

Training agents of change



COOPERATIVE APPROACHES #2

“The only way that offers any hope of a better future for all humanity is through cooperation and partnership”. Kofi Annan

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November 2019

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During their visits to the tribe, the teams of trainees share their discoveries about their own culture with Jean-Marie Tjibaou, Deputy Director of the Centre de Formation d'Animateurs (CeFA) - [Organizers Training Center]... See "Story" on page 5.

Cooperative Approaches: bimonthly review, 6 issues per year.

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Subscription : <https://approchescooperatives.com/fr/categories/english/annual-subscription>

EDITORIAL

Agents of change

By Dominique B nard

Issue 1 of Cooperative Approaches focused on youth-adult partnership and youth empowerment. This issue addresses the question of training agents of change.

The common thread is the singular life trajectory of our friend Philippe Missotte. A young typographer and Scout leader at the National Scouts of France, in the 1960s, Philippe was one of the initiators of a key pedagogical reform in scouting. In 1964, this reform reintroduced cooperative methods - within its pedagogical approach - into the educational program of the Scouts of France. It took place with the creation of the Pioneers' section for 14 to 18 year olds. While on a mission to New Caledonia to train local leaders, the Secretary General of the Territory took notice of Philippe and proposed that he take charge of a training program for

youth leaders. His mission would focus on Kanak youths.

As with many indigenous populations, the arrival of European settlers had driven New Caledonia's Kanak people from their lands and marginalized them. Philippe created a training center for youth leaders with the help of Jean-Marie Tjibaou, a colleague who would become one of the leaders of the Kanak Independence Party. Their meeting proved to be a decisive turning point in Philippe's life. Passionate about the unique culture of the Kanak people, he would go on to train a generation of leaders to be agents of change in their communities. The highlight of their action was the organization of a major festival to promote Kanak culture which, until then, had been despised and unknown. The festival would be

called "Melanesia 2000". Transformed by this adventure, Philippe returned to pursue his studies in the social sciences, earning his doctorate. While working on his dissertation, Philippe contributed to the development of the "Collège Coopératif" (The Cooperative College), a new university center dedicated to the promotion of cooperative approaches to development as well as action-oriented research. He would become Director of The Cooperative Colllege in 1994.

Forty years later, the Kanak people have taken an essential place in the development and future of New Caledonia.

Philippe's "Life Story" shows us how cooperative approaches can successfully take on key problems always present in developing areas: marginalization and exclusion.

The "Dossier" presents an original method that is still little known called "participatory mapping". Those who help indigenous peoples to fight land grabbing use participatory mapping as a crucial part of their organizational activities.

It can be defined, in a broad sense, as local populations creating detailed maps in order to document and make themselves aware of the natural, cultural, individual and social resources contained within their territory - a crucial first step in community empowerment.

Participatory mapping has led to the emergence of a new approach to development based not on the analysis of problems and needs but on the identification of a given community's assets. Whereas the needs-based approach leads to passivity and assistance, the asset-based approach leads to cooperation and empowerment: a fundamentally significant change.

Participatory mapping is also used in the non-formal education of young people. Such mapping helps youths to become aware of the resources contained within their respective communities, engaging them in the development of social action activities or business creation projects. Examples of the use of participatory youth mapping can be found in two books available in our library: *Involving Youth in*

Community Development and Fighting Poverty through Micro Business Generation.

Finally, this second issue of our magazine marks the arrival of "The Solexos", a series coming from the creative pen of our friend Michel Seyrat. The Solexos features the adventures of a group of young people determined to make a difference around them. The Solexos reminds us of Margaret Mead's famous phrase: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

We hope that you will take an interest in reading this second issue and that you will not hesitate to write to us with your reactions, criticisms, and suggestions. We await your contributions to add to our new section that remains inevitably missing from our magazine: Letters from our Readers.

Please have a good read!

Dominique Bénard





STORY

From organization to emancipation

By Philippe Missotte

TRAINING OF YOUNG KANAK STUDENTS IN NEW CALEDONIA, 1971-1975

This article recounts the experience of training young Kanak adults¹ in New Caledonia. In February 1971, the Secretary General of the Territory², Michel Levallois and Maître Jean Lèques, President of the Territorial Assembly, asked me to take charge of socio-cultural activities and the training of youth leaders in New Caledonia. The underlying objective was not simple. As noted at the time: *"The priority is the Kanaks. The aim is to establish, first of all, bridges with the Melanesian environment."* These confidential terms, which would remain so, guided the action which I was tasked to take on.

The historical context of colonization had created a gap between Europeans and Kanaks.

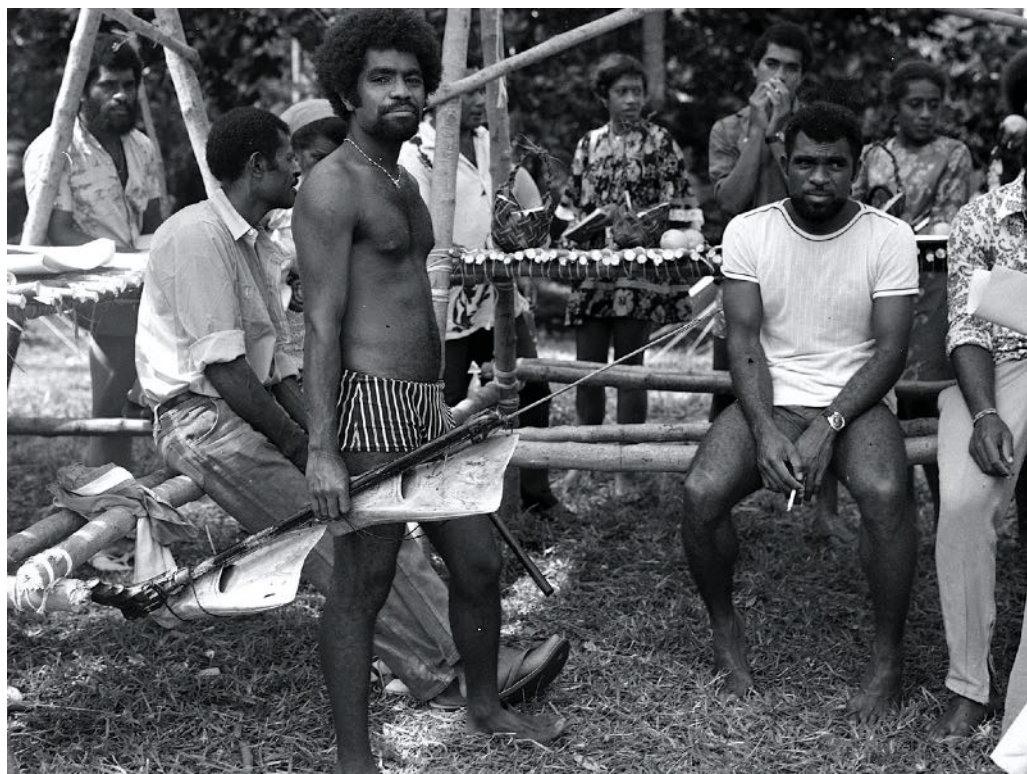
Demographically, the two populations were roughly equal, but great inequality persisted on all other dimensions: housing, socio-economic levels, socio-cultural participation... The objective of creating links between the European and Kanak worlds would bring the socio-cultural organizational project into an important area: that of development.

First contacts

The dual aspect of my function - non-formal youth education and Kanak development - was confirmed on my arrival (June 1972) in the presence of the Acting Director of Youth and Sports to whom my mission would be administratively attached. *"The*

Kanaks want to enter the modern world. They are behind the window, but do not know how to enter the door of a world that intimidates them. They may lose patience. Europeans are getting scared. They realize that Kanaks exist." The Youth and Sports Inspector said nothing during the meeting with the Secretary General, but once on the street, he asserted that: *"We take care of the youth, not the Kanaks."*

Caledonia and the Territory's administrative services in which colonial past has marked the prevailing inherited mentality. However, a project was required of us from the outset. It would involve young people in Nouméa. During the summer holidays, urban children were left to their own devices. We were tasked with creating a set of activity centers: "Beach 1000"³. Once the center managers had been trained and



To train change agents, the method is based on projects conducted with the group, and on alternating between life in Nouméa and stays with the tribal community. Above is a meeting to prepare a project for a "survival" operation on an islet.

time activities, every day, for 1000 children of Nouméa on the beaches outside the city.

Training agents of change

The main project of the mission was about to take shape. We wanted to train agents of change. It was about getting young people - or any audience - to discover together the shortcomings of their environment, their needs, as well as their aspirations in order to imagine their most appropriate responses, and to eventually lead their own actions for positive change... and to do so with success. It was about "going backwards" from the audience, letting the audience take the lead: not waiting for someone else to do the work for them. This organizing principle indicates the kind of methodology we would employ in our work. We wanted to rely on young people as they are, their culture, their achievements, their family, as well as their friends; and we hoped to support their growing awareness of their challenges and dreams so that they might discover for themselves their intrinsic capacity to act for change. This

objective would set young people in motion in activities that they would take charge of in order to become the ones developing their own society. The principle, that the trainers shared - which Jean-Marie Tjibaou enriched, which René Richard and Gilbert Barillon supported, and which the recently appointed Director of Youth and Sports also supported - corresponded to the pedagogical project of the Scout of France Pioneers. That pedagogy had, at its core, the principle of deciding and designing projects together: Cooperate to organize and prepare; implement, evaluate and conclude; and then start over, team up, cooperate, again, at all levels, sharing responsibility for all actions.

The first step was to recruit and train auxiliary "instructors" from the Territory. They would liaise with the trainees. Presented by the popular education associations, the management team selected⁵ and trained three auxiliary instructors for six months. The first long internship (nine months) began in June 1973 with seventeen students aged

25 to 45. A jury chaired by the Director of Youth and Sports selected, via interview, these 17 from twenty-five potential candidates. This recruitment and training activity would continue, each year, with the offering of a short three-month refresher course, known as "Éveil," for thirty trainees, followed by a longer course known as "Promotion"⁶ for twenty of them. Overall, these trainees were Kanak, except for one European and one Wallisian, and fairly representative of the population.⁷ They demonstrated skill, imagination, and creativity in all practical activities. After a period during which they behaved, on the whole, with reserve, they began to express themselves with ease, often with considerable depth. They took notes. Their difficulties would become more pronounced when they had to analyze situations and prepare reports.

Our concern? How can we foment cooperation? Our answer? Without saying it: By living it. The first care is daily life. It accompanies the educational approach, centered on the pedagogy of the project. We would see that it would

encounter obstacles within a traditional society vs. the democratic life of the group: the going back and forth between life at the Center and stays at home with the tribe - research in urban areas, and then back with the tribe. This created a tension. All training programs would be designed on the same principle that we detail below.

Taking charge of daily life

Ensuring material life is an elementary way of creating care and, in this case, reacting to the usual pattern of New Caledonian assistance. Students, in groups of three, were responsible for the small apartment made available to them.⁸ Each team would be responsible for buying its own food, the cooking, and management of its own budget, one the collectively generated by pooling their individual scholarships. This requirement immediately led to the autonomy of the trainees and to the development of teamwork. It would extend to the entire group for more ambitious projects. During tribal stays, responsibilities were shared for stewardship, travel, camp site

planning, ad hoc equipment management, tents, dishes, etc.

The three instructors would live with the group, guaranteeing the maintenance of scheduled activities, the follow-up of logistics matters, and managing the permanent relationship that was evolving with the team of trainers. They monitored the preparation and reporting of surveys, offered support during visits, drove the vehicles, etc. Gradually, they would lead the training sessions.

The democratic life of the group

From the second phase of activities onwards, the group's organization would change towards more involvement of trainees. Basile, a volunteer in the civil service, would remain as the only instructor. Trainees assumed the roles that the other two instructors previously had held. Delegates from the activity group were elected to the various functions: group presidency, library management, cleanliness and hygiene, atmosphere. The group discussed these functions during weekly plenary sessions known as "the forum," held in the

presence of the team of trainers. More technical meetings, on request, often for the running of ongoing projects, brought together trainers and delegates. This embryonic democratic life, established from the second round of organizational activity, required extra attention, but also created a more responsible, more adult, less academic atmosphere. After a few reminders and adjustments, the delegates were doing their jobs perfectly. This way of distributing the group's facilitation functions corresponded well with Kanak life where everyone has their own function, but with one difference. The myth refers to the clans where the person in charge of a specific function is located - the clan "chief", the offshore fisherman, healers, midwives, seers. The elders' group defines all the possible topics for each function.

Project pedagogy

For each major activity, the group decided on a project, and then organized, implemented, and evaluated it. At the beginning of the awakening courses, the teams were invited to propose an exit activity. Three

times the chosen project was a survival operation on an islet for two days, with the obligation to create an accommodation and to harvest food from the wild. This choice, so close to a return to natural life, raised questions. The trainees explained that they wanted to live "as before" and seek out the so-called lost skills, in fact very present: to make fire by friction, to fish, to cook, to sleep in huts, etc. For the group, these outings were the first evidence of a training process in which they were directly involved in cooperation with the trainers, and where they could demonstrate their ability to organize themselves.

With the exception of the Nouméa Film Festival, the projects were oriented towards internships in tribal communities, with workcamps, rehabilitation of community facilities, clearing of coffee bushes, etc. and organizing evening shows presented to often remote, rarely visited, tribes. The team delegate and team council monitored and evaluated, daily, the organization of the group's activities and material life, with the trainers

involved on an equal footing with the trainees.

Attracting the curiosity of the real - Alternative and tribal stays

Paolo Freire inspired the following approach: "*Man can only change the world if he knows that the world can be changed and changed by him*". An investigation of reality to create questions on the part of the trainees precedes any approach to a discovery, a new material, a new tool, sociology, social psychology, a fresh management approach, or critical press analysis. The team searched for new ideas both on their returns to the tribe or visits to a European establishment, bank, company, etc. Then, large groups, in plenary, considered and listed concretely what we wanted to observe and how.

This first stage of the work led the trainees to identify questions together by reflecting on their future observations. It led to new paths of knowledge, often radically different from their previous understandings, provoking new curiosity that had hitherto been ignored or



The tribal stays allowed the trainees to organize service projects and to deepen their culture through surveys with the elders. They invented activities with young people in teams, and shows that they would present on trips to visit the tribes.

repressed, particularly on usually taboo questions. The social climate of the country implied that things would remain unsaid... both on the European and Kanak sides. The trainees in teams, immersed in the environment, would discuss

among themselves what they observed, as well as the reactions they encountered. They reported and discussed all of this in the large group with the trainers.

The trainees' interest focused primarily on leisure activities, games, outings, sports activities, organizing groups of young people or children, and especially planning for the evenings and the small shows, constantly in a process of invention. Very quickly the group would be given requests from the tribes, including ones for services (clearing brush, clearing roads, cleaning up beaches) and for community works (rehabilitating premises, pouring concrete slabs, building huts). These kinds of tasks require not only some training in engineering skills, but also knowledge of the way in which projects are implemented.

Such a background can ensure that learners deliver questions to the communities that may open their minds to the realities and practices to be attended in accord to their reasoned observations on the reality at hand. This approach contrasts with the didactic objectives of the School... whose memory constantly invades the approach to training. Suggesting to these future leaders that they question their world and act by and for themselves reversed

their understanding and reproduction of their process of learning. For our team, learning was to become vitally curious and to act according to one's observations: Seeking, thinking, and acting.

Discovering the reality behind appearances created a constant dialectical appreciation and understanding of their previous experiences and knowledge. This allowed them to add to their skill acquisition approach: the habit of attentive and methodical listening, a way to avoid routine. This mixture between reality and training represents several safeguards for the trainees: the training is rooted in their reality, not hovering around in realms of theory or top/down teaching. It prompts avoiding of the ordinary as well as "self-righteous," cliché-ridden language.

These questions stimulate debate and allow an active pedagogy based on the expression of needs in a framework of freedom. Knowledge is formed in understanding a new relationship with others and the

environment, but also in adjusting concepts as you go. Movement from one world to another creates questions gleaned from reality. It arouses curiosity and the desire to learn and to give meaning to strides forward and to what is being undertaken.

By observing the environment, trainees also prepare for their future roles as community leaders, requiring of them an enhanced capacity to negotiate with the community for action by adopting appropriate attitudes and ways of communication. This pedagogy of curiosity based on permanent movement across cultures produces a symbiosis between action within real situations and analysis of the same. It also highlights constraints owing to customs and tradition.

Facilitation does not consist of external recommendations to "do things" that may use up time. Facilitation goes through a constant process of conducting research. After their stays in the field, it could be seen that the trainees not only made discoveries, but also were



In addition to surveys in neighborhoods and companies to research social realities, each year the film festival would invite the population of Nouméa to film screenings for about fifteen days, which the broadcasters had not scheduled, considering them too intellectual. Every evening, the trainees presented to the audience a film on the agenda of a film club. These events increased the trainees' self-confidence and made the training known to the urban and European public.

soothed as if they had a better grasp of the tension between the two cultures in question: Kanak and Western. The

outlook was intended to enhance their professionalization as adult trainers. Its implementation



Each trainee arrived in the training program with previous knowledge related to his or her culture. Training required finding a consonance between old and new concepts.

consisted of making learners artisans within their own training in the concrete experience situated at the crossroad of learning, seeking, and undertaking.

Training in cooperation. Trust and confidence

Training for group cooperation was the most important aspect of the program. It was part of the learning method as well as the transmission of skills and pedagogy¹⁰ that we used. Basically, how was one to keep on training, hour after hour?

A quick psycho-sociological detour can shed light on these assertions. Each group undergoing training, in this case each Kanak and/or Caledonian, had previous knowledge. When he or she arrived at the internship, s/he looked at, conceived of and lived the world in accord with his/her culture. Culture was and remains expressed through concepts. There may be contradictions or conflicts between concepts transmitted by traditions, on one hand, and learned ones, on the other. Training requires avoiding

conflict and finding common ground between the two. It is essential to understand each, but also to transmit ideas regarding both. This process begins with knowing the learner, respecting his or her person and believing, as the trainer really should feel, that he or she can succeed. False attitudes are those employed *"to make people believe that they are respected"* while deeply doubting the learners' abilities and dwelling upon the source of their possible academic failures. The trainees would say to us several times: *"Here we are trusted, while at school we knew that the teacher had condemned us to failure before we even started"*. Although this was probably false, at least in part, it was completely felt.

In the daily functioning of the program, this certainty concerning the learner's eventual success manifested itself in attitudes of empathy, demonstrating the trainer's conviction that the learner *would* achieve his objectives, which we planned to develop *with* him. It involved ways of living and talking with one another, within the group and with the trainers;

as well as regarding the image that the group in formation would offer to the outside world. This type of peaceful relationship created mutual representational systems that generated a climate of mutual trust and a desire to learn and to help other people learn. The intention was found a new outlook within the language used, the rhythm of the speech, and the dialogue attentive to all reactions and concerns. They made an effort to paraphrase and to use simple words as bridges toward complex concepts. This coherence in behavior opened a path of transmission, discovery and learning. Ignoring the importance of *how* ideas might be shared would, by contrast, create a crippling obstacle to mutual understanding and a sure path to failure.

Towards a desired cooperation

Kanak people are used to cooperating in traditional actions that reactivate alliances between clans, thus strengthening both the society and culture. For this reason, it is not uncommon to see a wedding or a period of

mourning involve a gathering, for several days, of three to four hundred guests. Mobilization for innovative projects was and remains more difficult. The ceremonies mentioned aim to strengthen Kanak life by renewing the ways of the ancestors, of the community's shared myths. But the project would entail the unexpected, something new. Future facilitators should not lose sight of this dimension and negotiate sustained cooperation, to undergird any project, with the customary authorities: elders, the headman, mothers, and beyond the group itself. Thus we now see the "beach 1000" holiday activity centers for children multiply, year after year, among the tribes of Grande Terre and the islands: the "mothers" cooking lunch, the men building the infrastructure, and the older young people becoming volunteers training and leading the younger ones. The Kanak know how to innovate, adopt projects,

mobilize themselves, and undertake them, because they have found a method that they know will degrade neither their way of life nor their culture. They can be sure of this because they themselves will have chosen it.

This was the case for the first Kanak Arts Festival, Melanesia 2000, in 1975, and for some subsequent projects that the Aid Fund (Fadil) supported between 1975 and 1980. But this, as Kipling would say, is another story.

Philippe Missotte

1. The term, "Kanak" refers to the Melanesians of the New Caledonia archipelago. For a long time, the name, written "canaque," derived from the Polynesian *kanaka*, and was used in a pejorative way: "canaque nap", "canaque work". The activists for the independence of the Territory, in the 1970s, adopted this new spelling. On 9 January 1985, the provisional government of Kanaky, presided over by Jean-Marie Tjibaou, chose the spelling, "Kanak which does not change in accord with either gender or number, or the nature of the word's usage as a noun, adjective, or adverb," replacing the previous "canaque."
2. The Secretary General of the Territory, directly under the orders of the High Commissioner representing the French Government, is responsible for the functioning of the Administration.
3. With René Orrezzoli, Secretary General of the "Fédération des Oeuvres Laïques" (FOL) and President of the Territorial Youth Council, which was responsible for all the logistical follow-up of the operation.
4. "Brevet d'aptitude aux fonctions d'animateur", certificate of aptitude for the function of youth organizer. "Brevet d'aptitudes aux fonctions de directeur", certificate of aptitude for the position of youth center director". Each center

has about 100 children per neighborhood with two directors, ten certified youth leaders and twenty assistant youth leaders over the age of 16. These centers would then be developed throughout the Territory. They led to the training of the first generation of youth leaders and the creation of youth leaders' training associations and inaugurated a new way of looking at socio-cultural action beyond sports: until then, the sole institutional concern.

5. Basile Citré presented by the Young Protestants, Petelo Falelavaki by the Wallisian association and Martine Dahl, by the FOL.
6. It is significant to note that the term "promotion" is coined by the Administration and preferred to the term "development". It implies that the Kanaks will be "promoted" to the same rank as the Europeans.
7. Ten men, nine Kanaks and one European and seven women, all Kanaks, including Jean-Marie Tjibaou's wife, Marie-Claude Wetta, formerly a basic education officer. 11 of them have the academic level of the primary school certificate, 3 have the BEPC (First cycle secondary school certificate) and 3 have the baccalauréat (high school diploma).
8. For the first course in guest houses a little outside the city. For the following courses, ten studios for three people, with shower room and kitchenette, were built in a property in the center of Nouméa, formerly the residence of the prison director, including a park and a house for classrooms, the library and the equipment warehouse.
9. Although the CeFA only welcomes adults, I use the term pedagogy, which means "educating children", to refer to the educational process. I prefer it to andragogy, prized by the Québécois, but sexist. Pedagogy has become in everyday language, the study and implementation of methods and conditions for learning.





Top left, Hienghène dancers. On the right, the current case arrow of the local cultural center. In the bottom left corner, presentation of paternal donations for the wedding ceremony in Tiédanite.

DECIPHERING

New-Caledonia 1970: one territory, two populations

New Caledonia, a French Overseas Territory, is an archipelago located in the South Pacific. The main island is 400 km long and 64 km at its widest point. In 1970, the population numbered 130,000 people, comprised of some 40,000 Kanaks, about as many Europeans, in addition to a few thousand Wallisians, Tahitians, and inhabitants of the New Hebrides (which became Vanuatu in 1980). Located in the southern part of the Territory, the capital Nouméa contains a third of the inhabitants, with a large white majority. The Kanaks live in the interior of the Territory and the Loyalty Islands (see map on page 26).

Kanak society

To work with the Kanaks, the first difficulty is to know their culture. The development agent must "learn" about Kanak



A traditional hut built next to the Tjibaou cultural centre.

culture; even more importantly, to approach it with respect. He or she will quickly discover the first obstacle: Kanaks tend to withdraw into themselves. Telling how his clan lives is not done; neither to members of other clans, nor to strangers.

Kanak¹ society's clans are complex. To decipher the society's subtleties and begin to understand them, with profundity, requires years of work and a great deal of humility. They are based on the transmission of the Word, the founding myth of each lineage, of the relationships between them, which are constantly updated in daily relationships, especially during the feasts of life and death and episodes of conflicts and forgiveness. But first and foremost, one must understand that which is constantly referred to as the earth.

It is in its soil, topography, and toponymy that Melanesian society exists. It is through the "*terroir*," that lines and lineages are incarnated; that social organization and beliefs derive their essence and meaning. This genesis, specific to each lineage, commands the vision of the world to express the harmony of living and being together, the relationship with distant fathers to better establish their close sons on a concrete *terroir*. More than a chronology, it establishes the classificatory order. But from the

first lineage named to the last, everyone is a brother and, in this immemorial order, customary services take place. This ordered space allows the Kanak to be located and to be in the world. From the slightest narrative to the solemn proclamation of the myth, the narrator hangs his speech on the details of the field.

Emerging from the cosmos, linked to the invisible universe that governs nature, the story of



Doorframe of a large hut.



Nouméa, place des cocotiers. Kanaks have long been held outside the city. In 1970-80, they lived mainly in low-rent housing and, in large numbers, in slums or squats. These areas, which are constantly increasing, are difficult for the Nouméans to accept and contrast with the European districts of villas and buildings.

its origins reveals to each group its guardian spirit - animal, or vegetable - its spirit-symbol², living within the nature of New Caledonia.

Thus, the myth gives the land, the society, and the social place of each Kanak; the land is the identity. It contributes to the basic personality of the Kanak man and woman. Kanak culture is based on the tripod of terroir-myth-social organization.

The colonial context

New Caledonia was discovered by Captain James Cook in 1774. Napoleon III of France took possession of it on September 24, 1853. The objective was twofold: to make it a prison and to ensure the French presence in the Pacific against the British.

European settlement was a series of failures. The French settlers were for the most part "landless"³ and found themselves, after three months

at sea, clearing a few hectares, trapped between the Kanaks they were trying to enslave and the convicts that had been released⁴, all fearing each other. At the same time, important mineral resources were discovered, which allowed the development of the mining industry (nickel).⁵ During the Second World War, Caledonia became the American rear base in the conflict with Japan.⁶

In the 1970s, Caledonia was administered as a French metropolitan department. No measures were considered to deal with the specificity of the Kanak (45% of the population⁷), who resided in so-called "reserve" lands belonging to the French State, and made available in perpetuity to the Kanak tribes. The colonial legacy keeps the Kanaks as second-class citizens.⁸ The basic mechanism of colonization is the negation of the Other; the Other has no culture. A leading European politician interviewed on the radio on Kanak culture replied, "I only know the yam culture." Stronger than social and economic marginalization, the denial of culture is the

foundation of European New Caledonian society, which exists only on basis of the non-existence of Kanaks and their "reduction to insignificance"⁹.

A book title on the history of the 1917 Kanak revolution, "Native Land, Land of Exile"¹⁰ reflects the situation of the first inhabitants. They occupied Caledonia and the islands long before the arrival of the French in 1853. One hundred and fifty years later, they are kept on the



Nickel in 1970 was the mainstay of the New Caledonian economy. The Kanaks, mainly employed in mining, hardly benefited from the financial resources of nickel.



margins of the economy, politics, and "official" European life.¹¹ Between 1860 and 1940, a large part of their land, the richest, was expropriated and given to the settlers.¹² In all areas, the Kanaks are reduced to picking up the crumbs.

From 1966 to 1971, mining production created an unprecedented economic expansion. The GDP of the Territory had multiplied by 2.5.¹³ The profit motive ruled everything. The only objective had become the pursuit of profit. Even the support arrangements, ostensibly in place, remained deficient. No global plan was forthcoming, either to make this evolution coherent, or to compensate for the shocks underway. No human reflection was even

mentioned. No measures were planned for the rural world, especially, since importers handled most supplies. A fortiori, the Melanesian ethnic group did not benefit much from the bargain - it would remain out of the loop, except to provide manpower. When a reduction in staff was deemed necessary, Melanesians were first to be laid off.

In 1969, more than 50% of the population was under 20 years of age. The demography of the Territory's population presented a double risk; first, for employment, but also on a socio-political level. The arrival of French citizens increased a non-Melanesian electoral mass that was worrying for the first inhabitants. The claim for



The Territory is struggling to develop tourism. Rural and kanak areas are not involved.

independence is still a minimal, hidden, and silent phenomenon, but its foundations are already well established in the relations between Whites and Kanak.

1. Each major linguistic group follows this general pattern in its territory and in its own way, with the specific vocabulary of its language.
2. Often referred to as a Totem. Bensa A. and Rivierre J.-C., *Les Chemins de l'Alliance, L'organisation sociale et ses représentations en Nouvelle-Calédonie (Région de Touho - aire linguistique Cèmuhi)*, Marseille, SELAF.

3. Merle Isabelle, 1995, *Colonial Experiences. La Nouvelle-Calédonie (1853-1920)*, Paris, Belin, 480 p.(Part 2, Chapters 5 & 6).

4. Some 21,630 convicts were registered in prison, including 1822 Maghrebi deportees and 4250 "communards" from the Paris Commune. After serving his sentence, the convict was obligated to double it on a prison farm (260,000 ha of land were taken from the Kanak) and then theoretically receive a penal concession to be developed. Many unemployed "relegates" roamed the Territory in gangs.

5. Nickel mines represent less than 1% of the world's land mass. In Caledonia, they occupy 5,600 km², almost a third of the surface area of Grande Terre, the main island.



Source : Carte des activités industrielles et de services de Nouvelle-Calédonie, éditions Hatier, Paris, 1990.

6. 1,200,000 American soldiers passed through New Caledonia.
7. But comprise the majority in the North Province (73.8%) and the Loyalty Islands Province (96.6%).
8. In France, institutional apartheid is unconstitutional. However, after the insurrection of 1878 and under pressure from the settlers, the "Code de l'Indigénat," instituted in 1885 for ten years, confined the Kanak to "reserves." This exclusion must have been embedded in people's mindset and became an acquired characteristic of the society. The "code" was extended for ten years, under pressure from settlers, until 1946. After this date, as daily contact has become more common, physical distance became social distance through exclusion from office jobs, sales positions, or any position requiring relations with the public that could provide proof that a Kanak might behave like everyone else. Any pretext is sufficient to prevent the Melanesians, insofar as they might so desire, from being imagined as equal to Europeans.
9. Tjibaou, introduction to the presentation file of Melanesia 2000.
10. Tjibaou, introduction to the presentation file of Melanesia 2000.
11. Dousset-Leenhardt Roselène, 1976, *Terre natale terre d'exil*, Paris, Maisonneuve and Larose, p. 317.
12. "This situation is reflected in the institutionalization of 'tribes' bringing together entire lineages of 'displaced' people to allocate land to settlers on so-called inalienable 'reserve' lands. Their creation, 'is similar to an expropriation in the public interest with a minimal amount of compensation in principle.' The entire colonial history of New Caledonia is that of a struggle over land." In 1976, "less than 1,000 agricultural workers, European or assimilated, control some 370,000 hectares of property with most of the 145,000 hectares of State leases. Saussol Alain, 1985, "La terre et la confrontation des hommes en Nouvelle-Calédonie" in *Les temps modernes*, March 1985, n° 464 p.1612.
13. "In 1983, Caledonia had 2,035 non-Melanesian farms, 619 of which were main properties, 1,017 secondary and 399 undivided between several farmers, half of which belonged to 4% of the owners and 57% of the total owned less than 25 ha." p. 461. On the other hand, 25,000 Melanesians [about 6,000 families] hold mainly 165,000 hectares of reserves and about ten thousand hectares of private concessions, to which a few civil societies can be added. [...] Saussol Alain, 1979, *L'héritage, Essai sur le problème foncier mélanésien en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, Publication de la Société des Océanistes n°40, Paris, musée de l'Homme, 500 p. .
14. The Territory's GDP in 1969 increased from 8,505 million CFP (46,750 MFF) to 34,020 million CFP (187,100 MFF) in 1970. The progression index is from 100 to 248.

DOSSIER

Participatory mapping

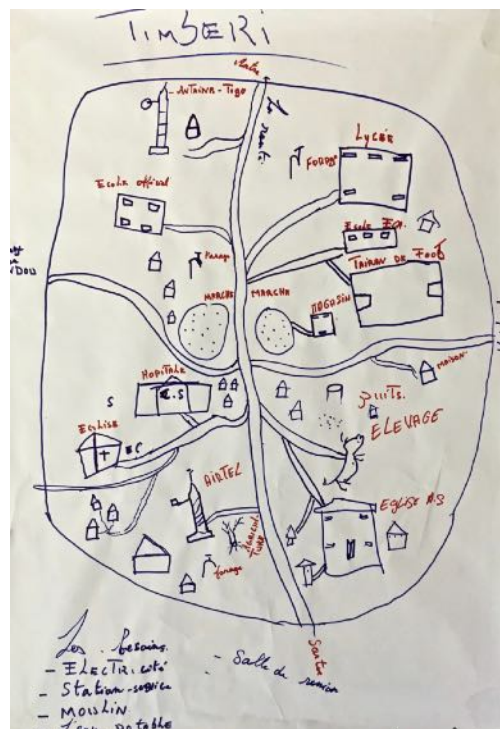
A COOPERATIVE APPROACH THAT EMPOWERS MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

"The cards are not just pieces of paper. They tell stories, conversations, lives and songs lived somewhere and are inseparable from the political and cultural contexts in which they are used." (Warren, 2004)

Participatory mapping is a cooperative approach that has been used in the design of development projects for the past twenty years or so. It can be broadly defined as the creation of maps by local populations, often with the involvement of supporting organizations, including governments (at different levels), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities, and other actors involved in land-access development and planning.

The birth of participatory mapping

For a long time,



Participatory map produced in Chad to identify the resources and needs of the community.

analysis. It seemed perfectly rational to start from such an analysis to help communities facing "underdevelopment," but as the text in the box (next page) explains, a needs-based analysis leads people to believe that their community accumulates all the negative factors and that it is absolutely unable to transform itself without external help. They are not motivated to take charge of themselves. By the late 1980s, the failure of many programs made people aware of the ineffectiveness of solutions external experts provide which are generally based on brief and mainly quantitative surveys. This was due to the low involvement of local populations.

An "Accelerated Participatory Research Method" (APR) was then developed. A collective process of discussion was initiated with the population in order to involve them in the search for data on resources as well as needs. This collective discussion process is facilitated by various visualization and dialogue tools (Venn diagrams, transects, calendars, drawings, etc.),

including participatory mapping. The latter method has the advantage of being easy to implement, inexpensive, attractive, and stimulating to discussion/dialogue engagement. These qualities have led, over the past twenty years, to a greater complexity of participatory mapping and its autonomous development as an instrument for participatory diagnosis.

The participatory mapping process

People are invited to come together to map their community. This can be done on paper or on a board, but also on the ground, on any open and cleared ground. First of all, a few landmarks are placed, then the map is built by successive contributions of marks and objects. The way the villagers make the map and indicate what they find important, which provides the starting points for discussions on the essential aspects of village life.

The needs-analysis approach

Focusing on needs often convinces people that their community is defined by the accumulation of all the negative factors and is absolutely unable to transform itself. They end up internalizing these difficulties and perceive themselves as deficient, unable to take charge of their future. They develop an attitude of dependence and believe that only external intervention can solve problems. To obtain funding, leaders then focus on community issues and highlight "*how bad things are going here.*" As a result, the funds made available are managed by professional stakeholders and external services. It is clear that with such a climate and a total lack of ownership of change by the inhabitants, even the best studied projects can only fail. When significant results are not achieved, more resources are allocated to external operators to try to resolve the difficulties. As Jody Kretzmann (2010) suggests: "*All this tends to feed a downward spiral, leading to residents having a negative self-image and experiencing a growing sense of hopelessness.*"

The asset-analysis approach

Focusing on resources or assets can create a dynamic that is very different from the traditional needs-based approach. This new approach is called Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). It recognizes that all members of a community (including individuals, voluntary groups, businesses, and organizations) have skills, interests, and experience that can contribute to community development. This does not mean that all their problems must be hidden under the carpet. But the best way to effectively address the challenges facing the community is to have a good knowledge of the resources available to work on local issues. Thus, an important starting point is to identify the community's assets—the skills and talents of local residents, as well as the capacities available or possible through local organizations and institutions. The collection of these resources provides the means to address a range of important issues that impact the community. People assess the resources, skills, and experience available in the community, then organize themselves to determine and take appropriate action. No community can improve its situation in a sustainable way simply by waiting for help from others.



In Chad, young Central African refugees sketch out a map of their community to identify the resources and needs from which they will build their micro-business project.

Facilitating dialogue and bringing out local knowledge

The collective construction of the map facilitates dialogue between multiple actors and gradually reveals the territorial elements that make sense to the group. It cannot be

considered as a "faithful and objective" representation of the territory, because, like any cartographic representation, it is a communicative system that "presents a specific vision of the world". Through the mapping work, a negotiation is

initiated between the participants that makes it possible to bring out:

- the values and knowledge attributed to space by different actors;
- the issues behind the use of a resource by a plurality of subjects;
- the evolution of land use and organization over time.

Constructed in this manner, the maps, although they are drawn by people who are often illiterate, are very telling and reveal a community's perception of where it lives and its main characteristics. Development specialists themselves are often surprised by this. One of them, R. Chambers, said:

"When I think of the 1980s today, it is with a feeling of disbelief and shame; how could we have been ignorant for so long, before we discovered what local people could do?" (Chambers, 2006).

Empowering marginalized populations

Participatory-mapping practitioners provide community members with the skills and expertise to develop the maps themselves, to represent their knowledge of the area, and to decide how and to whom to communicate the information they obtain.

The participatory mapping process can influence the internal dynamics of a community. It can help to strengthen its cohesion, encourage its members to participate in decision-making on access to land, raise awareness of land issues of greatest concern, and ultimately contribute to the empowerment of local communities and their members.

The development of tools

Participatory mapping has gradually used increasingly sophisticated mapping tools to communicate community information to decision-makers in a credible way.



In Chad, a young woman maps her community in cooperation with members of her team.

The practical cards

Practical maps are the simplest form of participatory mapping. They are drawn from memory, either on the ground (ground mapping) or on paper (topographical sketching). They are not based on exact measurements, consistent scale or georeferencing, but they indicate the relative size and location of the characteristics.

Scale maps

Photocopied scale maps or blank plastic sheets placed above a map, aerial photographs or satellite images are used to directly

reproduce local information and knowledge from discussions with the community. The position of the features is determined according to their location in relation to natural landmarks (rivers, mountains, lakes, etc.). This method is usually used when accurate and inexpensive scale maps are available. Additional information can be read from the map using GPS data collected in the field

Models in 3 dimensions

Scale relief models can be made from the contour lines of a topographic map. Cardboard sheets are cut according to contour lines and glued one on top of the other to create a three-dimensional representation of the topography. Geographical features can be marked on the model by drawing pins (for points), colored threads (for lines), and paint (for areas). At the end of the exercise, the model remains in the community. It can become a permanent facility reflecting community spatial knowledge and is often displayed in a community center. The models



can be used for many planning exercises.

Geographic information systems

GIS are computer programs that collect, organize, and manage spatial data on, for example, topography, hydrography, vegetation, roads, crops, livestock, and habitats in order to build databases that combine and present this information by geographically locating it. Prior to the 1990s, GIS were difficult to access, expensive, and accessible only to experts. But since that time, the movement of participatory GIS has grown: experts have begun working with communities to democratize the use of these technologies. Thus, in Madagascar, participatory GIS

were used to establish a Local Land Use Plan (LULP) with the participation of communities during public sessions, in order to identify, in a consensual way, the users of the different parcels and to give them a land certificate with an extract from the LULP where the boundaries of their parcel are shown.

Multimedia and web-based mapping

Maps, even when supplemented by text, are often insufficient to represent local knowledge perfectly, especially when working with non-literate populations. Local knowledge about land is often contained in stories and legends using metaphors and specific terminology that is difficult to transmit in writing. Multimedia mapping combines the use of maps with other digital media such as video, image, and sound, which record the visual and oral aspects of local knowledge. This increasingly popular form of participatory mapping helps local populations to express, document, and communicate their traditional and contemporary territorial

knowledge through a medium closer to traditional oral knowledge transmission systems.

The usefulness of participatory mapping

A participatory mapping project can meet 6 main objectives.

1. Transmit space knowledge to external organizations

Participatory maps demonstrate to external organizations how a community assesses, understands, and interacts with its traditional lands and immediate environment. Maps represent complex information in an easily understandable and accessible format, allowing groups with different languages, cultures, land values, and worldviews to easily communicate and understand the information presented.

2. Preserving and archiving local knowledge

Local populations, with the help of NGOs working with them, can use participatory

mapping to collect and preserve cultural stories and record the territorial knowledge of elders. This information is recorded to prevent its loss with the disappearance of the elders and changes in traditional lifestyles.

3. Plan land use and resource management

Participatory maps are used to plan traditional land management and can make community knowledge about land and resources visible to external actors. They have helped communities communicate their long, but often invisible experience in resource management. This includes the identification and location of specific natural resources such as forest products, medicinal plants, pasture lands, water sources, hunting and fishing grounds, fuel sources, and construction materials (McCall, 2002).

With the rapid adoption of participatory GIS technologies, participatory mapping projects are increasingly contributing to local resource planning and

management by allowing community information to be directly integrated and compared with government planning information and processes.

4. Advocating for change

Local populations, and indigenous groups in particular, are often threatened with being driven off their lands by agro-industry or mining. Through participatory mapping, they can then appropriate the state techniques of official mapping and create their own maps. With the latter, they advocate for the legitimacy of customary



A key discussion for a community project: what resources can be used to meet the needs of the population?

claims to land and resources (Peluso, 1995). Such maps can also become a tool in a broader advocacy strategy. They reflect the demands of communities, which often differ from the government's idea of who owns what.

In a number of cases, counter-maps have been used to delimit and require the reclaiming of areas of customary land that the State or private companies had granted themselves.

5. Building capacity within communities

The mapping process brings community members together to share ideas and concepts, thereby strengthening community cohesion. When elders share traditional place names and stories with other members of their community through the development of maps, they generate new interest in local knowledge, especially among young people. This can help the community maintain a sense of belonging to space and a relationship to the land, which

in turn will strengthen the sense of identity.

6. Addressing resource conflicts

Participatory mapping can be used to avoid and reduce conflicts between a community and outsiders and to address internal conflicts. Maps can represent a conflict graphically, by placing the parties in relation to the problem and to each other. When the geographical boundaries of different groups representing the same land claims are indicated (especially when rights and responsibilities over land and resources are not clear), these areas of tension become visible. This process can identify conflict areas and reduce tension to identifiable and therefore manageable units. When people with different opinions map their territory together, they become aware of each other's experiences and vision.

Youth participatory mapping

Youth participatory mapping is a participatory development strategy that encourages youth and adults to engage their communities to document community resources, needs and opportunities. Seeing the community through the eyes of young people gives a more complete assessment of what a community has to offer. The resulting information describes the living conditions and economic situation of young people, as perceived by young people themselves and members of their communities, and records their own suggestions for improving their social status.

A positive approach

Just as development projects focus more on the resources of the community than on its problems, educational programs for young people tend to focus on the resources of young people, rather than focus on the problems they pose. They develop a positive approach.

Youth mapping is based on positive youth development principles and practices, in which young people are not only active participants in their learning, but also work in partnership with adults to conduct community development projects. The growing interest in youth participation is accompanied by a change in the development community, which can come to see youth as assets. From this perspective, young people are seen collectively and individually as partners and future leaders in development at the local, national, regional, and international levels, rather than as a problem to be solved.

The value of youth participatory mapping

Youth participatory mapping goes beyond other methods of youth participation, because instead of simply asking young people what they think through interviews or group discussions, it engages them directly in action by sending them to neighborhoods to interview other youth, residents, local elected

officials, and business leaders about community resources and needs.

Because young people have the greatest interest in building the future of their community (they will be the main beneficiaries), their contribution often improves the sustainability of community planning. In addition, their enthusiasm, creativity, and idealism bring a fresh



In Burundi, a young person presents his team's community map and explains what resources their business project will be based on and what community needs it will address.

What is participatory youth mapping about?

The information collected represents an invaluable resource in areas such as:

- Community service planning
- The development of income-generating activities and the fight against unemployment
- Vocational training programs
- The fight against trafficking in human beings
- Identification of possible choices for community development
- The development of non-formal educational programs

Two books available in the online library "Youth Engagement in Community Development" and "Fighting Poverty through Micro-Business Generation" show how participatory mapping can be used to enable young people to identify the resources and needs of their community. From there they can work to develop social action projects or micro-business projects.



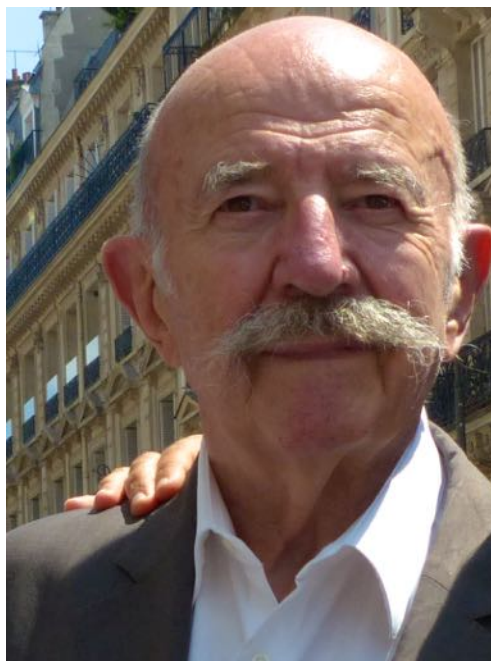
GUEST OF THE MONTH

Philippe Missotte

Philippe, thank you for accepting this interview. If I understand correctly, it was the organization of a mini-jamboree in New Caledonia in the framework of Scouting that led you to take an interest in the Kanak people. Can you say a little more about the personal experience that this discovery represented for you?

Since January 1961, as a member of the National Scout Team of France, I have been one of the actors in the reform that has strengthened Adolescent Scouting by creating the Pioneers' section (for 14-17 year-olds).

In July-August 1968, I was given the task of accompanying a mini jamboree of 600 Scouts and Guides from the three French territories of the South Pacific to Nouméa. For the next three summers, I returned to the South Pacific to train their adult leaders.



From my first Caledonian stay, I was struck by the inferiorization and marginalization in which colonial society kept the Kanak people.

First observation: the exclusion by my predecessor, the national leader for Overseas France, of a group of thirty European and Melanesian elders, led by a Melanesian



priest, Father Kapéa. The rumor is that "this group of seniors was in politics". However, this group had simply travelled to the islands or Grande Terre and lived in the Kanak tribes. Horror! This Melanesian priest made people discover that Kanak exist, that ethnic groups can meet and bridges can be created. This arbitrary eviction by a passing colonial officer serves the counter-fires that local society ignites when it believes that a group or event is no longer absolutely in line with the status quo, or, as others put it, against the "party line".

The second observation concerns the New Caledonian

delegation to the mini jamboree. Among 250 young people from Nouméa, a group of 20 Melanesian adolescents came from Thio, led by a Caledonian. The small size of this population (the Kanak population is 45.9% of the Territory according to the 1969 census) - is of no concern to anyone. This relative indifference towards the Kanak overlaps with impressions gathered while touring the Grande Terre. We saw them, often with their hands raised for reciprocal greetings - we say tatas - but we did not reciprocate.

These teenagers from Thio offered me my third observation. During a role-playing game, their role was to present a Kanak dance. I mean the term "pilou". Their hesitation, a little embarrassed, their lack of ease was glaring. I was asking questions. The Europeans were explaining: "The Melanesians have lost all their customs. But they take refuge there"... "They don't want to be taken care of"... "They do as they please"... "We can't be interested in the Kanaks", punctuated by a refrain: "They drink a lot."

These observations were in line with my concern for the Third World and the encyclical of Paul VI *Populorum Progressio*. But New Caledonia was not underdeveloped, the per capita income was similar to that of the French metropolis. In 1970, I presented a draft of a survey on New Caledonian youth to the Secretary General of the Territory. I conducted the survey from June to September 1971. Carried out in collaboration with the Territorial Youth Committee (CTJ), it allowed me to have interviews with all the mayors, mostly European, and the

officials of the Territory. A two-day mini-congress in Bourail, brought together more than 100 youth leaders, the majority Kanak. The conclusions stressed the need to train youth workers. This task was entrusted to me.

I left for New Caledonia with my family, Janine and the five girls, convinced that I would participate in the work of my generation. Very quickly I discovered both the correctness of my vision and my naiveté in the face of the colonial world, strongly rooted as it was. We would have to deal with it.

You implemented a youth work project that aimed to emancipate a colonized and marginalized population. How can a cooperative educational practice be an emancipatory practice? What were the objectives of your program? More specifically, what skills did you want to enable young people to acquire? For what role or actions in their society?

We cannot look at 1970 Caledonia with a point of reference in 2019. Emancipation was the least of the concerns of the Territory's

leaders. New Caledonians' main concern was to earn money and, incidentally, in terms of education, attend French Schools and participate in sports. Popular education was the fifth wheel of the cart. The Fédération des Oeuvres Laïques functioned more as a service provider than a movement. It organized activities for people: dance, cinema, theatre, etc. There were a few associations, including the Scouts, with membership focused on Nouméa. One of my tasks was to create Scouting among the tribes.

At the beginning, my concern was focused on empowerment, facilitation skills, and learning to work together. I was thinking of development, without a clear goal of emancipation. My gradual discovery of Kanak culture showed that young people needed a double emancipation: in the European world and in their own. I had a great respect for this dual situation. If I could contribute to it, I would do so by proposing a development approach to individuals and communities. During my entire stay, from 1971 to 1981,



emancipation was for me the business of the Caledonians, not mine. Any attempt in this direction would result in the suppression of the activity as would happen after the Melanésia 2000 Festival.

My problem over these ten years was the lack of recognition of the Kanak and their culture. This led us to seek an institutional support point in the creation of the Development Committee in 1973, following the example of the CTS or the Committee for the Defense of Nature. Tjibaou took over as Chairman and I as General-Secretary. The Committee's first project was a

Kanak Arts Festival, joining the women's movement project, "For a Smiling Melanesian Village" created at the instigation of Tjibaou with Mrs. Pidjot's wife. It amounted to a question of researching what was being lived from within Kanak culture and what might be its future, and presenting it to the non-Kanak population of the Territory who normally ignore it and, to a large extent, despise it. From then on, the training approach undertaken for a few groups of young people extended to all the tribes and indirectly to Europeans.

You quote Paulo Freire in your story. How have Paulo Freire's ideas, on consciousness raising , for example, or on cooperation between teachers and learners, enriched your practice?

Paolo Freire alphabetizes from the words that point out the flaws facing the society of landless farmers. René Richard uses this model to create the Kanak Culture Circle. In two hours with a series of posters representing essential phases of Kanak cultural expression

and starting from the participants' languages, a small group could raise questions concerning the problems of their culture. Like the pedagogy of oppressed within the Association des "Maisons familiales Rurales," that I discovered with André Duffaure, the principle appears that any change starts from below, from the people and their ways of representing their world and their problems.

Hence, a pedagogy based on the observation of reality -- both to analyze it and open learners to social representations, representational systems, attitudes and possible paths of change that the participants would invent. Instead of receiving "from above" an education foreign to their culture, learners would open themselves to the universal, without losing contact with their cultural heritage.

Can you introduce readers a little more to Jean-Marie Tjibaou's personality and the influence he had on you?

Jean-Marie Tjibaou, born in 1936, is the son of the chief of a

tribe of Hienghène Tiédanite. His grandmother was killed by French soldiers in 1917 while she was running away with Jean-Marie's father in her arms. Given to Father Rouel, a Marist missionary, at the age of six, he was at the same time entrusted to a seaside tribe, the Bwarat, in accord with Kanak tradition. He became a priest in 1965 and asked to be reduced to a lay state in 1970 after higher studies at the University of Lyon. I meet him when he got back. We worked together from 1973 to 1976.

In 1977 he entered politics, the New Caledonian Union, and I only followed his progress through newspapers. First, as mayor of Hienghène, in 1977, he became vice-president of the New Caledonian Union. Its position was becoming more radical regarding independence. In 1979, he was elected Territorial Counsellor of the Independence Front and then Vice-President of the Governing Council until 1984. In November 1984, he took over the leadership of the Socialist Kanak Liberation Front (FLNKS). In December, two of his brothers Loulou and Tarcisse

were among the ten Kanak killed in the Hienghène ambush. Despite this, he asked for the removal of the roadblocks set up by the Kanaks.

In Paris, he participated in the Matignon Accords organized by Prime Minister Michel Rocard in June 1988, shortly after the Ouvéa tragedy. He was murdered, as was Lewene, by Djubeli Wéa in Ouvéa, who accused them of signing Agreements supposed to delay immediate independence.

His influence on me is important. He introduced me to Kanak society, in his own way, step by step, but also to non-Western, non-Christian cultures. We wrote together, after the 2000 Melanesia Festival, "Kanaké, Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie" to give meaning to the photos taken at the Festival. In addition to the training center, we ran twenty introductory seminars on Kanak society, first about fifteen with the employees and managers of the Société Le nickel, then for the training of nurses and teachers. On each of these occasions, I heard him present



Jean-Marie Tjibaou at the inauguration of the chiefdom of Linderalique (Hiengene) in 1972.

on his society, again in his own way. Without saying more than necessary, he allowed us to understand the essentials of the socio-mythical structure and its influence on the construction of the Melanesian personality. I extended this anthropological introduction with a five-year sociological study to confront it with the society inherited from colonization, to which Wallisians and Futunians, immigrants from the Pacific Islands or Europe, have been added. Inspired by Jean-Marie's ideas, I defended my doctoral thesis in social sciences at the École des Hautes Etudes in 1985.

A general question to conclude: did this very rich experience change your vision of the world and society and how?

Life in Caledonia has changed my view of colonization and, especially for what concerns us here, the concept of authority, especially in education. On my return from Caledonia, I first managed the communication agency of the Scouts de France (media, publishing, public relations) for ten years, then accompanied

adults who wanted to go back to higher education and obtain a university degree (Bachelor degree, then the Master 2 at the Collège coopératif and at the Paris III University). I have always kept in mind and in my practice that everyone has their own culture, their own representations and that it is from them that we must move towards a deeper understanding of society. This twenty-year experience continued in the training of facilitators of collective action research workshops designated by Secours populaire activists, who volunteered to participate in a workshop.

THE SERIES

By Michel Seyrat

The "Solexos"

There are four boys and three girls. They have known each other for a long time, since the time of the Scouts. It's been years full of memories. They had learned to work on their own, to organize themselves, to be interested in what was going on around them, and now they continue to find themselves from time to time around a project, a trip, an adventure. In life, they are like everyone else - studies, work, fiestas, love, miseries and troubles - but they have barely lived twenty years, yet they believe in themselves, and to clear their neurons, they like this habit of going for a walk together, sleeping "under the stars," listening to silence or talking all night, it depends....

Today, what unites them like the fingers of the hand, they owe to Kevin who has "mechanic" in his blood, like his father and grandfather. He has



done all the studies, internships, competitions in this field, an expert! But be careful, Kevin is a mechanic in white gloves, an aristocrat of the plunger, a marquis of the carburetor, not the kind with sludge under his nails, no, a Swiss watchmaker of the cylinders.

Kevin's grandfather is a keen collector of old mechanical objects, and his collection includes a piece that he cherishes especially because his fiancée used it at the time of

their first love, when she wore a pretty puffy plaid skirt and a kinky camisole to make Brigitte Bardot blush: a SOLEX bicycle, the model 660 from 1957, a piece to be treated like a relic ! As soon as he walked, Kevin already had a blissful admiration for Granny's Solex. Kevin gave the impression that he had always travelled by Solex and little by little his passion had passed on to his friends. He had found them some good specimens and maintained them all with devotion.

So, when Élodie, who was studying art history, spoke passionately to them about the region's small Roman churches and their restored frescoes, they boarded their bikes and embarked on their first journey. But there, surprise, in the deserted streets of the sleeping villages, when they arrived, the curtains rose a little, the inhabitants put their noses outside, the older ones remembered, the younger ones were surprised and laughed at them, and very quickly they had to explain the model, the power, the speed, the fuel and the pollution rate (????).

The team had found that day an old human law that was still in vogue: to astonish to exist! to surprise to make people talk! to show themselves to demonstrate!

At the end of this tour of the Roman churches, when the last rays of the sun made the austere and joyful nave of the chapel of Sainte Foix sing, they promised themselves to put this discovery at the service of useful causes every time they could gather for that purpose, and, to unite their project, they had baptized themselves without hesitation:

THE SOLEXOS

Pablo's grandfather had arrived in this village during the Spanish War. He was a convinced Republican, like his whole family. He had barely left his country before the triumph of the Franquists. Seventy-five years later, his grandson wanted to honor his memory as an activist by being on a list for the municipal elections of the village that welcomed them in 1939. He had been elected although he had left the village to study. He would soon be a teacher of SVT as we say, life

and earth sciences, and everything that lived on the earth, under or above, in the waters or in the air, fascinated him for good.

Pablo, a member of the Solexos band, was a bit of a contemplative scientist, sweet and delicate most of the time. But when someone or something degraded humans or damaged nature, he was overcome with a cold rage that made him untreatable.

SAVING BUFO BUFO

However, a nature conservation organization had reported that, in its municipality, several roads crossed areas of migration of toads that left their wintering area in the forest to return to the ponds where they were breeding. And every year, they were massacres of toads and other amphibians, to the point where there were fears that the species was threatened with extinction in the region.

In the commune where he was a counselor, it was really hard for Pablo to accept!

He had therefore discussed it with the mayor, who did not see

what could be done, but who had agreed that he could ask about it and talk to the Municipal Council:

- I will give you the floor regarding the various questions, because, on the agenda, there are serious questions that will be debated, so if I put your toads on, they will croak like frogs...

Hello, humor, but well, Pablo had got used to it and refrained from protesting. It is up to him to prepare his intervention in a convincing way!

Professionally, he had a fairly clear idea of the problem, but he didn't know how to solve it, the amphibians being hardly visible and not very suitable for training, except for the famous frog in his jar which a media meteorologist had made his mascot! But among his science school classmates, he knew Jean Lapeyre well, who was cooperating with the League for the Protection of Birds, precisely to deal with the amphibian problem.

- I can come to your house Tuesday night, because at my house right now, there's my

sister with her two kids and it's rowdy!

Pablo had ordered his best pizza from Claudio, who delighted the neighborhood with his grandfather's recipes, and a bottle of Lambrusco, to welcome Lapeyre, thank him and have time for a good exchange.

He had done well, because Lapeyre was a specialist and the issue was complicated to solve.

- Batrachians, such as Bufo toads or green frogs, need moisture to keep their skin breathing well, and they are very sensitive to temperature variations. So, in winter, they hide under the leaves to protect themselves from the cold and develop their reproductive material. In spring, they return to their water source to mate and live summer at the right temperature. When a road is between their wintering place and their pond, they inevitably cross it, and are crushed in quantity if traffic is heavy. Many naturalists are concerned about this and have compiled lists of places that are dangerous for these amphibians. Your

commune must have been spotted like that.

- And what can I propose as an action to the city council, probably not very sensitive to the fate of toads, if I judge by the words of the mayor who wants to "avoid croaking"?

-If there is a majority of men on the board, he is right, because it is the males who are croaking, the females do not have what it takes! So, what can we do? In some remote areas, activists have ensured that roads are monitored or even cut off during the busiest period of migration. It requires people on the spot, a lot of information, and a population that accepts inconvenience.

-I need to identify the points reported by the agency that alerted us and see which routes they are.

-Obviously, it can only be short cuts and on roads with little traffic. And then you need official authorizations, notify the gendarmerie, and so on.

-Yeah, well, it's a lot of work!

-Then, if it works, there are solutions that require some work. For example, once the migration sites have been identified, nets are placed along the road to prevent amphibians from crossing and, far and wide, along this barrier, buried buckets: toads walk along the nets and fall into buckets from which they cannot exit. And every day, a good soul, takes the buckets, and knocks them over on the other side of the road, allowing the amphibians to go play in their favorite pool!

-Ugh! What a circus! I can see myself telling that to the council! And finding frog pickers.

-Wait, there's a better, but more expensive one: the toad!

-Oh, yes, I know, amphibian subways!

-That's right! Some Departmental Councils have funded some, but the work can be important, to channel small vertebrates to a passage under the road. It takes a lot of euros! But all kinds of small animals benefit from it, like hedgehogs,

which are also adventurous in spring.

Jean Lapeyre, who was never in need of information, gave Pablo addresses, websites to consult, names of specialists in the department and the evening continued between two old students who would soon leave the university.

But the city council meeting was approaching, Pablo had to get busy to gather convincing documents, proven solutions, specify budgets and financing, highlight the political as well as ecological benefits and put all this on a USB stick to connect to the projector in the council room. He knew that the projections were serious, but he also knew that, at the end of the meeting, making the room dark and staring at the screen presented a serious risk of the elected representatives falling asleep after a day's work! He had sometimes noticed that some people knew how to take advantage of it...

- Gentlemen, regarding the various questions, I asked our colleague Pablo Sanchez to study the answer we could give

to the report of the Departmental Council, which points out that, in our community, among other things, massacres of amphibians, toads, frogs and other batrachians occur regularly on certain parts of the road.

Without giving them time to chat or think about anything else, Pablo attacks head-on with some shocking figures, some rough images, plans of the incriminated places, then he proposes that for this year, the council authorizes certain road cuts at night, at key moments that a specialist would come to determine.

- I know specialized naturalists who would be delighted to contribute to these rescues and I already have a small team of volunteers who would be willing to strengthen the action of our fellow citizens.

Fortunately, we were at the end of the council meeting, and finally the mayor had played in favor of Pablo, because otherwise, as it had begun, the discussion could have lasted long enough for the project to

be rejected. Between the one who passed there every night to go home, and who had four cars in the family, the one that the batrachians' night screams ended up exasperating, those who found that "the ecologists, we're starting to get tired of them..." and those who said we'd better take care of the citizens rather than the frogs that are useless, it was a bad start! And Pablo was getting angry when he wanted to answer everyone. So, the mayor, who knew his world, since the time he was there and his father before him, spoke a little loudly:

- I propose to the council that our assistant in charge of roads, Émile Astruc, see the question with Pablo Sanchez and if there are no other questions, I adjourn the meeting!

Which was done!

When the deputy came out, he slipped into Pablo's ear: "We have to see each other, but it's going to be hard! Call me."

While he was returning to his parents' house for the night, two counsellors accosted Pablo with all the aggressiveness they

had contained during the meeting:

- We don't agree with your thing at all, we count every penny in the town; as for your frog bazaar, we're not going to finance it tomorrow!

- All this stuff about defending natural species is all bullshit: wolves come back to the mountain pastures, wild boars ravage corn, the fox has stolen two chickens from my mother and we had to put nets on the henhouse because of the birds of prey that come back...

- You say you know young people who will come to help rescue toads, again your wanker students, but if we don't agree, we can also mobilize young people who are used to crawling in the brush and who will be there at the right time.

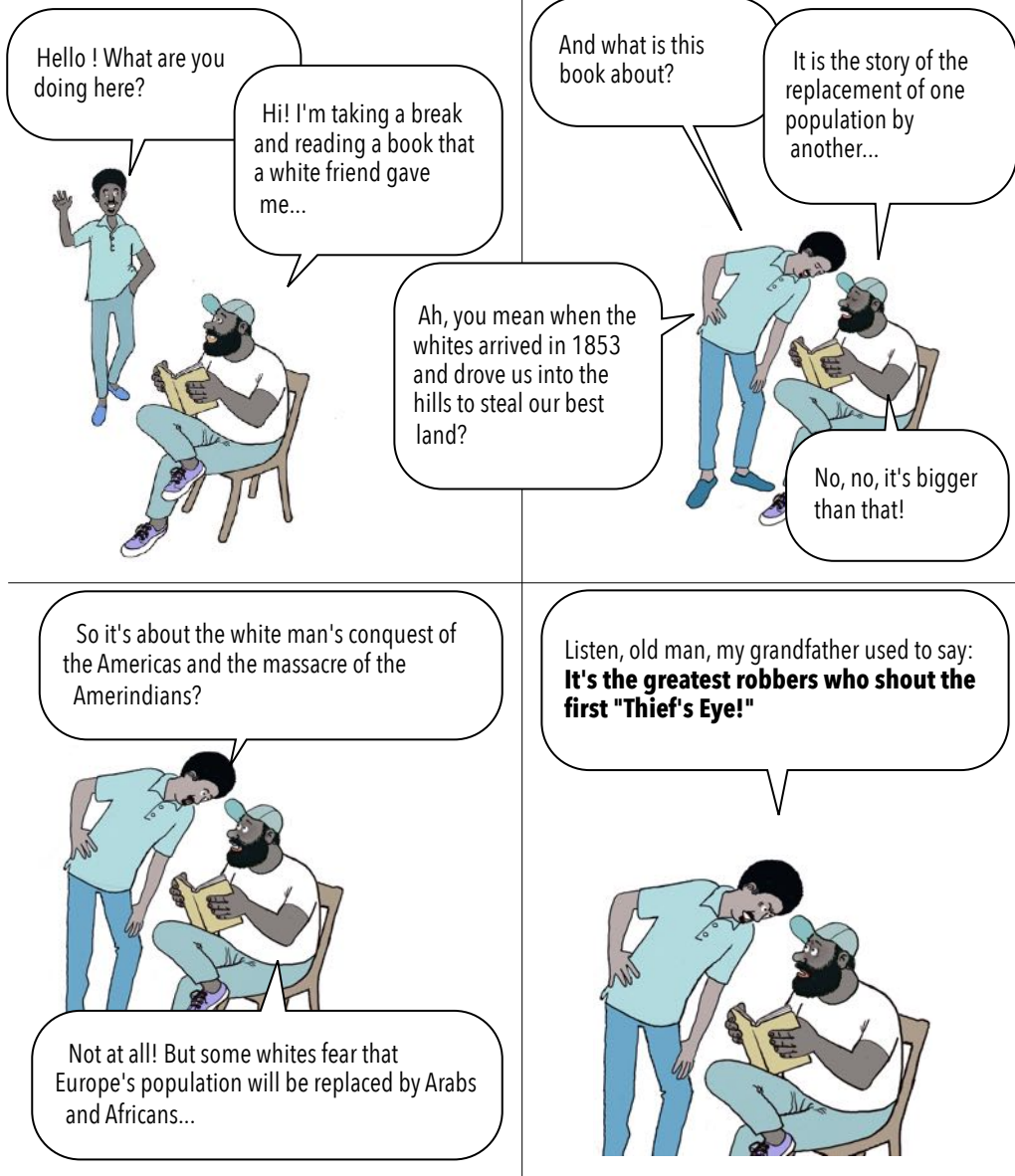
- Wait, guys, don't take it like that...

But before Pablo finished his sentence, the advisers had gotten into their car and started off with a screech of their wheels...

(To be continued)

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