

Building the social economy movement in Quebec 1983 - 2015

As experienced by Nancy Neamtan

Plan for the presentation

- Introduction
- 1983 – 1989 : Constructing an identity as economic actors
- 1989 – 1996 : Cross sector collaboration at the heart of a development strategy
- 1996 : Aim for the Summit
- 1996 – 2004 : Collective action at the heart of the economy
- 2004 – 2015: A social movement rooted in community
- Future challenges

Quebec 2019: A vibrant social economy ecosystem that continues to grow

- Framework legislation recognises the social economy as an integral part of the Quebec economy
- A network of national, regional and sectoral organisations comprise a rich ecosystem
- Financial tools adapted to collective enterprises and organisations
- Strong relationships with universities for research and knowledge transfer
- Organisations dedicated to labour force development, social purchasing, mutualised purchasing, knowledge transfer
- On-going strategic collaborations with municipalities, labour unions, environmental groups, private sector (social purchasing)
- A pivotal role in international networking and collaboration with OECD, UN and Global Social Economy Forum
- A strong involvement of youth, including student associations, youth networks and a rapidly growing number of young collective entrepreneurs

1983 – 1989 Constructing an identity as economic actors

Context of unemployment and social exclusion: early 80's

- Industrial decline with the end of the post-war boom
- Urban sprawl and entrenched inner city poverty
- The triumph of trickle—down economic theory with the elections of Reagan, Thatcher, Mulroney:
 - Less government intervention
 - Market forces and the private sector perceived as the only path to prosperity
 - Montreal's inner city neighbourhoods facing rapid decline and high levels of poverty

1983 – 1989 Constructing an identity as economic actors

Accomplishments

- Creation of the Quebec Solidarity Fund by the Quebec Federation of Labour (1983)
- Creation of the first community economic development corporations in Pointe-St-Charles with others to follow.
- Creation of first local investment fund for job creation (CDEC, FSTQ and Quebec government)
- Organisation of « Local Action », an international conference on local development (700 people- 25 countries))1988)
- Forum pour l'emploi (Forum for employment:) 1500 people from all sectors and regions come together to seek solutions to high unemployment (1989)
- Creation of multi-partite territorial committees to stimulate the economy and job creation in the deindustrialised sectors of Montreal

1983 – 1989 Constructing an identity as economic actors



Created by Margaret Hagan
from Noun Project

Issues and lessons

1. The choice of creating an identity as an economic actor
2. The need to reappropriate the concept of the economy as a social science
3. Create small utopias or transform the entire economy?
4. Search for THE magic solution or build a multidimensional approach
5. How to introduce citizens voices in the field of economic development?
6. Collaborate with « the enemy » ?
7. A bottom—up approach: recognising our own skills and expertise

1989 – 1996

Cross-sector collaboration at the heart of a development strategy

Context

- Unemployment rate 13,2% in 1993
- 12.6% of Quebec population dependent on welfare payments
- Real estate collapse in Montreal
- Community economic development as pilot projects out of the mainstream
- Tensions between urban centres and rural zones

1989 – 1996

Cross-sector collaboration at the heart of a development strategy

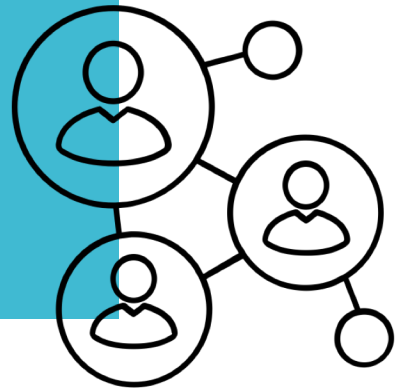
Accomplishments

- An innovation in territorial development: Creation of RESO (Coalition for the economic and social renewal of southwest Montreal) with a mandate to coordinate a vast action plan
- Governance shared by community, private and labour representatives
- Model replicated in other neighbourhoods and cities
- Rural communities come together to create « Solidarité rurale »

1989 – 1996 Cross-sector collaboration at the heart of a development strategy

Issues and lessons

1. The need for open spaces for social innovation
2. The need to build community roots and community empowerment
3. The potential of entrepreneurship for the benefit of the community
4. Maintain a creative tension between economic and social imperatives
5. Think globally, act locally
6. Assure the perennity of actions through collective ownership



1996 Aim for the Summit

Context

- Post referendum 1995 that sharply divided Quebec society
- High unemployment
- Devitalisation of rural regions and a weak Montreal economy
- Pressure from international agencies to cut back on government deficit (Quebec)

1996 Aim for the Summit

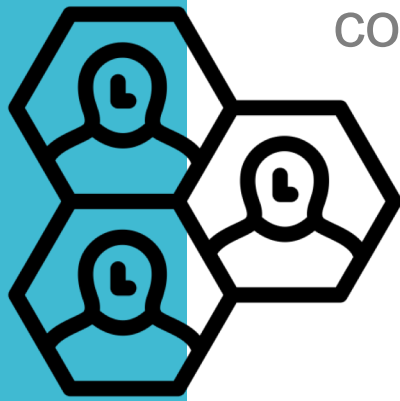
Accomplishments - Sommet

- Summit on Economy and Employment (1996): a defining moment in the recognition of civil society as an economic actor
- 4 working groups – the group on the social economy emerges as a source of job creation and innovative responses to societal needs
- New family policy based on non-profit daycare (5\$/ a day)
- Creation of the Fonds de lutte à la pauvreté (Fund to fight poverty)

Accomplishments – Post Summit

- Local development policy integrates support for the social economy
- Recognition of the community sector as a pillar of social dialogue (Labour force partnership Commission CPMT)
- Creation of RISQ – 10 M\$
- Creation of a labour force sectoral council for the social economy and community sector

1996 Aim for the Summit



Issues and lessons

- The force that comes from constructing a common identity
- The need for a new relationship with government to coconstruct policy

1996 – 2004 Collective action at the heart of the economy

Context

- Rise of the alterglobalisation movement (1st edition of the World Social Forum in Brazil 2001)
- Rising awareness of the dangers of global warming and climate change
- Social movement against poverty: *Collectif pour une loi sur l'élimination de la pauvreté*

New social policies in Quebec

- 5\$ day daycare, local development, wage parity for women, support for the community sector, anti-poverty legislation, freeze on tuition fees (lowest in North America)

1996 – 2004

Collective action at the heart of the economy

Accomplishments

- Creation of a multipartite national organisation: le Chantier de l'économie sociale
- Creation of 120 Local development centres and 17 Regional development Councils
- Creation of a network of local investment funds
- Access to loans and loan guaranties from Investissement Québec (nonprofits and coops)
- First Community-University Research Alliance on the social economy
- Recognition of social innovation in the new scientific policy

1996 – 2004 Collective action at the heart of the economy

An intense period of questions and debates as the social economy moves out of the margins

- The social economy and public services
- Commercialisation of community action?
- Unfair competition
- Cooperatives: in or out of the social economy
- An economy for the poor or a component of the 'real' economy
- Social economy and culture
- International networking

1996 – 2004 Collective action at the heart of the economy



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Issues and lessons

1. The need for a multi-dimensional approach to the social economy
2. The central role of social movements
3. The strategic importance of alliances with universities and research networks
4. The need to put the issues on the table and have the necessary and often difficult debates

2004 – 2015

A social movement rooted in community

Context

- Elections of federal and provincial governments unfavourable to the social economy
- 2008 financial crisis
- Increasing awareness of the negative impacts of globalisation and the financialisation of the international economy
- The emergence of the « Occupy » movement
- Rise of the extreme right in western democracies

2004 – 2015

A social movement rooted in community

Accomplishments (1)

- 132M\$ federal investment in 4 measures (Social Economy initiative 2004)
 - Capacity building
 - Social finance
 - Support for a network of community-university research alliance
 - Open SME programs for collective enterprises
- A show of movement's strength: the Social Economy Summit with 700 delegates from all regions and sectors (2006)
- Partnership agreements signed between the Chantier and regional hubs
- 1^{er} Quebec government action plan for collective entrepreneurship (plan d'action gouvernemental en entrepreneuriat collectif - 2007)

2004 – 2015

A social movement rooted in community

Accomplishments (2)

- Partnership Agreement with the City of Montreal
- Creation of the Chantier de l'économie sociale Trust (52.8M\$ in patient capital) (2007)
- »Campaign: L'économie sociale j'achète (2007)
- Creation of Commerce solidaire
- Framework legislation on the social economy (2013)
- Creation of a new organisation for knowledge transfer in social innovation: TIESS (Territoires innovantes en économie sociale et solidaire)

2004 – 2015

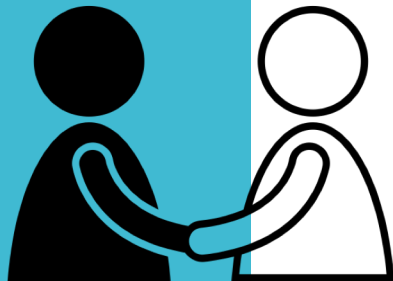
A social movement rooted in community

The end of an era...

- 2014 : Abolition of regional and local development structures
- End to institutionalised citizen participation in different structures of 'concertation'
- Survival of regional social economy hubs as one of the only government supported regional bodies with civil society participation
- A repositioned and renewed ecosystem still in emergence but the social economy continues its development with new as well as traditional partners

2004 – 2015

A social movement rooted in community

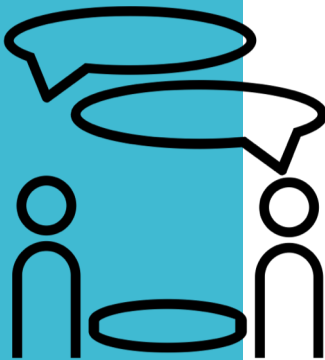


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Issues and lessons

1. Movement building on the basis of recognition of diversity
2. It takes an ecosystem to build a social economy
3. The need for scaling out
4. The delicate balance between supply and demand in social finance
5. Institutionalisation: a necessary process to navigate with caution
6. Open the space for the next generation and new ways of doing things

Today's challenges



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from Noun Project

- The challenge of democracy
- The challenge of scaling out
- The challenge of diversity
- The challenge of coherence
- The challenge of articulating the development model to which we aspire
- The challenge of maintaining local, national and international mobilisation

Questions?
Thank you.