

Bridge-Builder

BB#5, Dec. 2013

'THE COMMON GOOD AND THE ECONOMICS: NATURE AND SOCIETY'

A BRIDGE-BUILDER: Ioan Negrutiu, France | Steve Szeghi, USA

A THINKER: Raymond Makewell, UK and Australia

A PRACTITIONER: André Micoud, France

INTRODUCTION: Claire Brossaud, France

NEWS: Anthony Werner, UK | Ian Mason, UK | Alexandre Rojey, France



COMMON GOOD FORUM
Global & Local Bridge-Builder

EDITORIAL

By Ms Violaine HACKER
Common Good Forum



Violaine HACKER
Common Good Forum

The central question in this *Bridge-Builder #5* is: how a group of principals who are in an interdependent situation can organize and govern themselves to obtain continuing joint benefits when all face temptations to free-ride, shirk, or otherwise act opportunistically (see notably the introduction of Claire Brossaud). The Nobel Prize Pr Elinor Ostrom already insisted that each of these situations must be evaluated on its own terms. Indeed she delineated a set of eight “design principles” common to each of the cases (clearly defined boundaries, monitors who are either resource users or accountable to them, graduated sanctions, and mechanisms dominated by the users themselves to resolve conflicts and to alter the rules). So, understanding the process of the common good supposes not to overly generalized theories of collective action, particularly when used ‘metaphorically’ as the foundation for public policy as the three dominant models — the tragedy of the commons, the prisoners’s dilemma, and the logic of collective action — did.

People are far more complex! As Pr Steve Szeghi explains, this means « *yearnings dwell in the deep recesses of the human soul that are beyond quantification and rational calculation. (...) Contrary to theory, people do not know what they want* »... and particularly in an age of mass media dominated by sophisticated and subliminal forms of soft power. On top of it, as explains Raymond Makewell, when civilizations meet, new ideas can have profound economic and social consequences for the future generations. See in particular his interesting story of the Christian missionaries at the end of the 6th Century and therefore the concept of Land in Britain. This very important notion of Land is also promoted by our correspondants from the United Kingdom: Anthony Werner and Ian Mason. So what means the concept of the Common Good ? I like Steve Szeghi’s clear point of view: ‘ *What is valuable to people lies between them, in relationship rather than the separable benefits accruing of the human heart*’. That’s why the philosophy of the common good (designed by Aristotle for instance) has to be included in the analysis of the governance of the commons.

Therefore I would like to thank very much indeed the contributors of this ‘Bridge-Builder’ who helped demonstrate that, contrary to standard economics, we need reflection on what people desire and why. The river (in particular the French Rhône) is an excellent case of study, explained by André Micoud. Read also the book of Alexandre Rojey dealing both with environmental issues and energy as Commons, and cultural and national preferences. Indeed security and sovereignty issues, conflicts and geo-politics depends on natural resources. Besides, as explains Pr Ioan Negrutiu, ‘*the coordinated and integrated management of natural resources at the regional scale is likely to become an important political issue in the short run*’. Thus ‘*the dominant economic thinking has a serious handicap, namely the incapacity to put the economy within the limits of the biosphere*’. The ambition of the Institute Michel Serres is to foster a participative, proactive civil society acting to manage human activities while meeting the specific territorial potential and resource capacities and ensure a fair re-allocation of such resources according to fundamental social needs and coherent long term public good policies... Oh! That is both the philosophy of the common good and the ability to Build Bridge!!!

I would like to thank very much indeed, once again, my dear friends who contributed to this Bridge-Building ‘*End-of 2013 Operation*’!

Common Good Forum

<http://www.commongood-forum.org>

Contact: violaine.hacker@commongood-forum.org

INTRODUCTION

Which governance for the commons of nature?

By Mrs Claire BROSSAUD
France

Claire Brossaud is a sociologist at the University of Lyon. She works on issues regarding ownership and governance of social and digital innovations. As a Member of the VECAM association, <http://vecam.org>, she has contributed to the emergence of the francophone festival Villes en Biens Communs / Cities in Common Goods. <http://villes.bienscommuns.org>

The notion of Common Good is double-edged when it comes to the management of natural resources. When it leans on the side of ‘good’, it considers that the resources are threatened by over-exploitation or by an economic rationality that prevents their sharing - the famous tragedy of the Commons-. It then enforces either the law or a frame, through new forms of property used as mode of governance. The legal reflection on Common Goods has become a major issue of our current societies, more and more confronted with the scarcity of natural resources such as water, seeds, energy...

Common Goods can also be regarded as a process of «pooling». We are this time less on the side of the ownership of the resources than on the side of their appropriations. In this case, the rules of access and rules of use of a resource are the subject of a development that is itself embodied in human relationships, cultural transactions; in a co-construction of skills that takes into account the particularity and the nature of the ‘good’. A river in India cannot be managed as a seed in Africa.

If politics is at first sight more concerned with the first issue, however, economy fully affects the second one; because it precisely sets out the regimes of access, of sharing and circulation that a community will decide to apply to a ‘good’, be it merchant or non-merchant. In a context where the value of use of a natural resource may become more important than its possession, the notion of Common Good enables the thought of new models of development more respectful of man and his environment and more open to cooperation rather than competition.



Claire Brossaud est sociologue à l’Université de Lyon. Elle travaille sur les questions d’appropriation et de gouvernance des innovations sociales et numériques. Membre de l’association VECAM, <http://vecam.org>, elle a contribué à l’émergence du festival francophone Villes en Biens Communs. <http://villes.bienscommuns.org>.

La notion de Bien Commun est à double tranchant concernant la gestion des ressources naturelles. Lorsqu’elle penche du côté du « bien », elle considère que ces ressources sont menacées par le fait d’une surexploitation ou d’une rationalité économique qui empêche leur partage – la fameuse tragédie des Communs -. Elle fait alors valoir le droit ou un encadrement par de nouvelles formes de propriété comme mode de gouvernance. La réflexion juridique autour des Biens Communs est devenue un enjeu majeur de nos sociétés actuelles où l’on est de plus en plus confrontés à la rareté de nos ressources naturelles comme l’eau, les semences, l’énergie...

Les Biens Communs peuvent également être assimilés à un processus visant une mise « en commun ». Nous sommes cette fois moins du côté de la propriété des ressources que de leurs appropriations. Dans ce cas de figure, les règles d’accès et règles d’usage d’une ressource font l’objet d’une élaboration qui est elle-même incarnée dans des relations humaines, des transactions culturelles, dans une co-construction de savoir faire prenant en compte la particularité et la nature du « bien ». Une rivière en Inde ne se gère pas comme une semence en Afrique.

Si le politique est a priori davantage concerné par le premier enjeu, l’économie affecte pleinement le second car elle fixe précisément les régimes d’accès, de partage et de circulation qu’une communauté va choisir d’appliquer à un « bien », qu’il soit marchand ou non marchand. Dans un contexte où la valeur d’usage d’une ressource naturelle risque de devenir plus importante que sa possession, la notion de Bien Commun permet de penser de nouveaux modèles de développement plus respectueux de l’homme et de son environnement et davantage ouverts à la coopération qu’à la compétition.



A BRIDGE-BUILDER

From Michel Serres to Robin Wood
and vice-versa: natural resources,
what else?

By Mr Ioan Negrutiu

Ecole Normale Supérieure de Lyon,
France

The Michel Serres Institute, the Environment and Economics

Obviously we are facing a triple problem: (1) Dominant concepts, such as sustainable development, green economy or ecological transition are too vague to enable the building of a clear vision and the corresponding action programs;

(2) Main agendas in politics, research, and international conversations are wrongly framed, with inadequate approaches to poverty, climate change, energy issues, biodiversity dilemma, demography. They lack a critical common denominator. Our hypothesis is that the resource problematic as a whole can serve as such a denominator, a prerequisite to progress on the above-mentioned agendas ; (3) The governance is not right: most current projections, scenarios... are targeted – with few exceptions - towards 2050, the 2050 mirage. Our urgent deadline is the 8 billion peak, that is before 2025.

Essential decisions on the socio-ecological transition(s) must be enacted within the next 10 years horizon.

A Bridge-Builder:

The Michel Serres Institute, on Resources and Public goods is a Laboratory Without Walls and think-tank: 8 international, 5 French and 4 local partners
<http://michelserresinstitute.ens-lyon.fr>.



As a bridge-Builder, its basic tasks consist in acting as a facilitator and bridging agent between dedicated institutions, programs, centres, and also between disciplines and across science and society.

To these ends, the Institute benefits from the continuous commitment of Michel Serres, his Honorary Fellow, President d'Honneur. Remember his seminal book, 'The natural contract'. And more recently, 'Temps des crises' (Crises times). The Institute is one year old and this is what we stated on that occasion: this anniversary coincides with the publication of the IPCC report 2013. An article (Libération, September 28-29, p. 21) concludes that « The UN climate convention signed in 1992

yielded no major results; Decisions are guided by the economy ». Why the climate of political hypocrisy does not change? Most likely because present conventions (climate, biodiversity, energy...) are designed and bound to be sterile. For as long as the central issue of accessing, managing and re-adjusting natural resources at all governance scales will not hit the great political agendas.

References

Barnosky et al, 2012, Approaching a state shift in Earth's biosphere, *Nature* 486: 52-58
Dasgupta, 2010, The Place of Nature in Economic Development In: Rodrik, D & Rosenzweig, M (eds.) *Handbook of Development Economics* 5, 4039-5061
Freibauer et al, 2011, Sustainable food consumption and production in a resource-constrained world, SCAR 3rd foresight exercise, Publications Office of the European Union, <http://www.scp-knowledge.eu>
Running, 2012, A measurable planetary boundary for the biosphere, *Science* 337, 1458-59

The missions of the Institute – addressing the problems at the root:

(1) The central place of natural resources in the socio-ecological transition

Security and sovereignty issues, conflicts and geo-politics essentially have one thing in common: natural resources.

The dominant economic thinking has a serious handicap, namely the incapacity to put the economy within the limits of the biosphere. In brief, 'individuals and communities over-exploit natural capital (a mesh of resources), meaning that the ecological services are subsidized. Social norms and legal rules are at the root of the system' (Dasgupta, 2010). According to the SCAR 3rd foresight (Freibauer et al, 2011) "the increasing scarcity of natural resources and destabilization of environmental systems represent a real threat (...) to global stability and prosperity, as it can aggravate poverty, disturb international trade, finance and investment, and destabilise governments".

The systematic 'rush' on natural resources, a landmark of the Western culture, has led to a double chronic dumping, social and ecological, with accumulating socio-ecosystemic deficits, thus creating the conditions for local and global state shifts within the biosphere and / or society (Barnosky et al, 2012; Running, 2012).

(2) The production, access, and re-adjustment of natural resource must be considered as a whole.

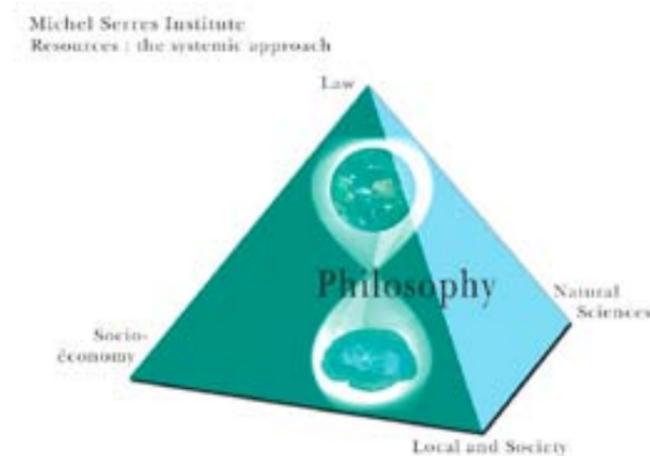
Poverty is the visible part of the iceberg, with 'slow famine', 'slow health'... syndromes.

We argue that humans are strongly resource-minded, but wrongly resource-framed. To that end, a natural resource-systems approach is being undertaken by

the Institute through a deep-interdisciplinary initiative aiming at the appropriation of the concept by the scientific community and society at large.

Therefore, research must serve to increase human understanding of those resources and how best to use them for the public good. The Institute works at an integral and integrated approach to natural resources and public goods as a unifying frame and toolbox.

This is where the Robin Wood spirit comes in.



(3) A new resources management architecture requires adaptive local governance

The desired architecture is build on continuously monitoring, accounting, and diagnosis of natural resources at regional scale. This allows understanding the specific territorial potential and available resource capacities. The rating of such capacities operates as an aid to decision-making allowing the discrimination of facts and trends from ideological considerations. Blind economic competition is an obvious example and is the current plaque of our societies.

These are the basic prerequisites to be considered for a coherent and effective territorial sustainable development.

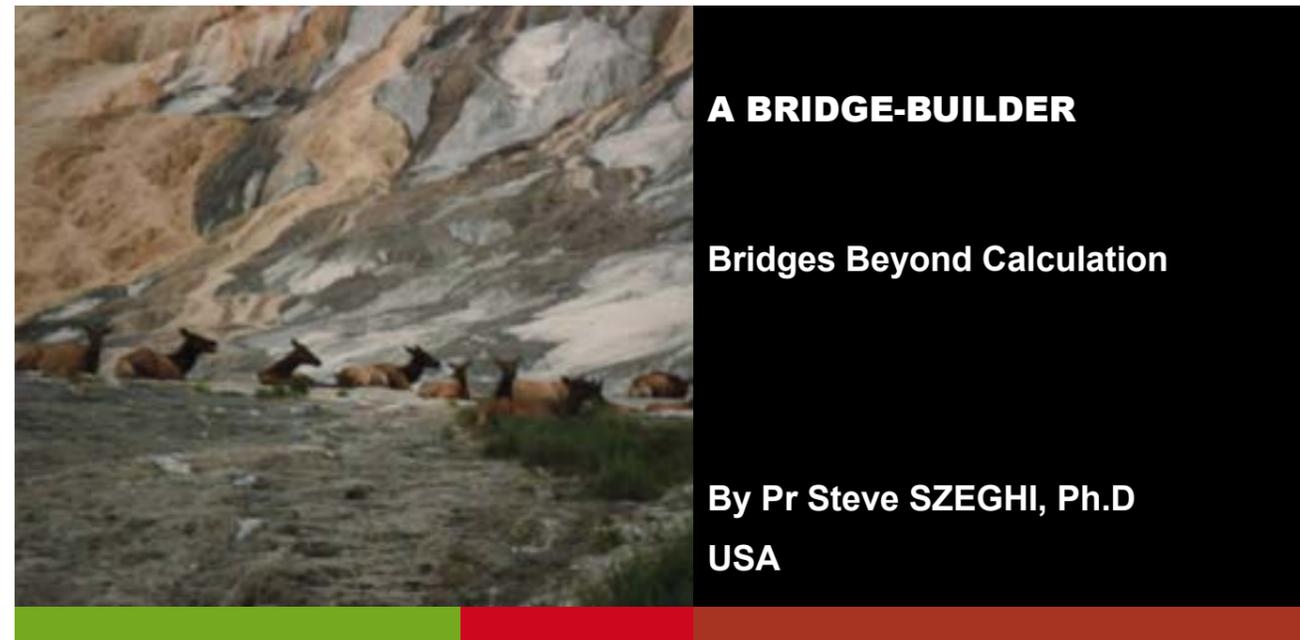
Towards these ends, the Institute is engaged in fostering a participative, proactive civil society acting to (1) manage human activities while meeting the specific territorial potential and resource

capacities (i.e. secure the life supporting functions and services within the ecosystems) and (2) ensure a fair re-allocation of such resources according to fundamental social needs and coherent long term public good policies. Such policies should systematically translate into and link food, health, education, and environment into all decision making steps (see for example <http://www.droit-aliments-terre.eu>).

Local specifics and potential matter in mobilizing stakeholders and the young generation.

Natural resources at the regional level have economic, financial, environmental, and socio-cultural meaning at the same time. Therefore they are likely to 'speak' more directly to society and individuals in terms of stock, flux, and footprint, but also in terms of responsible attitudes and actions through social networks and links. The temporal and spatial representations of the state and dynamics of regional resources, such as ecological deficit and debt (not erasable, contrary to financial debts by contractual agreement or government bailout), carrying capacity, internalization of socio-environmental costs, socio-economic competition... are likely to become politically and society-wise more readily meaningful than equivalent global figures. The socio-ecosystemic virtues of circular economy systems make sense at local-to-regional territorial scales. Therefore, the coordinated and integrated management of natural resources at the regional scale is likely to become an important political issue in the short run. An additional good reason is that the natural capital monitoring and accounting, and non-financial reporting will become the norm in the very near future.

The Institute works hard on that. This is where the young generations come in. To our own surprise, the concept of natural resources is an extraordinary pedagogic tool. Have a look at the website to find out what the students are thinking and doing.



A BRIDGE-BUILDER

Bridges Beyond Calculation

By Pr Steve SZEGHI, Ph.D
USA

At the core of standard economic theory is the assumption of self-interest, of rational decision making. But this is not reality. People are more complex. From this false premise standard economics has unwittingly poured a foundation from which a cultural cult of « greed is good » has risen, which harms both the individual and society. It hampers bridge building to others, to society, and the common good. Bridge Building is only possible beyond utilitarian calculation.

Complexity

Yearnings dwell in the deep recesses of the human soul that are beyond quantification and rational calculation. These include a thirst for justice, loyalty, and duty. Among our deepest desires is love, a longing for community, connection to other people and to the larger family of nature. In the human heart reside phobias and fears, prejudices, superstitions, fantasy, and delusion. People are a mix of irrationality, and rationality. True rationality would reflect upon our emotions and wants, critically evaluating and applying reason to them. True freedom would be able to say no to our wants. People are seldom, if ever, the mere one dimensional rational decision makers of economic theory.

Rationality

In standard economics there is little reflection on what people desire or why. Wants are a given. Rationality for an individual is choosing the want that yields the highest utility, subject to a budget constraint. No self-reflection is required. Rationality presumes self-interest. People maximize their individual utility at all times, unrelated and unconnected to others. It is the sole explanation of human behavior. Unique individuals merely have different items in their utility function or possess a different utility function.

If some individuals do not engage in meaningful self-reflection while some do, standard economics would argue the difference is because of a different utility function or different items in the utility function, both are merely maximizing utility, both are



Professor Steven Paul Francis Szeghi

Dr. Steve Szeghi is Professor of Economics at Wilmington College, Ohio-USA. In 2009 Steve Szeghi co-authored, together with Peter Brown, Geoffrey Garver, Keith Helmuth, and Robert Howell, Right Relationship: Building a Whole Earth Economy. In 05-06 Szeghi's article, Lessons in Sustainable Development on the Navajo Nation, appeared in the Journal for Economics and Politics. He has also been the author of many articles on social justice, environmental economics, primers in economics for social activists, and the economies of indigenous and aboriginal peoples as alternative economic systems. in numerous on-line journals such as Journal of Globalization for the Common Good as well as printed journals such as Kosmos. Starting at the age of 15, he began working ardently for social justice as an activist doing substantial work with the United Farm Workers Union (Cesar Chavez) until his mid-twenties. He continues to work for social justice, equality, and the environment; working with or consulting for on a pro-bono basis, environmental and labor organizations, candidates for political office who demonstrate a commitment to social justice and ecology, as well as indigenous groups and tribal governments.

equally rational. Some who do not engage in self-reflection according to theory do not have it in their utility function or the costs of self-reflection are perceived to be less than the benefits. But how can a behavior be rational that is not self-reflected upon?

Some individuals who engage in self-reflection merely contour their perceived costs and benefits to conform to their wants, a type of rationalization. Others truly critically evaluate their wants and apply reason. But according to standard theory both are equally rational.

Economics assumes self-interest and thus explains Mother Teresa and Donald Trump. Mother Teresa derived utility from serving the poor. Donald Trump derives utility from more hotels. Both are rational. Both are self-interested.

On one hand the rationality postulate employs circular reasoning or meaningless tautology. On the other hand it casts the shadow of self-interest upon all human behavior, no matter how selfless the behavior. It enshrines the cult of self-interest, of greed. The rationality postulate creates a moral equivalence between the behavior and motives of Donald Trump and Mother Teresa both do as they do for utilities sake.

Manipulation / Happiness / Welfare

Contrary to theory people do not know what they want. Wants are whimsical and contradictory. In an age of mass media with ever more subtle, sophisticated, and even subliminal forms of advertising and propaganda, it is suspect whether the wants of individuals are truly their own.

Theory assumes want fulfillment is good, that it enhances welfare. It identifies want fulfillment with utility and utility with happiness and happiness with the good. The wisdom of indigenous peoples and the philosophers of most civilizations would deeply question many of the links in this chain of reasoning. The philosophers of Ancient Greece counseled saying no to desire as did Buddha and Francis of Assisi.

The Individual and the Whole

The utilitarian ethic ultimately moves from the good of the individual to the good of the whole. Usually in economics the good of the whole is defined as the sum of the good accruing to individuals. But what of the benefits that individuals derive from the existence and health of the whole? Ideally economics should count these but frequently undercounts them.

There may be a benefit to the good of the whole that simply cannot be counted as a benefit to individuals. The existence and health of society may be a value in itself.

Building Bridges

We need bridges to the other, beyond the usual Utilitarian construct. We need to value social justice not merely on the basis of the utility we derive but adding weight to how the poor

and marginalized value her. We need to value ecology and endangered species not merely from the perspective of human utility but from the value of nature to itself. We need to consider future generations not merely according to how we of the current generation value their benefits and costs, but rather how future generations will value their own.

But we have difficulty valuing our own costs and benefits. What do we value or even want? Are what we call costs and benefits truly related to happiness, welfare, relationships, community and connection? What if what is truly valuable to people lies between them, in relationship, rather than the separable benefits accruing to individuals? What if the deepest connections and aspirations of the human heart, to be one with one another, to be one with the earth, are beyond quantification and rational calculation? They are.

More so than economic theory, markets fail to value and sufficiently count the other. An Economy cannot function well on private property and markets alone. We must balance the market with some collective decisions and safeguard some role for public ownership, particularly public lands both as protected wilderness and urban parks.

An economy that makes room for the other needs a stronger ethical foundation than Utilitarianism.



We thirst for justice; we ache for a healthy Earth. We need an ethic that makes room for the other, other people, other species, and future generations. We need it not to derive utility, but because it is right, because it is our duty.

This ethic flows from the reality of existence. Everything has a right to flourish; people, other species, other generations. The other deserves reciprocation, respect, and reverence. The lens of utility maximization yields a poor foundation to acknowledge the miracle of existence. Instead it serves up everyone merely for our use, a type of insane narcissism. We need a new lens grounded in respect for existence, relationships, ecology and justice. To find it we must break the chains of rational calculus. The Navajo say hozho, (beauty, balance, and harmony), let us find it.

A THINKER**Economics, Civilisation and the Ideas That Rule Us****By Mr Raymond MAKEWELL
United Kingdom**

Raymond Makewell published The Science of Economics. The majority of his professional life has been spent in the corporate sector. He discovered the economic teaching of Leon MacLaren in the late 1970s and has run public courses teaching these ideas for many years.

Introduction

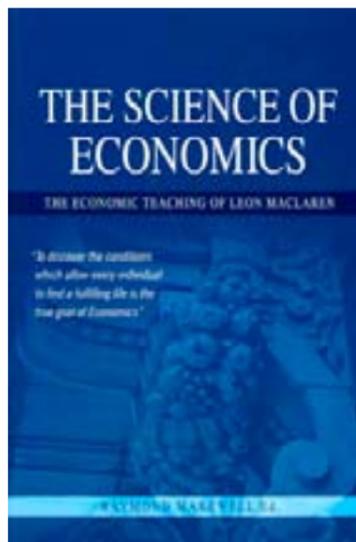
When civilisations meet, new ideas can have profound consequences. This essay looks at the conflict between the traditional ideas of the Anglo-Saxons in England and those brought to England by the Christian church at the end of the 6th century, and some of the economic and social consequences.

The Anglo-Saxons

The Anglo-Saxons, whose invasion of Britain began in AD 449, regarded all that they seized by conquest as 'held in common', until it was distributed as each new district was secured. This included the former inhabitants, as slaves, all their moveable possessions and their livestock, as well as their agricultural land.

The invaders shunned all the Romano/British structures, settling in small villages, as was their custom. Each household held an entirely private area of land around the house, was allotted strips of land in the village field, held the right to use the village meadow, and had access to the surrounding 'forests'. The area around the house was used for cottage gardens, keeping chickens and the like,

the strips were sown with grain crops, the meadows used to graze sheep and cattle, and the forest to glean wild foods, cut timber, keep pigs and hunt. Collecti-



vely, a land holding was referred to as a 'hide', a variable measure representing the area of land required to support one household.

Holding land was associated with duties: duties of mutual support in a small community and duties to the nation as

a whole. National duties took two forms: service and food rent. Each landholder was expected, when called upon, to participate in the national militia, and to assist with building or repairing fortifications and bridges. Each village was required to support the king's court by the provision of an annual food rent. How a village determined each household's contribution was a local matter.

The Anglo-Saxon farmer was self-sufficient, apart from the work of the smith. He was a free man who owned his home, his household utensils, tools, grain, slaves, livestock and weapons. But his society provided few measures to deal with difficult times, and, particularly as a result of warfare difficult times continued long after the Anglo-Saxons arrived in Britain. First they fought the original occupants, then each other, and finally new invaders. Warfare created destitution. It left behind the widowed and maimed, took householders away from their farms, and destroyed the farms and property of the defeated.

A Clash of Civilisations

According to the Roman historian Tacitus, the Anglo-Saxons practised their religion

using the woods and groves as their temples. The role of the few priests was to represent to the divine world the needs of the people, and to win help for the people from the divine world. In the minds of the illiterate Anglo-Saxons, kings were elected for life to be first amongst equals acting only with the consent of their council; the authority for what was right and wrong arose from custom and, in case of doubt, from consensus of the people. No one owned land and occupancy was associated with duties.

Christianity was re-introduced to Britain in AD 597 when Augustine of Canterbury and his companions arrived at the behest of Pope Gregory to preach to the English nation. They were received by King Ethelbert of Kent with tolerance and hospitality. The church brought ideas that were alien to the Anglo-Saxons.

Augustine and his monks taught that all people - kings, peasants or slaves, men or women - were equal in their relationship to God, who alone was able to carry the burdens associated with this troubled temporal life.

In the minds of the Christian missionaries, kings were chosen by God to lead the nation, and were vested with absolute power. Guidance for what was right or wrong, lawful or unlawful was to be found in documented authority (the Bible, the Roman Law and the Rule of St Benedict); and land, although ultimately God's, could be held by one person to the exclusion of all others without charge. Augustine and his monks needed exclusive use of land to house an extensive priestly class, and people to feed them.

From this clash of ideas were born the earliest documents in English legal history, referred to as 'charters' or 'books'. Augustine drafted, in Latin, for the illiterate and newly-Christian King Ethelbert, a statement in which the King declares that for the benefit of his soul he surrenders to Augustine and subsequent holders of the charter any sovereignty he or his successors have over an area of land in Canterbury. Seen in the light of Anglo-Saxon tradition, this statement held no real authority. The king had no power to grant land, and the authority over his successors was a threat of divine retribution reliant on

them having a Christian 'fear of God'. On the other hand, the king could not, and did not, interfere with the traditional rights and duties of the existing inhabitants. To add credibility to the document a long list of witnesses was appended, who, together with the king, drew the sign of the cross beside their names. In practice, the king surrendered any food rent collectable from those living on the land to the person holding the charter, and although land could not be owned, the benefit obtainable from it could now be sold or bequeathed with the transfer of the charter.

In a very short period of time the device of a royal charter was used to establish a vast monastic movement in Britain exempt



from any contribution to the physical wellbeing of the nation, and, it was found that the same device could be used equally well to favour men of ecclesiastical or private interests. The advantage the charters offered to those who held them was multiplied by another imported idea, that everyone should have a lord (private or ecclesiastical). Thus, destitute people sought the protection of those favoured by the king, for which they were required to provide service, usually in the form of working in the landholders' fields on a number of days each week. By the time of the Norman invasion in AD1066 English society had lost its free, democratic and egalitarian nature, and the majority of the English people were dependent on a lord for access to the land from which they could support themselves. This did not eliminate the destitution and the church stepped in, taxing free farmers to provide charity for the poor.

Conclusion

For all the good intentions of King Ethelbert and Augustine of Canterbury interference in the traditional

patterns of land holding had consequences that neither would have foreseen nor welcomed. The ideas they introduced are not Christian; the Bible states that the land belongs to God. But these ideas became part of what are accepted as the values of Christian civilisation. When cultures and civilisation clash, such ideas are highlighted and can be examined. The job of an economist to identify those ideas which are lawful, just and will lead to prosperity for all in the current situation.



maison
du fleuve
Rhône

A PRACTITIONER

What kind of common good is the River Rhone?

By Mr André Micoud, Sociologue, Directeur de recherche honoraire du CNRS, Président de « La Maison du fleuve Rhône », France

Rivers are considered environmental common goods. The case of the Rhône is exciting since it tackles on the one hand the socio-economic challenges arising from the legal status defined in the Rhône Act; on the other hand, André Micoud's article discusses the historical and anthropological process, and it thus recalls the cultural or non-immediately rational issues ... which should not be underestimated in the governance of the Commons! Common good is thus addressed as: purpose, process and object. {Violaine Hacker}

The Rhône River and its initial legal status: the Rhône Act

The national representation passed the «Rhône Act» on May 27, 1921, which approved a development programme of the River, with a triple viewpoint of the driving forces, the navigation and other agricultural uses, from the Swiss border to the sea. Shortly after, in 1934, for the first time ever, the State entrusted the Compagnie Nationale du Rhône (CNR), the only concession of the river, to a joint company in order to make the necessary layouts. The private and public interests which intermingled within this company were assigned three missions: power generation, navigation and irrigation. How can we say that the property that was thus granted at the time was a common good? The name qualifying the concessionary seems to contain the answer: the Rhone is a common Good for the Nation. Let's note, however, that the founders were people who originated from the region: Léon Perrier, Deputy of Grenoble, and Édouard

Les fleuves sont considérés comme des biens communs environnementaux. Le cas du Rhône est passionnant, car il aborde d'une part les enjeux socio-économiques découlant du statut juridique défini dans la Loi Rhône. D'autre part, l'article de André Micoud aborde le processus historique et anthropologique, et rappelle ainsi les enjeux culturels ou non-immédiatement rationnels... à ne pas sous-estimer dans la gouvernance des Commons ! Le bien commun est ainsi abordé comme : objet, processus et finalité.

J'aime cet article car il permet de comprendre que le bien commun est ainsi abordé comme : objet, processus, et finalité. {Violaine Hacker}

Le fleuve Rhône et son statut juridique initial : la Loi Rhône

La représentation nationale, le 27 mai 1921, votait une « Loi Rhône » approuvant un programme d'aménagement du fleuve, de la frontière suisse à la mer, au triple point de vue des forces motrices, de la navigation et des autres utilisations agricoles. Peu de temps après, en 1934, - une première en France -, l'État confiait à une société mixte, la Compagnie Nationale du Rhône (CNR), la concession unique de ce fleuve pour y réaliser les aménagements nécessaires. Les intérêts privés et publics qui se côtoient au sein de cette

Herriot, Mayor of Lyon and Rhône Senator - even if he was also between 1916 and 1935 several times Minister and president of the Council. The electrical energy that would be produced by the first equipment on the river - the Génissiat dam (1948), was mainly intended to supply the Paris region.

Rivers : Common Goods

The Rhone at the time was a Common Good for a particular reason: It represented a considerable resource - motor energy, for waterways and agricultural purposes — that should first and foremost be made useful to the nation. And concretely, whether it concerned the hydroelectric production, dam locks intended to make it navigable or irrigation canals, the Rhone, granted to the CNR became the object

of the hydraulic specialists most likely to achieve the required facilities for these three functions. Throughout that period known as the 'Great Development' period, until the 1980s, the Rhone River was therefore a common good in so far as it was a liquid physical flow that had to be tamed, channeled, regulated... for economic development.

The River, a lively environment

The 1970s saw the emergence of new looks that would gradually come to challenge the only technician characterization (they call it a plumber's vision). The River Rhone would gradually become "Common good", for other specialists who designated it as a lively environment. The hydro-geo-morphologists on the one hand, would endeavour to show that a river cannot with impunity be contained within dikes, and that it should be able to go on spreading and wandering (they say a river 'bright and running'); on the other hand, the hydro biologists would describe it as a place in which thousands of living beings lived and needed to be protected. Taking into consideration environment and the irruption of ecological issues was very new. The Rhône-Alpes Fédération of Associations for the Protection of Nature (FRAPNA) strong of its many supports in the naturalistic scientific community was opposed to the last development plans scheduled. As global warming was not yet on the agenda, it wondered particularly to find out if the River would be able to manage the effects of EDF's nuclear plants which grew along its shores and used its water for their cooling. Even if it was largely furnished and artificialized, for these associations and mixed scientists, the river must be considered a common good in so far as it was still a lively environment.

An anthropological vision: a culture of the river

From the 1980s, with the creation of the House of the Rhône River – A center for the anthropology of the river - other actors

compagnie se voient confier trois missions : production d'électricité, navigation et irrigation.

En quoi peut-on dire que ce bien qui se trouve ainsi concédé à cette époque est un bien commun ? Le qualificatif qui désigne le concessionnaire semble contenir la réponse : *le Rhône est un bien commun pour la Nation*. Notons toutefois que ce sont deux « régionaux » qui en furent les fondateurs : Léon Perrier, député de Grenoble, et Édouard Herriot, maire de Lyon et sénateur du Rhône, même si ce dernier fut aussi entre 1916

et 1935 plusieurs fois ministre et président du conseil. L'énergie électrique qu'allait produire le premier équipement sur le fleuve - le barrage de Génissiat (1948) -, était principalement destinée à alimenter la région parisienne.

Les fleuves, des biens communs

Le Rhône de cette époque est un bien

commun pour une raison singulière : parce qu'il représente une ressource considérable – énergie motrice, voie d'eau et usages agricoles – qu'il s'agit avant tout de rendre utile à la nation. Très concrètement, et qu'il s'agisse de la production hydroélectrique, des barrages écluses destinés à le rendre navigable ou des canaux d'irrigation, le Rhône concédé à la CNR devient l'objet des spécialistes hydrauliciens les plus à même de réaliser les aménagements requis pour ces trois fonctions. Pendant toute la période qui va suivre jusque dans les années 80, que l'on qualifie comme étant celle des « grands aménagements », le fleuve Rhône est un donc un bien commun en tant qu'il est un flux physique liquide qu'il s'agit de dompter, de canaliser, de réguler... en faveur du développement économique.

Le fleuve, un milieu vivant

Les années 70 voient émerger de nouveaux regards qui vont peu à peu venir contester cette caractérisation seulement technicienne (ils disent une vision de « plombier »). Bien commun, le fleuve Rhône va progressivement le devenir pour d'autres spécialistes qui le désignent comme un milieu vivant. Les hydro-géo-morphologues d'une part vont s'attacher à montrer qu'un fleuve ne peut impunément être contenu entre des digues, et qu'il doit pouvoir continuer à s'épancher et à divaguer (ils disent un fleuve « vif et courant ») ; les hydrobiologistes d'autre part vont le décrire comme un milieu dans lequel vivent des milliers d'êtres vivants à protéger. Nous sommes au début de la prise en compte de l'environnement et de l'irruption de la question écologique. La Fédération Rhône-Alpes des Associations de Protection de la Nature (FRAPNA) forte de ses nombreux appuis dans les milieux scientifiques naturalistes s'oppose aux derniers aménagements prévus. Alors que le réchauffement climatique n'est pas encore à l'ordre du jour, elle s'interroge notamment pour savoir si le fleuve pourra intégrer les effets des centrales nucléaires d'EDF qui ont poussé le long de ses rives et qui utilisent ses eaux pour



would appear. As researchers in humanities, they had just discovered that the river was not only a property of nature. By accompanying the residents who, there as elsewhere, were involved in the social movement of re-appropriation of the rivers, they brought another look that would come and enrich with a new quality the common good. There is a culture of the river which for thousands of years until today has been benefiting the residents who are attached to it. Here again, and even though its development has completely transformed it, the history of the river is still present. A number of associations are striving to revive it and local authorities would like to enhance it. It is no longer only the water that «is part of the common heritage of the nation», as stipulated in the 1992 water Act. It is this culture of river we have to save as a Common Good, just as important.

Consequences: governance for transversal management

A river developed and tamed to produce energy, made navigable and usable for irrigation; a river about which we will now worry for the quality of its water; a river to which management we will gradually incorporate the restoration of environments and the consideration of leisure and tourism popular uses. This was what seemed to lead us closer to an idealistic form of transversal management. Perhaps, except that it probably took the 2002 and 2003 floods for us to become aware of it. These tragic and repeated events constituted a major turning point. The River we believed we had tamed showed that its strength was intact, and that it could still much destroy. It led, some few years later, to the signing of a Rhône Plan between the State, the five Regions crossed by the river and all stakeholders of the River (CNR, water agency, Navigable tracks of France...), - the Plan had as its main objective the coordination of all actions for a global management, as part of 'governance' as we finally say today....

GDF SUEZ-Electrabel

However, another event, less visible but of great importance, also took place in 2003. One can read on the company's website 'New statutes for the CNR accompany the opening of its capital. GDF SUEZ, via Electrabel, becomes its new industrial partner, its shareholder of reference. At the same time, the redefinition of its rights and obligations gives rise to the drafting of a new bill of specifications of the concession which confirms its historical and solidarity missions; it decides to attach a blueprint of general interest missions, thus reinforcing its commitment in favour of the environment and sustainable development'.

The CNR has become the 2nd largest producer of electricity in France today. The concession to a joint enterprise by which we had started this column - but which has since seen the entry of a large group in its capital – expires in 2023. It is said that competitors are already lining up...

Conclusion

One wonders: how come so many qualities of the river - that was carried by so many human collectives, who all

leur refroidissement. Même s'il est largement aménagé et artificialisé, le fleuve pour ces acteurs associatifs et scientifiques mêlés doit être considéré comme un bien commun en tant qu'il est toujours un milieu vivant.

Une vision anthropologique : une culture du fleuve

À partir des années 80, avec la création de la Maison du fleuve Rhône – Centre pour une anthropologie du fleuve - ce sont d'autres acteurs font leur apparition. Chercheurs en sciences humaines, ils viennent de découvrir que le fleuve n'est pas qu'un bien de nature. Accompagnant les populations riveraines qui, ici comme ailleurs, participent au mouvement social de réappropriation des fleuves, ils vont faire advenir un autre regard qui va venir enrichir ce bien commun d'une qualité nouvelle. Il y a une culture du fleuve qui, depuis des millénaires jusqu'à aujourd'hui, a fait vivre ces riverains et à laquelle ils sont attachés. Là encore, et alors même que son aménagement l'a complètement transformé, l'histoire du fleuve est toujours présente. Nombre d'associations s'efforcent de la faire revivre et les collectivités territoriales souhaitent la mettre en valeur. Ce n'est plus seulement l'eau qui « fait partie du patrimoine commun de la nation », comme le stipule la loi de 1992 sur l'eau. C'est cette culture de fleuve qu'il s'agit de sauvegarder comme un bien commun tout aussi important.

Conséquences : une gouvernance en faveur d'une gestion transversale

Un fleuve aménagé et dompté pour produire de l'énergie, rendu navigable et utilisable pour l'irrigation ; un fleuve dont on va maintenant se soucier de la qualité des eaux ; un fleuve à la gestion duquel on va intégrer progressivement la restauration des milieux et la prise en compte des usages populaires de loisirs et de tourisme. Voilà bien qui semble nous approcher d'une forme idéale de gestion transversale. Peut-être, sauf qu'il faudra sans doute les graves inondations de 2002 et 2003 pour en faire prendre conscience. Ces événements tragiques et répétés constituent un tournant majeur. Ce fleuve que l'on croyait avoir dompté montre que sa force est intacte, et qu'il peut encore beaucoup détruire. Il en résulte quelques années plus tard, la signature d'un Plan Rhône entre l'Etat, les cinq Régions traversées et tous les acteurs du fleuve (CNR, Agence de l'Eau, Voies Navigables de France...), - Plan qui se donne précisément pour tâche de coordonner toutes les actions pour une gestion globale, dans le cadre d'une « gouvernance » comme on dit enfin aujourd'hui...

GDF SUEZ-Electrabel

Toutefois, un autre événement, moins visible mais de grande importance, a eu lieu aussi en 2003. On peut lire sur le site de la Compagnie « De nouveaux statuts pour la CNR accompagnent l'ouverture de son capital GDF SUEZ, via Electrabel, devient son nouveau partenaire industriel, son actionnaire de référence. Parallèlement, la redéfinition de ses droits et obligations donne lieu à la rédaction d'un nouveau cahier des charges de la concession qui confirme ses missions historiques et solidaires ;

together were able to bring out this unique quality of Common Good - will be able to be still managed harmoniously?

elle décide d'y annexer un schéma directeur de missions d'intérêt général, confortant ainsi son engagement en faveur de l'environnement et du développement durable ».

La CNR est devenu le 2^{ème} producteur d'électricité de France. La concession à une société mixte par laquelle on avait commencé cette chronique – mais qui depuis a vu l'entrée d'un grand groupe dans son capital - arrive à échéance en 2023. Il se dit que les concurrents seraient déjà sur les rangs...

Conclusion

On s'interroge :

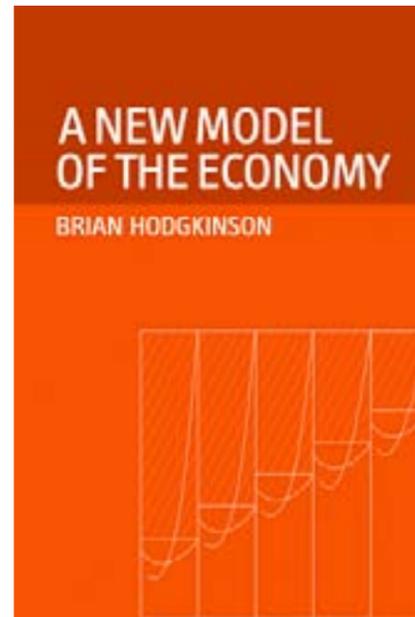
comment autant de qualités du fleuve - qui ont pu être portées par autant de collectifs humains et qui ensemble ont pu faire émerger cette qualité unique de bien commun - pourront-elles continuer à être gérées harmonieusement ?

IN THE NEWS

From our correspondants

From our correspondant, Mr Anthony WERNER, United Kingdom

A New Economics



Disillusioned by the unwillingness of academic economists to revise the curriculum in the light of their failure to predict the crash, students at Manchester University have been demanding alternatives to the free-market dogma they are taught. A Post-crash Economics Society has been formed and their campaign is spreading to other English universities and also to university groups in France, Germany, Slovenia and Chile. This is a timely development, considering the high level of youth unemployment,

a major social problem incapable of solution by neo-classical economists. With funding from the Institute for New Economic Thinking (INET), a professor at University College London is preparing a new first year curriculum which will include an in-depth review of economic history and look at the way financial markets can undermine economic stability.

However, as Brian Hodgkinson, author of *A New Model of the Economy*, pointed out in a letter to the *Financial Times* recently, *'The debate about the « new economics » fails to note the key omission from current models of the economy: the place of land as a separate factor of production.*

'Land, defined as all natural resources, should not be regarded as capital, since it is not the result of production and, unlike capital, creates rent, largely from location values. Its omission from economic models has meant that land values have been ignored, even though these were the principal element in the house price rises that led to the creation of the subprime mortgages and other financial assets that caused the crisis of 2008.

'A new analysis to include land, both in micro and macro models, would bring the whole subject into line with observable facts, including also the huge disparities

of wealth in modern economies.' The subject is explored in greater depth in his book *A New Model of the Economy*.

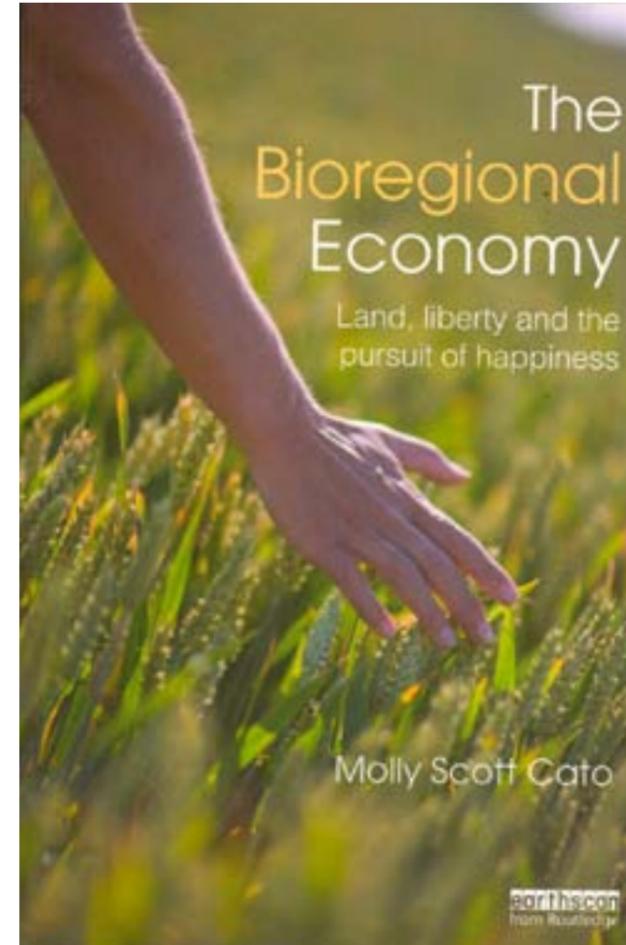
- A different approach, but relying on the same classical economic model, is set out in *The Science of Economics*. This book is a radical revision of modern economic theory, but it deliberately follows the broad outline of modern textbooks. Economists today, the author argues, employ 'flat-earth' models which are totally unrealistic. They ignore the huge influence of spatial location, which gives rise to economic, or Ricardian, rent. He incorporates into both micro- and macroeconomic analysis this basic and universal feature, thereby bringing economic theory into much closer touch with reality.

In *Re-solving the Economic Puzzle* Walter Rybeck draws on his experience working with a Senator in the United States to try to solve the housing problem in Washington DC.

For more information about these books and others exploring a new economics: visit www.ethicaleconomics.org.uk or to view inside the books <http://www.shephard-walwyn.co.uk/ethical.asp>.

From our correspondant, Mr Ian MASON, Principal School of Economic Science, United Kingdom

Book of the year



It has been very clear to many people for a long time that the neo-classical global market economy produces more in the way of injustice and poverty than it does in the way of freedom and prosperity.

In the School of Economic Science we have been calling for a complete renewal of the whole subject of economics based on a human scale in its proper environmental, planetary and ethical context.

At the very heart of this is re-discovering a healthy relationship between people and land, that is, between mankind and the planet Earth.

In her scholarly book, *'The Bioregional Economy: Land Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness'* (Earthscan from Routledge 2013), Molly Scott Cato, Professor of Strategy and Sustainability at Roehampton University, UK, takes up and explores this theme.

Defining the 'Bio-region' as meaning 'life-place', the book starts from the premise that a viable economic 'locality' can be definable by natural, rather than political, boundaries with reference to identifiable land forms and related unique human cultures that grow from them.

Her view involves a re-defined role for economists as the intermediaries between the natural world and the human presence with the particular purpose of recognising the natural restraints on human conduct that offer real freedom for people in a healthy environment and advising accordingly.

Perhaps its greatest value is that the author explores the subject without claiming that there is a single solution or model to be applied everywhere. Bio-regions may overlap; they may be defined by reference to different natural features, ecologies, species or populations and each is likely to have its own distinctive characteristics.

It is not enough just to read this book. It needs to be studied and assimilated.

From our correspondent, Mr Alexandre ROJEY, France

La Réinvention du monde. Entre utopie et principe de réalité, Collection Prospective,

L'Harmattan, Paris, 2013

Building a vision for the future is much needed at our present time of global stakes and huge challenges. Scientific and technical progress cannot bring in itself the required solutions, while, more and more often, its benefits are considered as controversial. Building such a vision lies in finding an appropriate balance between the needs of the economy and the necessity to define an approach compatible with the preservation of the Commons. It supposes the will to overcome the contradiction between an ideal which might stay « utopic » or « idealistic » and « realism » promoting specific or personal interests. As discussed in the book « La Réinvention du monde », achieving such a goal requires a « Reinvention of the World », through an approach combining lucidity and ethics. The author, who leads, within the Tuck Foundation a think tank aiming at the promotion of a sustainable future in the area of energy, presents different alternative scenarios for such an ambition: degrowth, sustainable development, technical innovation, knowledge and creative society with alternatives to the present globalization, as well as the emergence of new values, which are considered from the viewpoint of the history of the humanity. Rather than trying to bring immediate and specific answers to those complex issues which have remained unsolved until now, he points out the need for an evolution of the mentalities and describes the conditions to be met for assessing with a lucid and open mind the new situations which will be encountered in the future.



Alexandre Rojey

La Réinvention du monde

Entre utopie et principe de réalité

L'Harmattan

Construire une vision d'avenir s'avère essentiel à un moment où les enjeux et les défis sont devenus planétaires. Le progrès scientifique et technique, de plus en plus fréquemment contesté, ne peut plus apporter à lui seul les solutions à mettre en œuvre. Une démarche compatible avec l'intérêt général et la préservation des biens communs, est confrontée à la contradiction entre un idéal « utopique » et un « réalisme » au service d'intérêts particuliers. Cette contradiction ne peut être surmontée qu'en associant lucidité et valeurs éthiques, pour « réinventer le monde ». Un projet collectif n'est possible que si l'esprit de coopération l'emporte sur les antagonismes et les rivalités. L'auteur, qui anime, au sein de la Fondation Tuck, le think tank « IDées » dont le but est promouvoir un avenir durable dans le domaine de l'énergie, aborde différents scénarios alternatifs pour un tel projet: décroissance, développement durable, innovation technologique, société du savoir et de la création, mondialisation responsable, émergence de nouvelles valeurs, en se plaçant dans la perspective de l'histoire longue de l'humanité. Plutôt qu'essayer d'apporter des réponses immédiates aux questions complexes qui restent à résoudre, il met l'accent sur l'évolution des mentalités et les conditions à réunir pour aborder avec lucidité et ouverture d'esprit les situations nouvelles que nous réserve l'avenir.



Common Good Forum

<http://www.commongood-forum.org>

Contact: violaine.hacker@commongood-forum.org

Chief Editor: Violaine Hacker

Knowledge Manager and Graphic Design: Caroline Hacker Bauer

Translation Manager: Dr Moustafa Traore

Credits Photos: Claire Brossaud, L'Harmattan, Institut Michel de Serre, Maison du fleuve Rhône, Raymond Makewell, Ian Mason, André Micoud, Ioan Negrutiu, Alexandre Rojey, Steve Szeghi, Anthony Werner