

Decentralization and participatory democracy

The decentralization of the 80s led by Gaston Deferre within the government headed by Pierre Mauroy during the 1st Septennat of François Mitterrand will have nearly 40 years at the end of this quinquennium.¹ In the light of the latest events that have shaken our country it appears necessary, even urgent to give it a new lease of life, to strengthen and extend it!

The crisis we are going through, linked to the covid epidemic¹⁹, only goes to show a little more what many of us share: our institutional system is no longer at all adapted to the needs of a modern society and the economic crisis that follows this health crisis will only accentuate this diagnosis.

A hyper-centralized State, all vertically, where no decision can be taken without the President's approval, where the Parliament has almost no real capacity for discussion, where the administration, increasingly complex and riddled with internal rivalries, has become heavy and slow, cannot have the slightest flexibility or agility to resolve the multitude of problems that involve us all. This state model has shown itself to be increasingly impotent: it is incapable of managing.

In this respect, the movement of "yellow vests" from our regions, our departments, our communes, from a France that one geographer has called "peripheral France"² and which recently shook our institutions is a strong symptom of this. The citizens who gathered around traffic circles there expressed a need for more proximity, associated with more "participatory" or "local" democracy, which was reflected, among other things, in the demand for a citizen initiative referendum (RIC). We may have different opinions and analyses on this movement, but the fact remains that a real expectation of our fellow citizens was expressed there.

It is time to bring citizens as close as possible to the decisions that concern them and this at all levels. Of course the State is there to set national standards by law when they are indispensable, but not to manage very diverse situations in a uniform way.

It is time to move resolutely towards a real decentralization of power in order to make it more understandable to citizens and to better involve them in its exercise.

To do this, we must go as far as possible in all areas, not decentralize a little more, but decentralize everything, unless it is obviously impossible. The State makes the law, but it must only manage the national regalian, in the strict sense.

For example, what is opposed to the so-called National Education becoming departmental for primary and secondary education and regional for universities (the national level determining the programs and conditions of training and recruitment of teachers, and nothing more)? What is opposed to hospitals being managed according to the same principles and, more generally, to health (within the respect of a legislative and social protection framework that remains national)? Why isn't the responsibility for the employment cluster completely entrusted to the regions that are much closer to the field, as the first experiences in this direction have been positive? Let's take the example of Germany, Switzerland or the Netherlands, which is doing better than us.

Contribution "La France d'apres

¹ Law n°81 of January 2, 1983 relating to the distribution of competences between the communes, the departments, the regions and the state.

² " La France peripherique " Christophe Guilluy - Editions Flammarion 2014.

