RGCS White Paper – Alpha Version

Collaborative communities in the city:
From policies *for* to policies *through* third-places?[1]

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[1] We wish to thank Tarani Merriweather Woodson for her precious help in the copy editing of this Alpha version of our White Paper.

Abstract of Alpha White Paper

Collaborative communities, spaces and movements are increasingly structuring the emergent collaborative economy.

The Alpha Version of this White Paper is grounded in the discussion of a key trend: the growing convergence between managerial and political agencies. More than ever, the agency of managers has transformed society and the modalities of 'living together' (public communication, modalities of representativeness of a collectivity, a discourse or a practice, systems of legitimacy).

The phenomenon is not that new. In the 30s, Henry Ford and his T model transformed American society and part of its sense of togetherness. With the mass production of cars and the social or economic compromise underpinning it, Ford also managed to institutionalize a political model. Since the 90s, the political effects of managerial actions have taken an extent (potentially global), a depth (related to the very mechanisms of democracy and the shape of democratic forums) and an unpredictability (global actors emerge sometimes within one year) which has rarely been reached in the history of capitalism. It could be said that today, public policies are originated by a myriad of actors-entrepreneurs often de-territorialized from any local and national interests.

How did we get there? The Alpha version of this White Paper underlines three concomitant phenomena: a radical evolution of connectivity modes, a change in the modalities and the processes of sense-making (a new "semiosis") and the emergence of new kinds of political consciousness. These transformations (started at the end of the 40s and which have accelerated since the 90s) induce new convergences between the transformative capacities of managers (in particular those of entrepreneurs) and those of politicians (as institutional actors with a mandate for political actions).

Collaborative communities and collaborative spaces crystallize the aforementioned dimensions. Coworking spaces, maker spaces, fab labs, hacker spaces and living labs are as much managerial phenomena (they are the new forms of an acting together which can imbricate with more classic managerial forms) as political ones (they are also at the heart of renewed forms of 'living together, ways of life and communitarian decision modes).

From RGCS seminars, meetings of our Standing Groups, but also ongoing research, the RGCS coordinator summarizes here four key tendencies (indistinctively managerial and political) identified during one year of discussions and observations. After having stressed the Napoleon complex aspect of local, national and international policies, it insists on the importance of coordinated policies (both between public actors, between collaborative movements, and between collaborative movements and public actors).

This White Paper targets new citizens-entrepreneurs-makers, politicians and strategic decision-makers. **Collaborative communities do not only need to be the objects of fragmented policies or multiple local initiatives. They could and they should model the heart of integrative policies about entrepreneurship, innovation, urbanism, social inclusion, culture and education at the heart of the city**

SUMMARY

Introduction: work transformations and the return of communities

This White Paper[2] is aimed at citizens-entrepreneurs-makers, politicians (in particular those at the heart of the city) and strategic-decision makers in organizations.

The transformation of work and society to which we attend, with major geopolitical tensions in the background (terrorism, migrant crises, search for new equilibrium between east and west, north and south…), are deep. The forms of this transformation keep multiplying. The generalization of entrepreneurship and independent work, the rise of telework and mobilities (e.g. digital nomads), self-production (Do It Yourself), and value co-creation are experienced by almost all western countries.

For more than thirty years (with an acceleration since the mid-2000s), our economies have increasingly turned into a capitalism of assemblers.

The vast cathedrals such as multinational groups still exist. Some of them are largely polished by time and have an outmoded façade, no matter what they do. Others call new Viollet-le-Duc who will help them to come closer to the taste of the day. Others know massive destructions, close to bombardments of WWII. Others are demolished to better reconfigure around a practice which tends to pervade contemporary capitalism: assemblage. Cathedrals thus succeed more of another managerial character.

Assemblers are collectivities which keep assembling and de-assembling other juridical entities, and more and more, entrepreneurs and independent workers themselves, depending on market demand and on-going projects. Beyond the logic of a peripheral job market or a firm, which would outsource its activities, this is all capitalism, which aggregates and disaggregates permanently, as taken in the movement of a breath. Vast infrastructures and standards (themselves assembled and disassembled permanently) enable these maneuvers. These infrastructures are as much digital, legal, and capitalistic as organizational. They are the fragile exoskeleton of those activities which keep aggregating and disaggregating continuously. Digital transformation (which also covers the problematic side of these societal infrastructures), law (more flexible and adaptable in most western countries than it seems), management (more than ever careful of individuals) and one part of the financing modes (by projects) facilitate these evolutions.

Beyond the movement at the scale of these infrastructures, everybody's gesture becomes also assembling and de-assembling. As always, we are both actors and victims of ongoing transformations. From the visible gesture of a worker in a plant (the gesture of the pins manufactory of Adam Smith), we have moved to almost invisible gesture, minimalist movements with digital tools. Its expressivity (to re-use Merleau-Ponty's 1960 terminology) is weak (think about managers using their smartphones or laptops during the day, or consumers using their iPad at night). Gesture boils down to fingers typing on a keyboard (more and more flat and invisible from the outside), touching the flat screen of a tablet or simply moving naturally (with connected-objects or augmented-reality). Nonetheless, through

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[2] For more information about the process linked to this White Paper (which is the first of a series of three White Papers), thanks for visiting the following site : https://collaborativespacesstudy.wordpress.com/2016/04/08/a-process-for-rgcs-white-paper/

the logic of process integration and digital infrastructures mentioned earlier, the sum of these small gestures and noises assemble and de-assemble at the scale of the planet. From the manufactory, to warehouses and last-mile logistics, they set the world in motion. They are the concrete translation of assemblers and de-assemblers. Indeed, the great assembler is not Google, Amazon nor Uber. It is instead this steadily increasing discrete music which makes and transforms our world.

In order to understand work transformations, I will explore here a key phenomenon: the emergence of a collaborative economy, described by means of three interdependent layers: collaborative practices and spaces, collaborative communities (which can be fully independent of a place and its physicality) and collaborative movements (collaborative modes can be grounded into genuine social movements)[3].
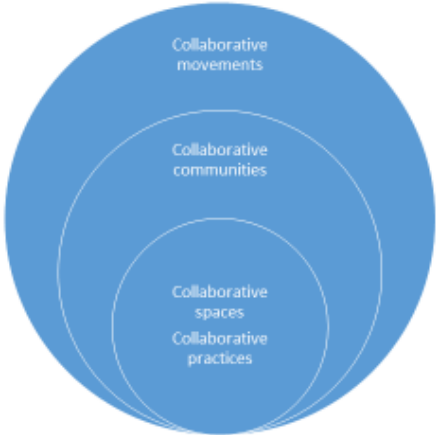
- **Figure 1: Spaces, practices, communities and collaborative movements**

The ambition of this White Paper (and the broader process behind it) is to enter into the concrete process of assemblage and de-assemblage of individual activities and projects, and to describe it from the perspective of collaborative communities.

We will define collaborative communities as *collectives of individuals entrepreneurs and/or project managers who build lasting collaborations in order to share practices and/or emotions against a backdrop of communitarian utopias.* Main collaborative communities at the heart of this first White Paper will be coworkers, makers, fabbers and hackers (whatever the status of the place or platform through which they meet, corporate or external). These communities rely on digital infrastructures (linked to the Internet), places and collaborative spaces (often designed, configured and furnished in a reflexive manner about the potential effect of space, colors, textures, lights… on collaboration), temporal structures (pitches,

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[3] In contrast to other analyses about the collaborative economy, collaborative platforms will not be the main focus of this White Paper which will rather deal with collaborative communities and collaborative movements.

seminars, anti-seminars, workshops, serious or less serious games…). They are more evanescent than traditional work or occupational communities whose boundaries and identities they often question (e.g. through the integration of customers themselves in the practice of goods or service co-production).

In the first part, I will detail and justify the central thesis at the heart of this White Paper: the growing convergence between managerial and political agencies. I will describe three interrelated phenomena which are constitutive of this convergence (new connectivity, new semiosis, new or renewed political consciousness). I will then evoke collaborative communities and collaborative movements which perfectly epitomize this trend.

The second part will detail the network and dispositive which have been implemented by RGCS coordinators in order to better understand collaborative communities, collaborative movements and their political dimensions in the context of work transformations.

Then, the last part will emphasize the results of one year of discussions in our seminars and working groups. I will conclude with a central invitation for citizens-managers-makers, politicians and strategic decision-makers: to move from policies *for* to policies *through* collaborative communities and collaborative spaces.

1. An observation: The rising politicization of management and the generalization of politico-managerial spaces

1.1 A key thesis: The growing convergence between managerial and political agencies

Collaborative communities, collaborative spaces and collaborative movements, are more and more important and contribute to the emergence of a collaborative economy.

I start here with a key statement: the growing convergence (or isomorphism) between managerial and political agencies[4]. More than ever, everyday activities of managers transform society and the modalities of 'living together'.

The phenomenon is not completely new. In the 30s, Henry Ford and his T model no doubt transformed American society and part of living together. With mass production and the social compromise offered by Fordism, this powerful economic actor also institutionalized a

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[4] Most philosophical and sociological works make a distinction between agency (also called 'agentivity'), action and practices. Agency is a symbolical or material transformative capacity of our world. It cannot be distinguished from a form of intentionality, an impetus. Some researchers relate this agency both to human and non-human entities. Others see agency by itself as human and non-human. Action is the result of this agency, what involves agency. Lastly, a practice is the set of behaviors, behavioral patterns meaningful for people living or acting together. Greeting, defending a thesis, crossing the street, driving a car, managing a meeting… correspond to expressions which evoke expected patterns of behaviors (and norms embedded into these behaviors). Thus, a coworker who 'pitches' her project will rely on practices (linked to PowerPoints, a way to move and play with space, a short temporal structure…) and will do her best, with her agency, to transform the relational space (symbolical and material) within which she evolves. She will position her project. Agency is close to notions such as creativity, practical sense, intuition, reflexivity, interiority…

political model. Since the 90s, political effects of actions have taken an *extent* (potentially global), a d*epth* (touching at the very mechanisms of democracy and the form of democratic forums) and an *unpredictability* (global economic actors sometimes emerge in less than one year) largely unknown till now. In a way, contemporary public policies are produced by a myriad of actors-entrepreneurs (pushing disruptive models) often detached from national and local interests (which does not mean that cathedrals are not transformative as well[5]).

To clarify this thesis about the joint transformation of agency and capitalism, it is important to position this idea relative to other alternative discourses.

Firstly, with those dealing with the 'manageralization' of policy and private lives. Promoters of critical approaches underline in particular the increasing penetration of managerial vocabulary and ideology in unexpected spheres: hospitals, administration, religious organizations, army, and family… everybody manages something today. Everybody is incited to 'performance', a better management (and self-management), a better use and management of time… Society at large managerializes itself, which induces new hierarchies and dominations. The thesis defended here is different. Beyond the managerialization of numerous aspects of public and private lives and the growing imprint of managerial ideology, I want to stress mostly the increasing political nature of the material and symbolical effects of management (beyond ideology and structures of domination).

Our thesis is not about the influence strategies (e.g. lobbying activities) of (big) companies in the context of legislative processes. It neither insists on social responsibility (in relationship with business ethic or corporate social responsibility). **The thesis defended here is more radical than that of other discourses (more strategic than political): managerial actions (in particular entrepreneurial ones) become more and more political by themselves.**

In the context of this White Paper, I want to clarify what is meant by 'political'. The convergence I wish to emphasize deals with three political dimensions of managerial actions:

- Communication towards citizens and society at large (more than immediate customers) ;
- Modes of representativeness of a collective, a discourse or an action;
- Systems of legitimacy.

Communication towards citizens corresponds to a specific phenomenon. For a long time, big companies have addressed an audience far beyond their effective customers (e.g. Coca-Cola in the United States). Since the 90s, companies have increasingly addressed citizens (potential consumers or influencers) and society at large. They endeavor to be actors in and of the city, talking inside the Agora[6] to everybody, as other citizens. Facebook, Google, Amazon but also numerous startups are now in this grey area which is far beyond usual categories such as 'prospective' or 'potential' customers. In the context of their extended value co-creation processes, today they address citizens and or citizen consciousness as much as our instincts for consumptions. And it is probably in the worlds of the city and the citizenship today that the highest fences and barriers to their development exist.

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[5] But for them as well, managerial agency (and its political effects) has been transforming since the late 90s.

[6] "The Agora (/ˈæɡərə/; Ancient Greek: Ἀγορά Agorá) was a central space or square in city-states of Ancient Greece. The literal meaning of the word is "gathering place" or "assembly". The agora was the centre of athletic, artistic, spiritual and political life of the city. The Ancient Agora of Athens was the best-known example." (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agora)

The modes of representativeness of a collectivity, a discourse or an action correspond to the issue on which the rupture is particularly radical. The legitimate processes through which an actor or a technology can 'speak' for a totality (a nation, an occupational community, an industry…) are largely institutionalized and legalized in most western countries. Institutions and institutional procedures make it possible to identify legitimate spokespersons and to open public spaces to protestations and contestation movements. The Internet, and more recently, social networks such as Facebook, have made it possible to gather opinions quickly and massively from an aggregation of heterogeneous opinions, reviews, likes and re-tweets which are particularly visible and traceable. Modes of representativeness and existence of reflexive collectivities about their identity (class for themselves) and projects have been disrupted and are not really questioned by old institutions (the role of Facebook has thus been important in the Arab Spring). Everybody's voice can express itself among the noise of the multitude, and can be isolated and valorized very quickly. The representative and the illustrative (as the quantitative versus qualitative divide in data and data treatment) are only a question of degree in the exploration of spokespersons and strategic traces by a collectivity. It was probably not among Facebook, Google or Amazon's ambitions to become true **political infrastructures,** but this is clearly what happened. Likewise, in the context of more commercial third-places, it was probably not in the objective of WeWork to reinvent socializations and new ways to gather and aggregate social entities (workplaces and home for numerous entrepreneurs), but this is what they are starting to do. WeWork agencies and other coworking actors' agencies are transforming macro-dimensions of political and societal life. The coliving trend and its use in the political sphere epitomize this emergent transformation[7].

Lastly, this is the entire system of production of legitimate actors and legitimate discourses in and about the City and its management, which is disrupted. Through a new focus on digital infrastructures, it is tempting to give a more systemic aspect to the convergence between the managerial and political agencies I want to describe here. Beyond traditional media and political institutions (their elective and consultative processes), Facebook settle norms, new legitimate canals for political claims (from those of hackers to those of terrorists) and new processes to identify and constitute legitimate entities. The bulk of digital actors, local as global, contribute to give an unprecedented visibility to desires, expectations, trends, which are at the heart of our societies. In a way, they *make* more than they constitute the actors and discourses which will be potentially legitimate (as grounded into the crowd itself[8]).

Management becomes political in the strongest sense of the term. But if one asks an entrepreneur his 'business model', will he then ask her or him the 'political model' (beyond general expectations about the sustainable, equitable, ethical aspects of the business model)? Is s/he asked to defend (beyond banks and financers, which is also legitimate) this political model at the heart of the city's agora? Is s/he given the possibility to do it? Does it exist? **I will come back further in the White Paper on these issues by suggesting that collaborative spaces could and should become the very agora mentioned here, at the heart of the city.**

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[7] See the support of the former mayor of London, Boris Johnson, to the Fish Island Village project: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/adi-gaskell/londons-leading-role-as-a_b_9367478.html

[8] The Internet itself is nothing more than a technical infrastructure upon which other (compatible) layers will emerge, closer to contents.

1.2 Three interrelated phenomena underlying the growing politicization of managerial agency

How did we get there? The Alpha version of this White Paper puts forward three concomitant phenomena: a radical transformation of connectivity modes, a change in the modalities and processes of sense-making (a new "semiosis") and the emergence of new forms of political consciousness. These transformations (started in the mid-40s and accelerated in the late 90s) induce new proximities between the transformative capacities of managers (in particular those of entrepreneurs) and those of politicians (as institutional actors with a mandate for public action).
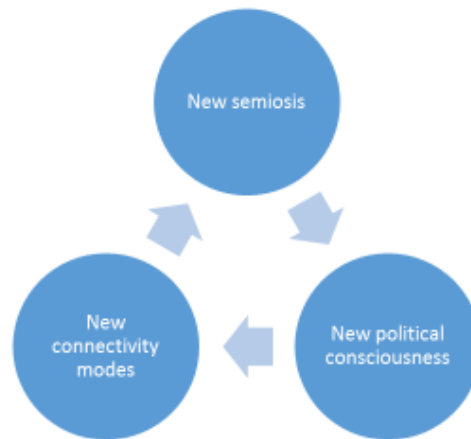
- **Figure 2: Three phenomena at the heart of the convergence between managerial and political agencies**

The rising connectivity at stake in everyday practices is as much a social phenomenon (the end of « enclaves » and the return of communities which will be discussed here) as a technological movement (the emergence of digital infrastructures and global standards of information and communication).

Over a long period of time, the genealogy of these new forms of collective activities and the end of "enclaves" could be described the following way (see figure 3):
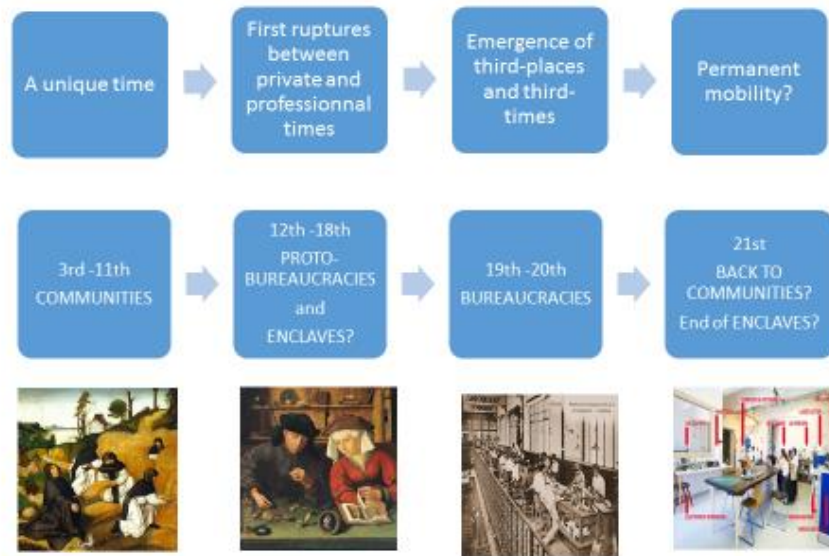
- **Figure 3: Long-term evolutions of collective activity in Western countries: back to communities?**

The first period I would like to stress goes from the 3rd to the 11th century. First, monastic communities appear (in the late antiquity, before the early Middle Age which is the focus of our period). They are mainly eremitical and coenobitical communities (lonesome monks are small nomadic groups). Europe is a vast continent covered by huge forests and partly connected through infrastructures erected by the Roman Empire (which will end for its Western component in the late 5th century). But for the essential part of the landscape forests are the heart of everyday life and everyday mobilities. As recalled by Michel Serres, Forest is from the early Middle Age to the late Middle Age a huge unregulated, non-law space. It is a place for outlaws, robbers and people nobody wants to interact with.

Still during this period, the first proto-bureaucratic forms emerge (from the 4th to the 6th century). The saint Benedict rule appeared in the 6th century. It defines the rules of common life, a unique temporality, largely theological. The abbey is at the center of the community. Etymologically, he is the father (abbey comes from the Greek word *Abba*, father, coming from the Aramean word *abba* pronounced the same way and meaning the same thing) of an isonomic collectivity. As in all families, one would not prefer one brother or one sister, but is expected to treat everybody the same way. Likewise, sisters and brothers are expected to like each other and treat each other equally (which does not mean that roles and tasks cannot be shared). Monks (and sisters) progressively enclaved themselves and abbeys or other religious buildings thus proliferated over the Middle Age period. Simultaneously, castles, cities, houses also multiplied and contributed to an increasing number of closed spaces and places. From the mid of the period, deforestation accelerated.

The second period (which starts from the 11th century) is delimited by several key events among which the foundation of the first western university (Bologna, in 1088) contributed to the urbanization of the landscape. As monks, academics (all wearing a tonsure) belong to a community at the heart of the city. At the beginning of this period, economic development accelerated, in and between cities. Commerce and bank activities took off. This is not without raising several theological problems. To finance this economic development, loan-sharking became common in most big cities. The Catholic Church itself was sometimes involved in these activities. This situation is particularly delicate, in a doctrinal system which promises either hell (to usurers) or heaven (to devotes, hard-working Christians). Fortunately, a major theological innovation enabled (in the 12th century) the unlocking of this situation: purgatory (Le Goff, 1981), which makes it possible to conceive an intermediary world (more or less provisional) for the soul of merchants and bankers. In a context in which productive activities (in which monks themselves are more and more involved), commercial exchanges and fairs take off, capitalism and its key techniques are from now on legitimate.

Still during this second period, a change in the vocabulary illustrates a deep (social, material and legal) change: the appearance of the word "enclave" in the 13th century. Etymologically, "enclave" comes from the vulgar medieval Latin *inclavare*, derived from the word "clavis" meaning "key", with the suffix 'in' pointing out the outcome, successful realization of something (see the Trésor de la Lange Française). An enclave is literally what is locked with a key, an inside, an individual or communitarian home. Such a place and dispositive of locking was not accessible to everybody.

Monastic organizations and castles generalized enclosing all over Europe. With them, territories, everybody's space (possibly enclaved into another enclave) becomes a "private property" (that of the seigneur or the abbey mainly). Monasteries are often unique places, surrounded by forests, which remain a huge non-law area. Inside the enclave, rules (e.g. monastic rules) apply, along with specific forms of collective activity. Collective activity constitutes a unique time and space, a totality. We are in an eschatological temporality which will be ended by the apocalypse. The outside exists, it is paradoxically reified before being annexed and regulated by the enclave[9]. It is primarily a spatial and temporal emptiness. From the 11th to the 16th century, universities gradually became enclaves themselves.

Beyond the Church and monastic organizations (which play a major economic role in most Western countries of the Middle Age), Cities and States structure themselves and organize the growing occupational communities of that time. Guilds and corporations multiply, constituting additional proto-bureaucracies (Kieser, 1989). But economic activity began to more and more autotomize itself in the Middle Age and at the beginning of the Renaissance. Compagnia appear (Hatchuel and Glise, 2003). They are big commercial and productive collectivities related to powerful families (e.g. the Medicis), but also networks transformed through gifts and counter-gifts dynamics, trust and commercial contracts. They are not at all legal entities.

With the third period, western countries experience a strong economic growth and an unpreceded level of technical innovations. Great Britain is the first nation (in the early 18th

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[9] Interestingly, mechanical clocks were invented in the 14th century. They initially equipped religious buildings and contributed to an enclaving and solidification of time for collective activity. Time is there, materialized, and measured physically by these new artifacts for members of the enclave and those crossing it.

century) to experience the industrial revolution. It was soon followed by other European countries, including France. Manufactures appear. In contrast to compania of the Renaissance, they are legal entities. Techniques and managerial rules are more and more discussed. More than ever, rules, procedures, structures, walls, machines, define a work itself more industrial (and decreasingly agricultural). Cities expand. One does not only goes through the gate of his/her house to reach the filed s/he works. Increasingly, s/he needs to travel far in order to reach the manufacture or the workshop. Sometimes (e.g. for merchants), it is necessary to cross long distances by horse or later by train to visit partners or customers (which sometimes requires sleeping far from home). Between the home and workplace flourish numerous 'third-places'. If inns, restaurants, hotels appeared before this third period, they clearly multiply during and after the 19th and 20th century. During the 20th century, manufactures increasingly became firms structured in various ways, more or less distributed (networks connecting multiple legal entities). The world, largely deforested, is gradually covered by bounded spaces and enclaves sometimes enclaved into each other.

The fourth period (from the late 20th century till today) is punctuated by numerous ruptures and breakthroughs (in particular after World War II). The economy is globalized more than ever. Vast infrastructures and technological standards (which emerged in the 80s and 90s) enable worldwide communications (at very low costs). The Internet and the Web have become the network of all networks. Information and sense-making liquefy and most western societies move from "object-images" (of periods 1 and 2 of our chronology) to screen-images (with period 3 and most of all, period 4). **It is at this point that a second phenomenon (a new semiosis) emerges, which became even more pregnant in the late 90s.**

Object-Image (periods 1 and 2)   Screen-Image (periods 3 and 4)
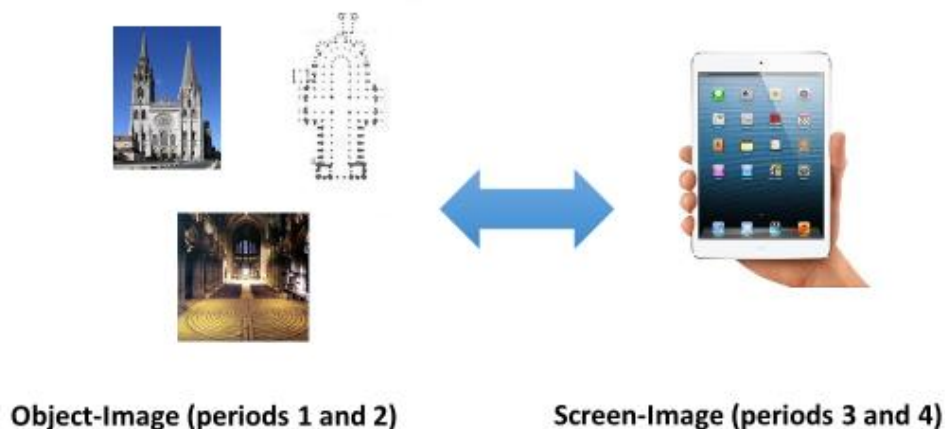
• **Figure 4: Transformation of meaning and sense-making over long-durée (adapted from Baschet, 2008).**

During periods 1 and 2 of our chronology, signs and their significance can be considered as "object-images". The materiality of icons, triptychs, and statues were fundamental in the

processes of creating meaning during this period. The matter, place in space and time of religious rituals create meaning. Images were not (yet) a flow that would be materialized and lead to meaning through the use of a specific medium. Meaning is inscribed into a physical, embodied, ritual relationship. Thus, "instead of the conjunction of two elements partially external to each other, image and medium, one attempted to conceive object-images as a whole, taking meaning through the relationships which are involved around them" (Baschet, 2008: 51). Furthermore, medieval iconography, and more generally the semantics surrounding it, does not oppose texts ("written") and images ("drawn"). Books and the pages that they contain are "*pictura*"; the same verb ("*pingere*") can relate to the activity of tracing letters or that of drawing an image. (Ibid).

The Chartres Cathedral, which is eight centuries old, epitomizes this point perfectly. It is, at large, a complex object-image filled with other object-images. The entire building is intended to be experienced during religious rituals, specifically during Mass or pilgrimages. Pilgrims could move from the North portal of the labyrinth (related to the Old Testament) to the South portal (focused on the New Testament); the scenes in the cathedral logically follow this theological perspective. The place, matter, and succession of statues, spaces, stained glasses, the time of encounter and the spatial practice at stake (a walk during a procession, a prayer, a specific act during a liturgy, etc.) are all meaningful. The entire set constitutes a complex semantic system that in turn must become an embodied experience. While today each tourist leaves the place with his or her personal experience of the cathedral, during the Middle Ages pilgrims, followed an order in which to experience a path and an emotion expected to be "universal". Furthermore, while contemporary visitors may find the place intriguing, curious, nice or wonderful, for Middle Ages people the cathedral was simply *meaningful*. The building's matter did not contain a specific meaning per se, nor did it convey or transmit one; rather the choice, location, and time of encounter with artifacts had a meaning in itself (Baschet, 2008).

In his analysis of image and iconography, **Baschet (2008) suggests juxtaposing "object-images" with what he calls the "screen-images" of contemporary societies (more grounded into period 3 and most of all, period 4 of our chronology).** The exercise will lead us back to the post-Macy conceptualization of information.

Screen-images rely on an instantaneous iconography, a flow that materializes by means of a medium (a book with a standardized typeface or structure, the screen of a computer, an iPad, etc.). In the end, neither the time nor space of the process of interpretation is important for the process of creating meaning itself. A vast technical infrastructure made of standardized screens, corporate networks, Internet protocols, etc. and associated social rules and routines of interaction, navigation and use enable individuals to implement these new modes of sense-giving.

This infrastructure is essential. It includes all technical and cognitive means which enable the circulation of signs. In the Western world it emerged in the 16th and 17th centuries through a standardized writing which could be more and more accessed by literate people without the need to understand palaeography; it evolved in the 19th and 20th centuries into material paper-based media produced on a large scale and at a low cost (Breton, 1990); and more recently, to electronically based media and networks. All these elements constitute a vast infrastructure

which enable the circulation and embodiment of screen-images in a more ephemeral and fluid way than the object-images of the Middle Ages.

Today, information is expected to circulate ad flow everywhere. No longer are there rituals likely to give (or remove) meaning of everyday activities. We live in an informational ocean, an abundance of signs conveying meaning in multiple manners. Most teenagers do not merely use the Internet; they live in it, are immersed socially and cognitively in it.

Invisible digital infrastructures (and the broader screen-based semiosis behind them) succeed to the visible forests of the Middle Age, other non-law area (Serres, 2007). Enclaved regulations of the Middle Age are more and more dissolved into information flows and global communication. The Church of the Middle Age strongly controlled flows of information. Monks thus copied manuscripts in their scriptoria of their abbeys. Each book embodied a solid, heavy, knowledge, a jewelry. Libraries were controlled by religious power. Places devoted explicitly to the development and diffusion of knowledge (universities) were all religious. With the invention of printing techniques (which contributed to the Protestant reform), standardization in writing policies, or more recently, the emergence of global computer techniques, information becomes a fluid, circulating freely on the highways of global infrastructures. No State, no Institution can really regulate it. This becomes particularly obvious in the last period of our chronology.

Collective activity has autotomized itself. It can now inform itself, take shape and be deformed. Organizations outsource more and more activities and become vast capitalistic Legos. Telework, entrepreneurship, digital nomads, independent workers, have multiplied, partly because of the economic crisis started in the 70s, a return more or less structurally and cyclically in most western countries. Men, goods, money, circulate at the scale of the planet. Society has liberalized itself, as some even announce the "end of History" (Fukuyama, 2006). Markets (more and more global) dictate the temporal orientation of economic and social activities (immediate, short-term oriented) of our world. Past has no relevance and presence anymore in a liquefied world where nothing kept its shape very long (Bauman, 2000). Only increasingly pressing and urgent present matters. In this world where pressure centers everything on individual activities and projects, where incentives to innovation become stronger and stronger, where vast digital, capitalistic and legal assemblages keep evolving, what keeps capitalism? What becomes the centrifugal force, the integrative power? Probably communities, in particular those **Max Weber (1971, &5, pp. 204-211) calls « emotional communities » (see the appendix of this White Paper).**

To all this, it is necessary to add a third phenomenon which underlies the politicization of managerial agency: **a new kind of political consciousness**, close to the communitarian movements post-May 68 , close as well to utopic socialism and social experimentations of the 19[10]th century, but in a more intermittent manner. We enter an era of political consumerism. Everybody can now quickly enter and leave a political debate, without subscribing to a political party, without joining physical agora or spaces devoted to political debates. Political action can take place from anywhere and everywhere, with a smartphone, a tablet, a laptop, on Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram or Periscope. Everybody can criticize a community, a city, an aspect of the living and acting together. Everybody knows it and feels this new potentiality and I guess does not necessarily to drop the mask (one can post a political

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[10] I think namely about Proudhon or Owen.

comment anonymously). Each one deeply feels this potentiality which is constitutive of a new "surveillance capitalism" (Zuboff, 2016). Everybody can be the victim or executioner of the next political wave. Everybody knows that interactions produce traces. In other words, this new political consciousness is more serious for those who have a true vocation for politics. Time of light and evanescent discussions in public agora are over. This new political consciousness involves managers and entrepreneurs, as any other actors. They know they can push the next wave (from the community of their collaborative space or other communities) or they can be submerged by the next violent wave which will destroy their reputation, their most precious asset in the context of a collaborative economy which remains largely immaterial.

The three aforementioned trends I have just described (connectivity, new semiosis, new political consciousness) are constitutive of a growing convergence between managerial and political agencies. Young entrepreneurs of today can produce disruptive political models as they enter directly into global infrastructures, global elements of language, logics immediately public and viral, acontextual reactions apriori (the service can be consumed at home, in situations of mobility, at work, in collaborative spaces…).

2. RGCS : an academic network and a think tank, a politico-managerial space among others

2.1 Objectives and activities of RGCS

In the context of the evolutions described previously, RGCS is an independent network which endeavor to elaborate propositions for citizens-entrepreneurs-makers, politicians and strategic decision-makers.

Initialized (in late 2014) as a working group devoted to (financed) research projects about collaborative spaces, RGCS has been re-positioned in Paris since 2015 as a collaborative community in the spirit of a think tank.

The network structures itself around three key chapters (London, Paris and Montreal) which make it possible to connect and gather researchers working on RGCS research topics, and who are often alone (on these issues) in their own university. Practitioners of collaborative communities and collaborative movements (e.g. in France at the level of the city or other public organizations such as "conseils régionaux") are invited to join us for our discussions.

RGCS has organized three kinds of public events (from January 2015 to March 2016):

- **Research seminars:** They gathered 20-30 minute-presentations by academics interested in collaborative communities, collaborative movements and collaborative spaces. These events were hosted by universities or collaborative spaces (in Paris). Discussions outside usual academic contexts (in third-places) were interesting because of the immediacy of the research subject around us, and informal conversations during and after presentations;

- **Working Groups:** they were more informal and interactive events aiming at feeding the White Paper (versions Alpha, Beta and Omega) around specific topics or more specific research projects involving participants of RGCS events. Three working groups, more or less structured, have been settled in London, Paris and Montreal. In London, the first Working Group deals with the communication of new work practices and new work spaces. It aims at critically understanding the political and ideological dimensions of discourses about entrepreneurship, new innovative places, third-places and collaborative movements. Sessions are partly animated through videos by actors related to these objects. People attending the sessions comment them and try to identify patterns of values and ideologies behind them. The second working group is based in Paris. It deals with public policies and territories linked to innovative places and collaborative spaces. It is particularly focused on the issues of social inclusion and exclusion. Discussions are animated through short presentations of researchers and representatives (in particular at the level of the city). Key units of analysis are the city, practices (in particular collaborative practices) in innovation-oriented places, or between innovation places (in the city) and between cities. The third working group, more emergent, is based in Montreal. It is focused on the territory of Montreal and aims at discussing "The re-invention of society". Society (and political dimensions of society) are more than ever transformed by actors of civil society who will reflexively produce new practices. Beyond movements such as hacktivism and social activism (which could be part of the discussion), the group could discuss social movements and counter-cultures likely to inspire more traditional managerial agencies;
- The last kind of meetings corresponds to more administrative discussions between chapters' coordinators. These meetings are made either physically or virtually, through Skype.

A charter defines the spirit of the network[11], focused on gifts and counter-gifs, sharing and concern for "common good". There are no employees in RGCS. Events and tools managed are shared (several members of the group give a little bit of their time to make the network work). Everybody is welcome to present her work, an idea or participate in our debates and the life of the network.

Since January 2016, new chapters have opened or should open in: Grenoble and Lyon (chapter RGCS GL), Saint-Etienne (chapter RGCS ST)[12], Barcelona (Chapter RGCS BC), and Roma-Milan (chapter RGCS RM).

The team of coordinators for each chapter is as follows:

Chapters	Names of the coordinators
RGCS Paris	Julie Fabbri (main coordinator), François-Xavier de Vaujany, Pierre Laniray et Anna Glaser
RGCS Montreal	Viviane Sergi (main coordinator), Annie Camus and Anouk Mukherjee
RGCS London	François-Xavier de Vaujany (main coordinator), Hélène Lambrix, Nathalie

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	Mitev, Stefan Haefliger and Yesh Nama
RGCS Grenoble-Lyon	Sabine Carton (main coordinator for Grenoble), David Vallat (main coordinator for Lyon) and Nicolas Lesca
RGCS Barcelona	Ignasi Capdevilla (main coordinator), Montserrat Pareja Eastaway and Roser Pujadas
RGCS Milan-Roma	Paula Ungureanu (main coordinator)

The team of coordinators of the Working Groups is as follows:

Working Groups	Noms
WG Paris	Fabrice Periac
WG London	François-Xavier de Vaujany, Hélène Lambrix and Magda Herchei
WG Montréal	Viviane Sergi and Annie Camus

Three projects (without private financing) are also linked to the network and the White Paper:

- A project about RGCS collaborative tools (with Blandine Bréchignac, Serge Bolidum, Fabrice Periac, Aurore Dandoy and François-Xavier de Vaujany);
- A survey project likely to contribute to the White Paper (with Grégor Bouville, Sébastien Lorenzini, Christophe Elie-Dit-Cosaque, Stefan Haefliger and François-Xavier de Vaujany);
- An RGCS symposium which will take place on the 16th December, 2016 in Paris and which will be an opportunity to present the first version (Alpha) of the White Paper (with an organizing comittee involving Julie Fabbri, Anna Glaser, Aurore Dandoy, Albane Grandazzi, Pierre Laniray, Anouk Mukherjee, Fabrice Periac and François-Xavier de Vaujany).

Between January 2015 and March 2016, the network organized the following activities:

	Seminars	Working Groups	Administrative meetings
RGCS Paris	9	4	2
RGCS Montreal	2		1
RGCS Londres	6	4	2
RGCS GL	1		

Beyond these meetings (31), the network relies on a couple of tools, all free or open source:

- A website with a blog section[13] (set up in January 2015) ;
- An email (gmail) devoted to the network (set up in January 2015);
- A collaborative platform (Stample, implemented in April 2015) ;
- A LinkedIn group devoted to the network, in particular information about events and publications related to the network (created in January 2015) ;
- A Twitter account (set up in February 2015).

Julie Fabbri, Pierre Laniray, Hélène Lambrix, François-Xavier de Vaujany, Blandine Bréchignac, and Serge Bollidum are involved in the everyday life and management of these tools.

2.2 For a universitas, a community at the heart of the city, its evolutions and relations with collaborative globalization

In continuation of the thesis defended here, RGCS network endeavors to be reflexive about the political effects of its own activities.

Made of academics[14], it is inscribed into the academic culture, and concerned with elaborate common goods, "positive externalities"…

University is initially *universitas*, a Latin word which means (among other meaning) a community. The community-oriented functioning, the gift (academics are not paid for the articles they produce which become a common good) and mutual help, are quite close to those of the collaborative economy (e.g. the sharing economy) and the collaborative communities observed by RGCS. This is not that surprising in view of the role of the academic and scientific cultures in the history of collaborative movements themselves (see e.g. Lallement, 2015 about hackers and makers).

Still from a historical standpoint, universities have always been at the heart of western cities (and even sometimes contributed to their birth and development). And at their early stage, universities have often been more communities than the places and spaces that later epitomized them. The history of Bologna University (set up in the 11th century) was not initially a place, a set of activities embodied into specific buildings and territories. It was only in the 16th century that the university was grounded into proper buildings (in particular the famous palazzo dell Archiginnasio). Beforehand, scholastic practice was disseminated all around the city, in public or private spaces, and sometimes even on public places. Bologna university has thus been for a long time, a community without a particularly spatiality or territoriality.

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[13] A dozen of posts have been put online on the RGCS blog (with ideas that are at the heart of this Alpha version of the White Paper). They have been also put online via pulse and Stample, which has been an opportunity to get very interesting feedback.

[14] From various academic fields: management, organization studies, sociology, ergonomics, political sciences, design, economy…

RGCS yearns to be a kind of return to this mobility in the city. The organization of some seminars inside collaborative spaces, with what it implies of meetings, sharing, surprises, is thus particularly important.

Being at the heart of the city also implies a participation in the debates, movements, and forums, which are at the heart of it. We thus endeavor to do our best to contribute to the exchanges, places and practices encountered.

The process (these exchanges) is more important than the output and destination (the White Papers Alpha, Beta and Omega).

As professors of scholastic of the Middle Age, the idea was to continue to rely on exchanges, encounters, and dialectic points of view (*disputatio*). We believe that a university, independent, could be of the consciousness of our societies, in particular those that are more and more trapped into those growing political managerial agencies emerging today. This implies relating them to other events. Our seminars, RGCS Working Groups as RGCS tools, are open to practitioners (in particular managers of third-places and collaborative communities), politicians and representatives of public organization who want to participate in our discussions.

3. Results and implications of the research discussed in the context of RGCS

From RGCS seminars, meetings of our Working Groups and our ongoing research, I would like to summarize four trends (both managerial and political) which emerged from our discussions this year. After a description of the Napoleon aspect of local, national and international public politics (particularly in France and Europe), I will stress the importance of better coordination between public actors, and between public actors and collaborative movements.

This is both the new citizen-entrepreneur-maker and strategic decision makers that are targeted by this White Paper[15] and the two others that will follow. Collaborative communities should not be only the focus of decoupled public policies or political initiative. They could and they should be the module and the heart of economic, educational, industrial and cultural policies targeting the city. A way to bring the economy and the social closer, aiming more than ever at collaborating and sharing.

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[15] Which is only a first summary of our meeting. We will go further with the Beta and Omega versions of this White Paper.

3.1 Key-result: four trends about managerial and political agencies

The four trends I will mention now are all related to the growing convergence between managerial and political agencies described in the first part of this White Paper.

The first trend is about collaborative communities and the city (its management and urbanism (the 'living together'). Questions raised by collaborative communities and collaborative spaces are often at the cross-road of problems which used to be very different. In the choice of the implementation, arrangement and animation modes of third-places and collaborative spaces, it is more than ever necessary to make assumptions about work, mobilities at work, the relationship with the district or the city, and the relationship with former Cathedrals and public policies. Likewise, regional and local authorities (e.g. the city or 'conseils régionaux' in France) have rarely made so many (implicit) assumptions about management modes and about the contemporary or future managerial practices. This is particularly obvious in the context of discussions about topics such as collaborative spaces and collaborative communities (see e.g. the project 23 places to « reinvent Paris »[16] or the successive versions of TechCity in the UK). When the emphasis is put on market, communication, events (this is probably more the case in London than in Montreal or Paris) as contents of public (local) policies, managerial assumptions (how will we work in 10, 20 years from now) are also very strong. Topics such as co-living (see e.g. the strategy of WeWork about it), the rise of coworking spaces erected by building contractors, the stronger and stronger link with food-catering (see e.g. Starbuck), new transporters strategies (see e.g. the case of the French railway and its initiatives about collaborative spaces in France) show that these actors are more and more present on the market of collaborative spaces. The choice of the location and urbanism of these new collaborative actors, are and may become more and more structuring of territories and mobilities on territories. In front of these very political managerial agencies, public policies look a little bit disjointed. We (collectively) have thus been surprised by the napoleon aspect of European, national, regional and local public policies (in particular in the context of Paris chapter). **Structural funds of the EU, regional and local authorities (city and 'Régions'), districts ('mairies d'arrondissements') and cities of Paris immediate surrounding, the Grand Paris… involve major investments and 'solid, material, quite irreversible choices in the long term[17].**

The second trend relates to economy, entrepreneurship and innovation. On the political side, collaborative economy and collaborative communities have rarely been more present in public discourses. The key stake is to rely on managerial agency itself, in particular that of entrepreneurs and managers of collaborative communities (see e.g. TechCity or The halle Freycinet in Paris which clearly epitomize this trend). For many, the solution to the structural and/or recurrent problem (depending on the city) of unemployment would be there: each one has the responsibility to create her own revenue and activity, or a combination of employment and activity (I think here about slashers). Corporate or external collaborative spaces could

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[16] http://www.reinventer.paris/fr/sites/
[17] We are consolidating data on this issue for the next versions of the White Paper.

accompany them[18] and create conditions for mutual help. Universities have recently made this choice (in particular the 'student-entrepreneur' status has incited thousands of students to join labs and collaborative spaces – coworking spaces, maker spaces and fab labs – hosted by universities). Most places and spaces discussed in the context of RGCS seminars or working groups were in this voluntarist vision of the crisis and problems of our societies. The case of planned obsolescence is also interesting. Numerous maker spaces look for ways out about it, ways to extend the life of most technical objects (bulbs, appliances, computers, smartphones…) which surround us. They inscribe the logic and projects in the broader logic of the sharing economy (suggesting to allocate rights of use instead of property rights) and of the circular economy. Here as well, political discourse is more and more present.

The third trend relates to collaborative education. Collaborative spaces and third-places become (and try more and more to become) spaces for debates, critical and reflexive forums, opportunities for experimentations… In short, for some with whom we collaborated, the academics we are quickly felt comfortable. Collaborative spaces and new places for innovation are (and could be more), unmissable contexts involved in two complementary (and paradoxical) other trends: the production of common debates and common knowledge, the development of business and political models which could imply the elaboration of more "privatized" entrepreneurial knowledge. 'Cathedrals' come more and more in external collaborative spaces or set up their own corporate space, excubate projects or send employees, to regenerate and inspire themselves through collaborative communities (we saw several experiences of that kind in London – e.g. Publicis inside the Trampery). Experiences range from simple seminars to month-longs immersions.

The fourth trend relates to a more experimental and open nature of managerial practices themselves. Managers try through innovation. Innovation is a way to try. Various practices are tested in very open contexts. In continuation of this more experimental management, work environments become more and more shared, open, modular, transparent. Furniture can be moved more easily than before. Rooms of a coworking space (themselves modular) can host more coworkers, host seminars and traditional meetings (hierarchical, with a knowing person, an expert diffusing knowledge) or more horizontal and open interactions (serious games, simulations, war rooms, yoga or mindfulness courses…). In the most etymological sense, management presupposes to spare, allocate, and restructure space and time. The manager of collaborative spaces, as all animators of teams, is more reflexive than ever about the affordance of objects, spaces or, more immediately, the practices on which he or she relies. Collectivity is no longer obvious (e.g. from a contractual point of view). It needs to be solidified and re-solidified continuously. Places, spaces, people and objects need to be assembled and re-assembled permanently.

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[18] About this, it is surprising that public policies do not offer contents and incentives about corporate coworking (in particular of big companies) and corporate collaborative spaces at large. This kind of collaborative space could also be an interesting economic lever (in particular if the space is open to external entrepreneurs).

3.2 Invitations for version Beta and Omega of the White Paper. To be continued…

The thesis and four trends described here are only a first summary of RGCS discussions. They converge about the importance of the political effects of managerial agency.

They do not suggest that classic public policies (elaborated by professional politicians and political institutions), in particular at the level of the city, are over. On the contrary. More than ever, collaborative spaces can be spaces for experimentation for public policies themselves. With perhaps better coordination between public actors at the level of the city[19]**, collaborative spaces and places for innovation (external as corporate) could become new integrative units for public policies.** Why not think about collaborative spaces as simultaneously spaces for training, social reintegration, culture, entrepreneurship and re-industrialization[20]? Contexts which combine **the institutional logics of an agora (for citizens of the immediate environment), Pôle Emploi (French employment agency), a Fab lab, a business school, a design school, a yoga center**? What about imagining these modules inside the city as new interfaces towards work environment, more self-managed as possible by economic and social actors of the city and/or the district? **Places where the political effects of managerial agency could be discussed, questioned, reflexively explored, legitimated or illegitimated in touch with citizens of the immediate environment of economic activities?** How to think of the university itself (and business schools[21]), its teachings, its research, its experimentations, at the scale of the city and for the city? How to include disciplines as diverse as philosophy, robotics, design and management into the project? How to rethink simultaneously the link with the city and mobilities inside and between cities? With a starting point for experimentations which could be collaborative spaces and collaborative communities themselves? This would require, beyond the strategic and functional taxonomies already offered by the literature about third places and collaborative communities, to identify the spaces and communities more linked to such or such political agency or a combination of political agencies (creating new social ties, favoring innovation on a territory, educating…).

In our future White Papers (Beta and Omega), we wish to offer concrete proposals for the joint elaboration of public policies *through* collaborative spaces and collaborative communities (involving both collaborative movements and traditional political or managerial institutions). Our analysis and proposals will target both politicians (in particular those involved in the management of the city), economic leaders and, of course, citizens-entrepreneurs-makers.

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[19] In France, there is a collective representative (or aiming at being representative) of third places… when will there be a collective aiming at being representative of all public actors involved in collaborative communities and collaborative spaces? Continental, national, local and regional authorities, cities… in relationship with associations, cooperative, unions…?

[20] The case in France of Quincaillerie numérique » (http://www.laquincaillerienumerique.fr/), d'ICI Montreuil (http://www.icimontreuil.com/), Fab Lab Lyon (http://www.fablab-lyon.fr/) or 100ecs (http://100ecs.fr/) epitomize these places and trends which would deserve more than visits or communication events simply 'supported' by the political sphere. They are close to the new political units discussed in the context of this White Paper.

[21] More and more searching for multiple distributed campuses inside the cities…

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2) Posts on RGCS blog (in French and in English)[22]

Coworking, immobilier et services partagés : un nouveau levier pour les politiques de la ville ?

The collaborative economy and Robin Hood : political experimentations without political vision ?

Les transformations du travail: vers un capitalisme d'assembleurs ?

Corporate Coworking: What is the reality behind it?

Work transformations and the teaching of management: towards the end of business schools (as they are)?

Une nouvelle clé pour comprendre les espaces collaboratifs : les communautés émotionnelles ?

Collaborative spaces in Paris, Singapore and Sydney: so far, so close?

Sharing a bottle of wine: back to the roots of the sharing economy?

Collaboration in an academic building: the case of UTS new building in Sydney

Fab time: let me show you are new space in the city

A letter to my daughter et l'économie collaborative: le contre-don de Mark Zuckerberg

Des nouvelles forms de collaborations : quelles utopies sociales ?

Manifeste pour une vraie politique publique en matière d'espaces collaboratifs

Coworking spaces, maker spaces, fab labs: true communities?

Après le coworking, le coliving: retour au Moyen Age?

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[22] https://collaborativespacesstudy.wordpress.com/category/blog/

APPENDIX

Emotional communities at the heart of collaborative trends?

Max Weber's project was to articulate the economic and social spheres from fundamental social, legal and historical units: communities.

As I mentioned it in the case of universities, communities have (in western countries) a long history. They cannot easily be distinguished from « domestic communities » and some of their monastic extensions of the Middle Age. Communities are the basement, largely face-to-face of the living together. Weber positions economic versus non-economic communities and types of "communalization" (chapter III) "in their relationship with economics".

Through an exploration of religious communities (Indian and Christian), Weber introduces a kind of community which is neither economic nor domestic (it is more a "permanent sexual community"). He mentions a community whose underpinnings is mainly an emotional sharing ("gemeinde") related to a "prophecy". What matters is mainly to be together and to be stirred collectively. Weber thus stresses (p. 204) that an emotional community "only appears in the context of a prophetic movement as the result of the routinization which happens when the prophet himself or his disciples want to be sure of the permanency of their predication and the continuity of the distribution of grace, this when they want to save the economic existence of this distribution and its administrators (…)."

What is finally the key promise of numerous coworking spaces we visited, in our entrepreneurial societies which see the emergence of a myriad of independent workers acting together sometimes in shared spaces and places, without common goals, without a real organization linking them (a common "gesellschaft")? The end of a loneliness ("you will not be alone" in your apartment or in a café)? Shared emotions (in the context of events and a "community")? A collective well-being, cultivated collectively (and part itself of a new ideology)? What is today's great prophecy? Maybe a very political one. That of the end of work, with its messianic figure: the entrepreneur-innovator. This exceptional human-being who, beyond centralized public policies, can be a deep remedy to economic crisis, and be at the heart of an (alternative?) project to Marx, that of Schumpeter (1942). A vision closer to communities, environment; more responsible, more militant and engaged (against inequalities, crisis, bureaucracies…).

Are new collaborative communities "communities of practice" (with the interstitial connotation sometimes given to this notion)? Are they organizations? In most cases, the turnover of members and residents (1 month, 2 months?) makes it problematic. The stake is maybe different than that of occupational communities and their common or shared practices. It is at this point that the idea of 'social movement' (of coworking, makers, hackers…) becomes particularly meaningful. These movements, if they correspond to the emotional logic described by Weber, can only be open and horizontal. For the sociologist (p 209): "The more an organization becomes an emotional community, the more the position of priests is put in front of the necessity to take into account the expectations of laypeople in the perspective of the maintenance and development of members of the community". The big priests of today's collaborative economy have long understood that collaboration in the strictest sense of the term was required to settle the prophecy…