

**Local Public Policies of Sustainable Development:
Toward Administrative and Territorial
Organisational Changes**

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5èmes Journées de Recherches en Sciences Sociales**

Abstract: The implementation of sustainable development requires substantive organisational changes. As far as local communities are concerned, these changes regard both the organisation of the administrative work and the way territories are managed. In order to be fully institutionalized these changes need to meet certain legitimacy. This paper analyzes the difficulties local communities are facing in attempting to implement the changes sustainability demands. The methodology relies on textual analysis of interviews led in the local communities of the Nord – Pas de Calais region (North France). The results, interpreted with the “Economies of Worth” model suggest two main interpretations: first, organisational changes fail to be implemented because the objective frame of sustainability public actions collides with the usual frame of the public service; second, the criticisms that sustainability directs at the usual mode of administration confronts the social worth put forward by the justifications of the French public services. As a result, sustainable development lacks legitimacy in order to justify substantive organisational changes in the way local public actions are led in France. But finally, focusing on sustainability brings back together environmental management and consistency of decisions in a mode of cooperation that fits within the legitimacy of the French public decision.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Organisation, Public Policies, Territory, Speeches Analysis, Economies of Worth.

Jel Codes: Q01, R11, R58

1. Introduction

There is a consensual definition of sustainable development most actors agree on. It is defined as a mode of “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland, 1987, p. 51). By doing so, actors refer to a notion that presents the characteristic of not enlightening its meaning. Jacobs (1999) qualifies sustainable development as a “contested concept”: there are no conceptual ambiguities, but its implementation requires technical explanations that may create conflicts. Therefore, sustainable development uses simultaneously two levels of comprehension: the action level involving the actual behaviors of individuals; and the cognitive level involving the formation of shared representations (Zaccaï, 2002). Two types of articulations of these two levels can be highlighted: the international or national institutions enact normative principles to supervise individual or organisational behaviors; the academic sector produces models whose findings lead to normative rules for actions. This paper relies on the hypothesis that the local implementation of sustainable development is disconnected from these two sources of representations. For instance, in the implementation of sustainability, the real-life actors almost never refer to future generations (Bertrand et al., 2005; Plumecocq, 2010). Moreover, the distinction operated at the academic level regarding the degree of substitutability between the various forms of capital (Pearce et al., 1989; Victor, 1991) has very limited operational uses. It is true though that they induce the design of international principles of actions. But in local actions, global sustainability norms and rules are reinterpreted, most of the time regarding local environmental issues.

Admitting that actors recreate or reinvent norms in relation to institutional or academic global representations is to accept that, not only these two levels are complementary and interdependent, but they are also simultaneously required to understand the implementation of sustainable development. In particular, following the results put forward by the French “*Économie des Conventions*” (Eymard-Duvernay et al., 1989; Batifoulie et al., 2001; Orléan, 2004), this paper defends this idea that the coordination of actions results from the admission that individuals share common sets of representations. It will be attempted here to provide an analysis of the dynamic of the implementation of sustainable development at the local level. The conceptual frame invoked – “the model of the Economies of Worth” (Boltanski et al., 1991), focuses on the articulation of collective representations and individual behaviors in attempt to create coordination. The first section develops the pragmatic aspect of sustainable development when considering a conventionalist approach. It will consider in particular the model of the “Economies of Worth”. The two next sections rely on an empirical study applied to the local communities of the Nord – Pas de Calais region (North France). It involves interviews of local actors of sustainable development. Section two presents the methodology and the preliminaries results obtained by the Alceste textual analysis. Section three analyzes and interprets the outputs with the “model of the Economies of Worth”. Results show the existence of three dynamics that reinforce the links between representations and actions in order to facilitate coordination concerning sustainable development: a critical dynamic; an agenda of investment of form and a specific mode of coordination.

2. A pragmatic approach of sustainable development through conventions

2.1. From conventions to representations

Sugden (1986, p. 32) defines a convention as “any stable equilibrium in a game that has two or more stable equilibria”. This definition raises a question: How to explain that among all the possible equilibria, one in particular arises? Referring to this type of solution as a “convention” is to admit that it presents a special characteristic: every one refers to a tacit rule according to which each one of the individuals will actually refer to this rule. In some way, to reach an equilibrium, individuals need to form representations of the situation they are involved in. The fact that this rule is common knowledge dispels any uncertainty regarding the behavior of *alter egos* (Dupuy, 1989). From this point of view, the convention appears as a cognitive disposal shared by all the individuals involved in the coordination situation. So this type of convention can be seen as a mark for action that indicates how to behave in a particular situation, given the strategies others will choose if they adopt the convention. In some way, the “model of the Economies of Worth” relies on this conception of the convention.

At a very general level, it assesses that coordination relies on a tacit agreement that takes place at a representational level. In the coordination process, two types of representations are at stake: the individuals involved have to share a common cognitive representation of the situation – *i.e.* the objective frame that characterizes the situation; they also must share values on how they perceive their individual treatment in the collective action – *i.e.* if they feel their treatment is consistent with socially accepted justice principles. It is also necessary that the justice principles that individuals invoke to initiate coordination is consistent with the objective frame of the collective action. This explains why disagreements occur: an individual may feel he is poorly considered by the group but in the same time he may admit that the collective action is justified regarding the objective context, causing an “exit” strategy (Hirschman, 1970); he may feel that the shared values enabling the action unfit the context, or he can contest the values itself, resulting a “voice” strategy (Ibid.). Finally, when the collective action is adjusted to the frame of the situation – following a sociological reference the authors of the model call it a “world”, and when the values that justify the construction of the collective are socially accepted, then everybody is “loyal” (Ibid.) to the order resulting from the constituted collective and coordination can actually happen. In other words, the collective action is considered as legitimate.

2.2. From representations to coordination

Then, it is easy to see that two elements are required in the coordination: an order of worth socially accepted coming from legitimate principles of justice and a convergence process of collective representation taking place both at a moral and at an objective levels. Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) put forward six “moral greatnesses”: market, industrial, civic, domestic, fame, and inspiration. Each one of them can bring a legitimate foundation of the justifications used during the conflicts. These legitimate foundations come from works of major authors: Adam Smith (market), Saint-Simon (industrial), Rousseau (civic), Bossuet (domestic), Hobbes (fame), and Augustine (inspiration). Boltanski and Thévenot name “Polity” these six

different social orders in reference to moral philosophy. Each “Polity” relies on a “higher common principle” that defines and legitimates the relative worth of things and persons: wealth ranks individuals in the market polity, efficiency in the industrial polity, solidarity or equality in the civic polity, tradition in the domestic polity, honor in the fame polity, and grace in the inspiration polity. The “Polities” spread themselves in the “world”, which is a context formed by things and persons. When qualified regarding a given higher common principle, the arrangement of things and persons forms a “common world”. Therefore, there are six “common worlds” in which persons are actually classed through tests – for instance regarding their personal investment for the pursuit of the common good, and qualified things define and objective frame for action.

The classification process regarding higher common principles (wealth, efficiency, solidarity or equality, tradition, honor, and grace) follows a procedure which stages are also tools for comprehension for coordination. Each principle is assessed in each common world according to relevant “modes of evaluation” (the price in the market common world, the technical in the industrial common world, the collective wellbeing in the civic common world, the trust in the domestic common world, the popularity or the recognition in the fame common world, and the passion or the enthusiasm in the inspiration common world). It determines “the form of the admissible proof” of qualification or greatness in every common world (*resp.* the monetary form, the measurable form, the official form, the oral form, the semiotic form, and the emotional form). So the “greatness” of persons (*resp.* the desirable, the efficient, the elected representative, the elder, the star, and the genius), as well of their “degeneration” (*resp.* the unsold, the inefficient, the particular, the common, the ordinary, and the routine) is revealed through a test, built from a layout of things qualified in the appropriate common world. The greatness of persons reflects their ability to commit themselves to the collective. Though their commitment to the group increases their well-being, it cannot be reached unless making a personal sacrifice or investment (*resp.* opportunity cost, productive investment, forsaking of personal interests, familial duty, renunciation of private life, and inspirational risk).

The two states of “greatness” and “degeneration” are obviously extremes. In reality, there are many persons qualified as “beings” of each common world (*e.g.* the consumer, the merchant, the customer, etc. in the market world, or the citizen, the NGO, etc. in the civic world). The same goes regarding the things, or the “objects” (*e.g.* the inheritance, the patrimony in the domestic world, or the media, the sign in the world of fame). So each common world defines a social order – in the sense of a socially accepted and recognized classification of individuals, in which there are worthy persons and things. So the common worlds are homogenous social sets in which there are “natural relationships between the beings” (*e.g.* to produce to organise, etc. in the industrial world; to represent, to delegate, to devote oneself to, etc. in the civic world; to advise, to respect, etc. in the domestic world). As social order, a common world relies on a “harmony”, or a matching “mode of coordination” (the market, the organisation, the democracy, the family, the audience, and the imaginary). Each world takes place in a relevant form of “space” and during a consistent “timing”.

3. Methodology and results

When confronted to environmental legitimacy issues, the framework of “the Economies of Worth” experiment some difficulties that have been discussed elsewhere (Godard, 1990; Lafaye *et al.*, 1993; Latour, 1995; Godard, 2004; Godard, 2005; Boltanski *et al.*, 2006; Plumecocq, 2010). Particularly, the fact that given the temporal horizon, there are no possibility for an ethic of the justification, imply that there cannot exist an environment polity (a “green polity”). The problematic considered here lies on a more pragmatic level: if sustainable development cannot be uplifted to the polity level, how does it fit into the world? In particular, is there a common world of sustainability with a less general degree of legitimacy, when considering local communities?

3.1. Methodology

Therefore, semi-directive interviews have been led in thirty communities of the Nord – Pas de Calais Region (North France), at every territorial level (region, departments, communes, gatherings of communes, decentralized services of the State)¹, with various types of actors: elected representatives, chief of staff, officials. The collected interviews have been analyzed using the textual data treatment Alceste, regrouping co-occurrences of words in specific classes. Therefore, the software produces a classification of vocabulary consistent with the words present in it. The belonging consistency of a word to a class is evaluated with the chi-square test. The results obtained with the corpus of the interviews present a classification in four classes of specific vocabulary²:

¹ Considering coordination problems of public actors, the French context appears relatively complicated to comprehend for, at least, three reasons: first there are original infra-territorial levels (the departments); second there are a large number of communes (more than 36,000 in the whole territory; almost 1,500 in the region considered here); and third, the merger procedures of communes generally replaces the communes involved (*e.g.* Urban Communities). Therefore, the multiplication of actors at various decisional scales makes the coordination problem more complex than in other countries.

² As the interviews have been conducted in French, the results produced by Alceste have been translated afterwards.

Figure 1: The Four Dimensions of Sustainable Development Speeches

Class 1		Class 3		Class 2		Class 4	
Form	chi-2	Form	chi-2	Form	chi-2	Form	chi-2
thing	140.2	social	356.1	state	266.2	community	848.7
people	115.0	economy	340.7	region	251.8	urban	340.3
do	113.9	sustainable	252.0	put	111.4	commune	294.7
come	82.3	energy	244.2	agenda_21	110.1	vice_president	257.5
it	60.3	water	175.3	regional	108.1	president	227.9
say	58.9	resource	126.1	national	99.9	planning	225.3
time	50.2	consummation	122.5	contract	99.3	delegation	137.8
itself	49.9	environmental	119.9	cerdd	95.4	town	125.4
not	45.5	renew	90.9	action	93.5	charge	103.0
see	44.0	employment	86.4	committee	91.6	director	98.0
succeed	42.7	eco	83.0	strategy	85.1	mayor	77.1
have to	41.3	management	87.8	country	74.3	responsible	75.8
go	39.1	bind	74.8	project	73.8	lille	68.7
world	39.0	development	73.3	tool	63.6	territory	67.0
you	35.7	town-planning	73.0	different	63.4	competent	61.6
take	33.9	question	68.6	territorial	63.0	direction	59.5
that	33.2	transport	66.0	direction	61.9	elected	58.7
moment	31.8	need	61.2	operation	61.3	mission	46.2

One of the purposes of the textual analysis is to identify the specific vocabulary. Here, the first class (in red) uses a very common set of words. It also appears that verbs are relatively presents. Therefore, it is a class of common sense vocabulary used to convince people and other communities that sustainable development can be virtuous, by showing what is currently done. The third class (in blue) focuses on the need of the populations through the various domains of public policy. They seem all seen through the prism of sustainable development, in particular through the integration principle (social, economy, and environmental). The last two classes deal with territorial issues, though they present different perspectives. The second class (in green) is oriented toward issues of cooperation, referring to the regional level. The fourth class (in yellow) relies on a lower territorial scale (communities and urban communities), referring to more specific organisational issues.

3.2. Preliminary results

A second step of the methodology consisted in allocating the specific forms³ highlighted by Alceste to the various keys of Boltanski and Thévenot's Common World model. The results show that the actors of sustainable development can mostly be affected to three

³ Alceste considers that every uninterrupted series of signs is a form. In opposition to others textual analysis software, it does not rely on dictionaries. It locates co-occurrent forms significantly associated – evaluated with a chi-square test, to build consistent classes of vocabulary. By assumption, we assume that the sense of a text comes from the proximity of co-occurrent forms Reinert, M. (1993). Les “mondes lexicaux” et leur “logique” à travers l’analyse statistique d’un corpus de récits de cauchemars *Langage et société*, 5-39..

common worlds: the industrial world, the civic world, and the domestic world. Others forms have been classified into other common world. Still, the picture of these worlds was not broad enough, and was not kept in the following analysis. Finally, the forms that could not be related to any of the known world and that match the principles of sustainable development have been considered.

The following figure summarizes the primary results achieved⁴:

⁴ In the rest of the paper, the words in italic refer to the vocabulary highlighted by Alceste.

	Civic World	Industrial World	Domestic World	Sustainable world
Higher common principles (Have to, Must)	<i>Solidarity, Help</i>	<i>Efficiency</i>	<i>(Local)Culture</i>	<i>Sustainable, Eco-efficient, Solidarity, Energy efficiency</i>
Mode of evaluation	<i>Well-being</i>	<i>Cost, Impact, Budget</i>	<i>Proximity</i>	<i>Equilibrium, Integrate, Societal</i>
From of the admissible proof	<i>Vote Legal Majority</i>	<i>Technical, Label, Evaluation, Balance, Criteria, Indicator Diagnosis, Study</i>	<i>Local</i>	<i>Implementation, Mission, Label (HEQ)</i>
Mode of coordination (Collectif)	<i>Forum, Public contract, Democracy</i>	<i>Organization</i>	<i>Family</i>	<i>Example, Coproduction System, Complexity,</i>
Kind of personal investment	-	-	-	<i>Pedagogy, Participation, Acculturation, Transversal</i>
Time of formation	<i>Decision, Agenda</i>	<i>Administrative (procedure), Plan, Forecasting</i>	<i>Habit, Elder History</i>	<i>To come, Future</i>
Space of formation (Regional)	<i>Public, Social, Politic, National</i>	<i>Analysis, Organization</i>	<i>Local Proximity Geography</i>	<i>Concrete, Everywhere, Environmental, Natural environment, Planet, Territory</i>
Qualified things (Quality)	<i>Law, State, Charter, Council, Official</i>	<i>Pollution, Mineral field, Coal, Waste, Energy, Infrastructure,</i>	<i>Patrimony, Landscape, Territory, Rural, Urban</i>	<i>Eco-area, Water, Environmental, Agenda 21, Climate plan, National Park</i>
Qualified subjects (Quality, Function)	<i>Citizen, Association</i>	<i>Official, Engineer, Bureaucrat, Colleague, Direction, Technician, Expert,</i>	<i>Inhabitant Population</i>	<i>(Future, Current, Lost) Generation, People, World, Human, Biodiversity</i>
Greatness	<i>Elected representative, President, Mayor, Jean-François Caron</i>	<i>Efficient, Productive, Direction, In charge of, Jean-François Caron</i>	<i>Jean-François Caron</i>	<i>Responsible Jean-François Caron</i>
Natural relationships between the beings or between the things	<i>Education, To Decide, To Direct, To Vote, To Help, Authority, Commission</i>	<i>To Innovate, To Organize, To Manage, To Control, To Exploit, To Measure</i>	<i>To Develop, To Depend on</i>	<i>To Learn, To Appropriate, To Change, To Participate, To Concert, To Coordinate, Together, To Preserve, To Protect, To Rehabilitate, To Renew</i>

The results show a classification of the various forms consistent with the “Common Worlds” model. They present a complete picture of three well-identified common worlds that lie on distinct characteristics. Each one brings different visions of the common good into play. They also rely on different worlds, that is to say different sets of persons and things

consistent with what worth regarding the common goods in question. A common world consistent with the sustainable principles as highlighted by Zaccarà (2002) in his study of the main texts of sustainable development, also appears. Finally, sustainable development speeches of local actors picture four worlds:

- The civic common world is built on the higher common principle of the public good. The greatness of persons is the ability to dedicate oneself to the pursuit of the general interest. Typically, the proof in which the greatness is revealed is an electoral proof.
- The industry common world relies on the worth of efficiency. The layouts of things and of technical devices are used to evaluate the greatness of persons (in measuring their productivity, for instance).
- The domestic common world is constructed on the model of the family institution. The greatness of persons is function of their relative position in “a chain of personal dependencies” (Boltanski *et al.*, 2006, p. 90) as in a familial structure. The quality of the persons belonging to this “polity” is therefore honesty – as Bossuet defines this notion, which is to say as self-knowledge and as admittance of one’s position in the familial hierarchy. The things that matters regarding this worth are the ones that create proximity and familiar relationships.
- The world of sustainability does not level up to the others common worlds identified. The main difference is that the higher common principle (*sustainability*) is not self-explanatory, for instance in a work of moral philosophy. It emerges in the actors’ practices in what can be called a “pragmatic” of sustainable development. There are also some remarkable characteristics. First, the higher common principle relies on two sub-principles: the *ecoefficiency* as the efficiency of actions to take into account the principles of sustainable development, and in particular, the principle of integration of the different dimensions of sustainability; and the *solidarity* extended to beings not considered in the civic worth. Second, the persons and the things belonging to the sustainable worth are not equally qualified. If the things are qualified in reference to a particular register, the sustainable persons are qualified in a very general sense.

For all that does not mean there is no bridge between the different common worlds. For instance, coordination by *public contract* mobilises elements from the civic and the market worlds. It is obvious that given the complexity of reality – and in particular of sustainable development, we deal with hybridised forms referring to several common worlds. In particular, the classification of the *Jean-François Caron* form as a figure of greatness in all the common worlds considered is remarkable. The “multipositionality” (Boltanski, 1973) of this personality refers to his legitimacy as common good actor (he is regional councilor and mayor), as an efficient actor (he is the president of the regional “Établissement Public Foncier” dealing with land planning, and initiates the case for the registration of the Nord – Pas de Calais mine field in the world patrimony of the UNESCO), and as a proximity actor (at the territorial level he is referred as a major actor of the conservation and the promotion of the local patrimony).

4. Interpretations

Two elements are highlighted here. First, the speeches mobilise four worlds, three of which have already been described and well-identified; the last one is more original. Second, its degree of legitimacy responds exclusively to a pragmatic of the actors in the implementation process of sustainable agendas. Given that the speeches analysed here globally refers to the implementation of sustainable development public policies, it is reasonable to assume that the vocabularies mobilising various common worlds – various moral principles, are related with one another. The interpretation of the primary results will rely on the hypothesis that the semantic of the usual common worlds (civic, industry and domestic) deal with the building of a legitimate principle of sustainable development. Therefore, this section will focus the explanation of the various relationships between the different sets of vocabulary identified using the “Common World model”. It is indeed fundamental to explain and to understand the links existing between the modalities of justification of the public action distinguished here. It is also important to see how a legitimate principle of collective action relying on sustainable development practices can renew or compete other legitimate principles. It will determine the efficiency of sustainable development as a collective “referential” for individuals (Muller, 2005), that is to say a “space of sense” involving shared norms and values allowing individuals to overcome their divergence of interests.

From the results presented by Alceste and laid out in the Common World Figure, it is possible to form representations on the sustainable development practices of communities, and to understand the justifications underlying them. Justifications and practices are articulated by the actors in a dynamic relying on two dimensions that tend to legitimate the local policies of sustainable development in the Nord – Pas de Calais Region, promoting territorial cooperation: a “form investment” dynamic (Thévenot, 1984), and a criticism dynamic.

4.1. *Form investment dynamic*

Using speeches material does not imply that analyses cannot go further than rhetorical speeches. It is possible to comprehend the objective shaping of the sustainable common world. For instance, the classes 1 and 3 (*cf.* Figure 1) both show a vocabulary turned to action. The class 3 vocabulary deals with the issues of fulfilling the population’s needs. Therefore, it relies on the various dimensions of the public policies and services: economic and social development, energy and water supply, transportations, employment policy, town-planning, etc. It also involves the three main dimensions of sustainable development, summarised in the integration principle: economy, social, and environmental. As for the class 1, it mobilises a common sense vocabulary that remains rather vague: thing, people, it, world... It also significantly relies on action tags (verbs). This dimension of sustainable speeches can be interpreted as a rhetorical dimension. In this respect, public actors intend to convince the populations as well as other communities of the sustainable development virtues. This rhetoric relies on the display of practical examples, and of concrete achievements that make obvious the benefits of the sustainable development implementation. The last two classes involve vocabulary more directly in touch with action. Indeed, the reference to the notion of territory implies a non-ambiguous relationship to the actors’ practices, via the design of strategic tools

and *ad hoc* institutions (e.g. the CERDD, the Resource Center for Sustainable Development, created to assist communities in their sustainable step and to convince those who do not implement it to do so).

So sustainable development is not only a critical speech, but has also physical manifestations in the “world” – as referred above. These physical manifestations can be understood as form investments (Thévenot, 1984), that is to say as a set up of things that confers the common world his consistency for action regarding a higher common principle. Thévenot refers to form investments as “the relationship between the objects upon which the actors rely and the co-ordination of their behaviour. The form is defined in terms of a capacity for time and space equivalency, and the yields on the form investment are the consequence of this generality which makes it possible for agreement to be grounded” (Thévenot, 2002, p. 181). In other words, the form investment enables to highlight the implementation of conventional resources (rules, norms, organisation patterns, habits...) in respect to the higher common principle. It can also bring together several polities in a “compromise”. Then, form investment can promote composite things, creating a new common world referring to a new higher common principle built into action. This common world is emerging at the crossroads of common worlds and it is supported by undividable things, that is to say things that are constructed from various elements of different common worlds, but cannot be deconstructed.

For instance, the French public service defines a legitimate mode of collective action – a mode of coordination, involving *industrial* and *civic* common worlds (Thévenot, 2001; Boltanski *et al.*, 2005; Boltanski *et al.*, 2006). Several elements make obvious and unequivocal the higher common principle in which the order of worth is built on. Thus, the proof in which community officials are considered suitable for the production of public service is an administrative concourse that guarantees the (*civic*) equality of treatment of the candidates, as well as the (*industry*) qualifications of the successful ones. The elected representatives are also qualified into this compromise. Not only they pass a *civic* electoral proof, but in the organisational system, they are in charge of a political section or included to thematic commissions they are competent (*efficient*) for. On a more general level, the administrative organisation of public services, highly compartmentalised, respond to a principle of efficiency based on the division of labor, and on the development of sectoral competencies. And in principles, the rules of representative democracy guarantee the community decisions will meet the general interest.

At a territorial level, the investments that put the territory administration into form are old and very stables, so that the local policies conventions are hardly challenged. Two sets of investments form are framing the territorial action in the French context. On the one hand, the “Loi de Rolland” set the general principles of public action: a mutability principle, stating that the public service must be adjusted to the populations’ needs and follow its evolutions; an equality principle, according to which two persons in the same situation should be treated equally; and a continuity principle, ensuring that public services must always be provided to users. This set of principles has emerged from a long case law history and has now a constitutional status. On the other hand, territorial organisation is framed by two types of rules, defined in the “Code Général des Collectivités Territoriales”, the Legal Communities Code. First, the independency principle guarantees the communities sovereignty of decisions regarding the preservation of its territorial interest. In doing so, this principle allocates

competencies in public policies matters, regarding the type of communities considered. For instance, in educational policy, the regions are in charge of high schools, the departments deal with junior high teaching and facilities, and the towns take care of primary education. Second, the subsidiarity principle is advancing the possibility for communities of higher territorial scale to intervene, under special circumstances, in lower territorial communities business.

Our finding shows that only transversality can be considered as a form investment of the sustainable common world. The rest of the production of objects remains at the lower level of meaning. Therefore, the Common World Figure presents qualified things regarding sustainable development. But it is easy to see they are not yet put together to built proofs of reality or tests that would confer sustainable greatness to individuals. In that respect, the qualified subjects of the sustainable world remain vague and very far from the empirical matters, whereas all the devices that confer greatness (the kind of personal investment to achieve it, the mode of its evaluation, and the form of the admissible proof that makes it obvious for all), given their practical dimension, are not stabilised and are designed case by case. So sustainable development policies do not seem to enhance the stability of a still hypothetic common world of sustainability. From this point of view, the form investment dynamic of sustainability in the French public service prove to be inefficient. But the achievements of sustainable policies have another interest: they carry a critical charge regarding the usual mode of territorial administration.

4.2. *Criticism dynamic*

The objects and subjects qualified regarding *ecoefficiency* and *intergenerational equity* that decomposes the higher common principle of sustainability are also carrying criticisms. They manifest themselves, first, in the context of the Nord – Pas de Calais development, and second, at a more general level.

At a located level criticisms appear regarding the development history of the Nord – Pas de Calais region. They rely on arguments challenging the mode of development the region has experienced during a century and a half. Indeed, the region's development is characteristic of what can be conceived as a non-sustainable development, because it has almost exclusively relied on the exploitation of a mono-industrial resource: coal. Moreover, this mining has lasted until the resource has practically run dry. Therefore, public actors of the territory are completely aware of that, insisting on the idea that the current environmental and social state of the region is typical of this mono-industrial non-sustainable mode of development: high unemployment rate, industrial wasteland, polluted soils and ground water, etc. (Zuindeau *et al.*, 2008). However, the public policies implemented at the regional level do not contest the legacy of the industrial area. It salvages the industrial outcomes (*e.g.* mining facilities and housings, slag heap, territorial network, etc.) and values them as a patrimony. Philosophically, these policies consist in turning the negative sustainable image of the region inside out so as to become typical of what a sustainable regional development should be.

As Emelianoff shows (2003), this strategy of salvage, of renovation, and of reuse is not peculiar to the Nord – Pas de Calais region. It can be found in some Italian cities, as well as in ex-East Germany. This “model” of sustainable public policy involves elements of the *domestic* common world. They contest the *industrial* order of worth showing itself in the mono-industrial mode of development, bringing into play two types of *domestic* elements: on

the one hand, they rely on the notion of territory to contest the territorial efficiency of this non-sustainable mode of development, destroying the environmental patrimony; on the other hand, they value the capital produced so it becomes a patrimony in which inhabitants can identify themselves, creating a *domestic* chain of personal dependencies. In addition, sustainable development policies also contest the *civic* greatness that has been legitimated during the nationalised period. After World War II, the need for rebuilding the country justified that the nationalisation of the steel industry and, in particular, of the coal exploitation. Therefore, the mono-industrial development has been legitimated on the *civic* basis of national solidarity. Invoking the lack of reciprocity, the sustainable public actors of the region denounce this form of solidarity. Therefore, from their point of view, they consider it is not a real form of solidarity and cannot be justified.

At a second level, more general, sustainable criticisms question the usual modalities of the territorial administration. Therefore, the administrative rules that guarantee the legitimacy of the French public decisions are contested by the reference of sustainable development. This challenging does not involve the greatness of the French public service itself that various authors relying on a *civic-industrial* compromise holding together greatness of efficiency and equality in the administrative treatment of individuals. It questions the (administrative and territorial) practices leading to produce an efficient-equal public service. On the one hand, the sustainable integration principle of the spatial-temporal multi-dimensions of political consequences requires adopting a more transversal mode of work. This is hardly compatible with the sectoral organisation of the French public administrations. On the other hand, the principles of participation and of consultation reasserted by the international institutions of sustainable development question the legitimacy of the public decision. Indeed, in a representative democracy, its legitimacy comes from an elective proof of reality: the elected representative is given a mandate to choose the best way to meet the common good. On the contrary, in a participative democracy, citizens, the civil society, and all the stakeholders are consulted in the decision process. Therefore, the legitimacy of the decision not only is revealed during an elective proof of reality, but also in the ability of the political leaders to design participatory procedures such as hybrid forums (Callon *et al.*, 2001).

These criticisms stress the necessity to bring the political orientations, the modalities of the public decision, and the administrative procedures back together with the notion of territory and the chain of personal dependencies that goes with it (Theys, 2004). The Alceste results show a vocabulary class (see Figure 1, class 2) mobilising the semantic field of the consistency of the territorial decisions. In this respect, actors consider that recovering decisional consistency involving the whole territory area is a fundamental aspect of sustainable development. Also, tackling the decision from the territorial angle gives the local policies their meaning back. In every case, the territorial dimension of sustainable development relies on elements coming from the *domestic* common world: first, it involves a patrimonial approach of sustainable development in which inhabitants can become identified with their region; second, it relies on criticisms of the geographical consistency of decision justified in the *industrial-civic* compromise of the French public service; third, it promotes a network of collective relationships where proximity do worth.

5. Conclusion

So, in a sense, SD fails to create a cognitive framework, a referential for action that would be shared by the local communities. But in some other sense, it succeeds in creating local spaces of coordination within the frame of the public service. In the words of the “Economies of Worth”, sustainable development extends the *industry-civic* compromise that legitimates the French public policies from *domestic* elements. In the world, the set up of public projects remains one of the main modality of public action. The contributions sustainability makes to territorial management relies on its focus on the importance to consider the geographical dimension of decisions, emphasising on notions such as patrimony and as proximities that are proper to establish a chain of personal dependencies.

The idea that sustainable development does not define a new common world, but that it extends the compromise of the public service confirms it does not rely on an *ad hoc* mode of coordination. In fact, it extends the service public privileged mode of coordination, the project. Therefore sustainable labeled public projects led by local communities seem to associates a wider range of actors (other communities, experts, local NGOs, departments, etc.) in order to take into account this territorial dimension. Then, its form is particularly adapted to set up participation and transversality. This is one of the main points highlighted here: in the region studied, despite the lack of form investments, sustainable development gets land planning and environmental patrimony back together via the project mode of coordination (Theys, 2004). There are obviously negative points to this: coordination spaces are reduced to project limits and vanish when they have been achieved. Furthermore, nothing guarantees that sustainable values continue to support public projects.

Another important point is that sustainable greatness lies on the theoretical requirement according to which individuals have to agree to a personal investment in “pedagogy” (see the “Common world” Figure), and learn how to act in a sustainable way. Then, it is possible that the development and the generalisation of sustainable projects promote administrative cultural change of territories. It results the adoption of a new administrative system of values, underlie by criticisms it carries out against the industrial mode of development and against the usual mode territorial administration. As Argyris (1993) has showed the adoption of a new system of values is fundamental to lead most profound organisational changes. Sustainable values may be the most efficient way to design a common world of sustainability and induce a common territorial and environmental management. It may also explain why, despite works showing that the implementation of shared environmental management can produce both economic and environmental positive consequences (e.g. see Lozano et al., 2007), virtuous examples are not spreading in European communities.

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