and social ties, the family has undergone many transformations over the past thirty years. For Durkheim, the family allows for strong integration, the establishment and consolidation of social ties. The family must reduce anomy and suicide. Traditionally, the family was the socialization par excellence. The individual formed his identity there.

Until the 1970s, it fully fulfilled its role; it was the place, with work, where social relationships were formed. These family models will then be turned upside down ... Our society therefore seems to reflect an image of the individualized and fragmented family, marked by a breakdown in social ties.

**4) The place of religion**

In order for the collective conscience to be fully expressed, Durkheim calls upon another institution, the Church, which makes it possible to subdue the individual conscience. However, like many other sociologists, he observes the decline of religion in favor of a scientific conception of the world. Consequently, the individual frees himself from the collective constraint imposed by the Church; he will only draw from it the few elements necessary for the meaning he intends to give to his life. More freedom of choice is offered, but for some, it is too much freedom that leaves them unattached.

**B) New forms of solidarity**

Contrary to what Durkheim thought, mechanical solidarity has not completely disappeared from our modern societies as can still be seen from the persistence of nationalist movements around the world. More broadly, the "weight" of too much freedom has prompted individuals to seek new forms of solidarity. Today, the individual tends to organize himself again into a group united by a strong collective consciousness.

**1) New social movements**

Feminist movements, environmental movements, etc. are built around a community of interest and point of view.

2) The rise of volunteering and the voluntary sector

We are witnessing a return to community spirit to help combat the isolation of individuals (eg neighborhood associations, restaurants of the heart, the Red Cross, etc.).

3) The creation of mutual aid networks dominated by non-commercial exchange

The emergence of these networks clearly shows that exchange and mutual aid constitute means of recreating social ties between individuals by escaping the traditional commercial link where any exchange supposes a counterpart in money. The family is an important place of exchange and non-market production through DIY (do-it-yourself), or moving aids, etc.

However, the family is no longer the exclusive location for these mutual aid. Indeed, individuals can come together locally to exchange household services, repairs, courses, etc. in order to create links between them. This is called a SEL (Local Exchange System). It is not a system totally disconnected from the economy since it works with a currency (eg "grain" or "pebble") whose only role is to allow the exchange of goods and services .

4) Traditional institutions that adapt ... and whose role must be rethought ...

- The revival of the family ... Sociological studies have shown the importance of kinship ties, the involvement of grandparents thanks to the lengthening of life and the increase in pensions, family solidarity towards young people entering later on the job market or affected by unemployment.

- "New" communities of believers ... the emergence of parallel beliefs (spiritualism, New-Age, sects, etc.) shows the desire of individuals to become attached to a new conception of the world.

- Transforming work… We have seen, with the crisis of the 1970s and the globalization of the economy, work has changed form; but because it continues to create social ties, it must be preserved and its role strengthened. First of all, within the company, it cannot be denied that the particular interest of the individual drives his actions. However, the work requires associating with others to complete a project. In so doing, it leads to forming bonds of solidarity with others.

- What role for the state?

If the State actively participates in employment policies, notably through RTT, it must also remain present in the fight against exclusion. Since the end of the 1980s, we have witnessed the development of integration policies, promoting the care and recognition of the excluded. We have developed new experiences often in collaboration with the local, such as Neighborhood Social Development (NSD) or Priority Education Zones (PEZ). In addition, the creation of the Interministerial Delegation to the City (IDC) in 1988 and of a ministry of the city in 1991, allowed a better coherence of the whole of the devices.

The priority given to integration was also affirmed with the introduction of the Minimum Integration Income (MII). Obtaining the RMI is however subject to participation in the proposed integration activities. However, most of them fail to get out of their situation permanently. The implementation of the RMI, like the integration policy as a whole, has the advantage of favoring the local aspect. But it is only an accompaniment, the will being to empower the individual in the search for better social integration to allow social ties to be established.

The welfare state then becomes a partner state which, through intermediary groups, communities, associations but also traditional institutions such as the family, aims to preserve social cohesion and to constitute again, in a period marked by exclusion, of the social bond.

These reflections on a new role for the State lead some people to rethink protection through the idea of ​​a universal allowance. It would be a minimum income paid to all, sufficient to live but relatively low to continue to appreciate the economic and social usefulness of work.

Anyway, the multiple reactions to the question of exclusion: Should work be at the heart of the social bond? Wouldn't the political bond be more important to generate social bond? Doesn't society hold together first because individuals all decide together on the rules that govern their life in society, that is to say the Constitution, the laws, how democracy works? In other words, is political citizenship more important than economic citizenship ??!